PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 149

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1988-89

COMPRISING PERIOD
13 MARCH—23 MARCH 1989

LONDON
HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
£68 net

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY THE RT. HON. MARGARET THATCHER, MP, JULY 1988)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—
The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS—The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Nigel Lawson, MP
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, MBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt. Hon. George Younger, TD, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Young of Graffham
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. John Moore, MP
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. Cecil Parkinson, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER AND MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
The Rt. Hon. Antony Newton, OBE, MP

LAW OFFICERS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
LORD ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Alan Rodger, Esq, QC

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. David Waddington, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE, (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. Lynda Chalker, MP
The Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
Minister for Overseas Development—Christopher Patten, Esq, MP
The Lord Glenarthur
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, HOME OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
John Patten, Esq, MP
Tim Renton, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, WELSH OFFICE—Wyn Roberts, Esq, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE—
Minister of State for Defence Procurement—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Trefgarne
Minister of State for the Armed Forces—The Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. John Cope, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. Ian Stewart, RD, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT—
Minister for Local Government—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside—The Earl of Caithness
Minister for Water and Planning—Michael Howard, Esq, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
Minister for Trade—The Hon. Alan Clark, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—Mrs. Angela Rumbold, CBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—DAVID MELLOR, ESQ, QC, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE, SCOTTISH OFFICE—
Ian Lang, Esq, MP
The Lord Sanderson of Bowden
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT—
Minister for Public Transport—Michael Portillo, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY—
Minister for Social Security—Nicholas Scott, Esq, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Morrison, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—
The Baroness Trumpington
Donald Thompson, Esq, MP
Richard Ryder, Esq, OBE, MP

Arts and Libraries, Office of—
MINISTER FOR THE ARTS—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry—
The Rt. Hon. Antony Newton, OBE, MP

Civil Service, Office of the Minister for the—
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. George Younger, TD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Trefgarne
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—Michael Neubert, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—The Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP

Education and Science—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Mrs. Angela Rumbold, CBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
John Butcher, Esq, MP
Robert Jackson, Esq, MP

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. John Cope, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
John Lee, Esq, MP
Patrick Nicholls, Esq, MP

Energy—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Cecil Parkinson, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Morrison, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Michael Spicer, Esq, MP
The Baroness Hooper

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Local Government—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside—The Earl of Caithness
Minister for Water and Planning—Michael Howard, Esq, QC, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
David Trippier, Esq, RD, MP
Christopher Chope, Esq, OBE, MP
Mrs. Virginia Bottomley, MP
The Hon. Colin Moynihan, MP (Minister for Sport)
The Lord Hesketh

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. Lynda Chalker, MP
The Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
Minister for Overseas Development—Christopher Patten, Esq, MP
The Lord Glenarthur
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Timothy Eggar, Esq, MP

Health—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
David Mellor, Esq, QC, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—
Roger Freeman, Esq, MP

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
John Patten, Esq, MP
Tim Renton, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Hon. Douglas Hogg, MP

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD-ADVOCATE—Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Alan Rodger, Esq, QC

Lord Chancellor—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Ian Stewart, RD, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Lyell
Richard Needham, Esq, MP
Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
Peter Viggers, Esq, MP

Paymaster General—
The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, MP

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Ian Lang, Esq, MP
The Lord Sanderson of Bowden
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, MP
Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP

Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. John Moore, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Social Security—Nicholas Scott Esq, MBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Skelmersdale
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP

Trade and Industry—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Young of Graffham
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER AND MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
The Rt. Hon. Antony Newton, OBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE
Minister for Trade—The Hon. Alan Clark, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Robert Atkins, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CORPORATE AFFAIRS—The Hon. Francis Maude, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDUSTRY AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS—Eric Forth, Esq, MP

Transport—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP
MINISTER OF STATE
Minister for Public Transport—Michael Portillo, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Minister for Roads and Traffic—Peter Bottomley, Esq, MP
Minister for Aviation and Shipping—The Lord Brabazon of Tara

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—
The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Nigel Lawson, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. Norman Lamont, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Peter Lilley, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. David Waddington, QC, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
David Lightbown, Esq, MP
Kenneth Carlisle, Esq, MP
Alan Howarth, Esq, CBE, MP
David Maclean, Esq, MP
Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
John Taylor, Esq, MP
David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP
The Hon. Tom Sackville, MP
Michael Fallon, Esq, MP
Sydney Chapman, Esq, MP

Welsh Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Wyn Roberts, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Ian Grist, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, KT, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Westmorland, KCVO
TREASURER—David Hunt, Esq, MBE, MP
COMPTROLLER—Tristan Garel-Jones, Esq, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Tony Durant, Esq, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Denham
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Viscount Davidson
LORDS IN WAITING—The Viscount Long, The Earl of Dundee, The Earl of Arran, The Lord Strathclyde, The Lord Henley

---

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—The Rt. Hon. Michael Alison, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—Rt. Hon. Bernard Weatherill, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Harold Walker, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Sir Paul Dean, MP
SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—

Donald Coleman, Esq, MP, Patrick Cormack, Esq, MP, Stan Crowther, Esq, MP, Dame Janet Fookes, MP, Norman Hogg, Esq, MP, Geraint Howells, Esq, MP, John Hunt, Esq, MP, David Knox, Esq, MP, James Lamond, Esq, MP, Michael Latham, Esq, MP, Ted Leadbitter, Esq, MP, Geoffrey Lofthouse, Esq, MP, John McWilliam, Esq, MP, Michael J. Martin, Esq, MP, Sir Anthony Meyer, MP, Michael Morris, Esq, MP, Robert Rhodes James, Esq, MP, Sir Giles Shaw, MP, Sir Michael Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, Sir John Stradling Thomas, MP, Nicholas Winterton, Esq, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—

Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Alan Beith, Esq, MP, Frank Dobson, Esq, MP, Rt. Hon. Sir Barney Hayhoe, MP, Rt. Hon. Peter Shore, MP, Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP

SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION—W. A. Proctor

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—

C. J. Boulton, CB (Chairman), Sir Victor Le Fanu, KCVO, D. Menhennet, D. Phil., G. A. Roberts, K. S. Morgan, W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF

SECRETARY TO THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—B. A. Wilson

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—P. J. Kitcatt, CB

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—H. Knorpel, CB, QC, G. E. Gammie, CB

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon D. C. Gray, TD, PhD

TRAINBEARER—D. J. Lord

DEPUTY TRAINBEARER—P. L. Warwick

HEO (ADMINISTRATION/DIARY)—Mrs. S. Norvell

ASSISTANT TO SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—P. Harvey, CB

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—R. I. S. Phillips

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—C. J. Boulton, CB

CLERK ASSISTANT—J. F. Sweetman, TD

CLERK OF COMMITTEES—M. T. Ryle

PRINCIPAL CLERKS—
- H. M. Barclay (Public Bills)
- D. W. Limon (Table Office)
- W. R. McKay (Journal Office)
- C. B. Winnifrith (Select Committees)
- R. B. Sands (Overseas Office)
- G. Cubie (Financial Committees)
- A. J. Hastings (Select Committees)
- J. R. Rose (Standing Committees)
- R. J. Willoughby (Private Bills)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—S. A. L. Panton, M. R. Jack, PhD, D. G. Millar, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms. A. Milner-Barry, R. W. G. Wilson, W. A. Proctor, F. A. Cranmer, R. J. Rogers, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms. H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig, A. Sandall, MLitt, D. L. Natzler, E. P. Silk, D. F. Harrison

SENIOR CLERKS—Mrs. S. A. de Ste. Croix, A. R. Kennon, D. W. Robson, L. C. Laurence Smyth, A. R. Gren, S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, S. J. Priestley, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips, R. G. James, Miss E. J. Baker, Ms. P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert, J. B. Ingram (acting), I. G. Gilbert (acting), J. Darling (acting), J. M. Hope (acting)

CLERK OF SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEES—K. J. Brown

ASSISTANT CLERKS—B. M. Hutton, J. S. Benger, Ms. E. C. Samson, N. P. Walker, M. D. Hamlyn, P. C. Seaward, DPhil, C. G. Lee, C. D. Stanton

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—G. E. Clayton, Miss R. J. Challis, P. G. Moon

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—L. L. Kaye, A. P. Hubner, Miss S. J. Fox, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, J. D. Whatley, S. D. Barrett, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader, Mrs. S. M. Barrett, Miss F. L. Allingham, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, J. A. L. Dresner

SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—M. P. Hillyard, M. J. Cremin, Ms. A. S. Frost, Dr. L. M. Rosborough, Dr. S. A. Harvey Miss K. Rogers, E. Thompson

EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—G. H. Bright, MBE, DEPUTY—B. Tidball, ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, Miss L. Lewis, J. Puricelli, K. B. Wood, P. D. Howlett, Miss J. M. Williams, Mrs. L. R. Shade

EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—R. J. Willoughby, M. G. Pownall

REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—A. J. Hastings

TAXING OFFICER—R. J. Willoughby

CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—R. A. Broomfield, M. P. Oxborough, N. P. Wright, Mrs. B. Ward, Miss D. Symes (temporary)

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Sir Victor Le Fanu, KCVO

DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. N. W. Jennings

ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANTS AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright, J. F. Collins

CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss S. J. Scott Thomson

ASSISTANT CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss P. Penson

ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—E. D. Palfrey, A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren

PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—G. H. Sargeant

SECOND PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—R. T. Warboys

SENIOR DOORKEEPERS—S. E. R. Skinner, R. A. F. Chapman, J. D. Garnett, R. H. Usher, C. Gray, J. C. W. Cooper

HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—W. H. Hazard, MBE

SENIOR OFFICE KEEPERS—M. Bryant, K. R. Kemp, K. R. Dickason

NURSING SISTER—Miss E. Needham

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—D. Menhennet, DPhil

DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—D. J. T. Englefield

LIBRARY AND RESEARCH—

ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Division)—G. F. Lock, Miss J. B. Tanfield

DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Section)—S. Z. Young, Mrs. H. R. Coates, Miss P. J. Baines, BLitt, K. G. Cuninghame, Mrs. J. M. Wainwright, FI InfSc, C. C. Pond, PhD, Mrs. C. B. Andrews, R. C. Clements, Mrs. J. M. Lourie

LIBRARY CLERKS, SENIOR—Ms. F. Poole, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, R. J. Ware, DPhil, Ms. D. Gore, PhD, R. J. Twigger, B. K. Winetrobe, T. N. Edmonds, R. J. Cracknell, Miss O. M. Gay, Miss E. M. McInnes, Mrs. G. L. Allen. ASSISTANT—Miss M. Baber, Miss A. J. Cook, PhD, E. J. Fishwick, MPhil, Mrs. K. Greener, Miss P. Strickland, A. J. L. Crompton, Miss V. A. Miller, Ms. M. J. Quiney, Ms. S. C. Penfold, Miss N. R. Donlon, Ms. H. M. Jeffs, J. R. Lunn, PhD, Mrs. P. Carling (temporary)

SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. S. M. Withers, ALA, Mrs. H. V. Holden, ALA, K. N. H. Parry, ALA, Ms. A. Muir, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Miss I. O. White, ALA (acting)

EDUCATION OFFICER—Mrs. E. R. Stones. ASSISTANT—Mrs. C. C. O'Connor

PROJECT MANAGER, NEW BUILDING—Miss J. Seaton FLA

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. P A. Bozdan, S. A. Wise

HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—J. A. Prince, MLS, Mrs. P. V. Wiles, Mrs. D. W. Clark, Miss M. H. Fletcher, Mrs. P. E. Cook, ALA, Ms. H. Armstrong, Miss E. J. Jones, ALA, G. Haig, Miss B. Mee, MIInfSc, Miss G. L. Cooper, Mrs. E. H. Riley, ALA, Mrs. F. M. Ward, Ruth Bacon ALA (acting), R. Freebury (acting)

SUPERINTENDING CLERK—J. R. Hutson.

EDITOR, WEEKLY BULLETIN—Miss B. A. Rowlands, ALA

LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, Miss S. Holland, A. D. Parker, ALA, Ms. J. B. Hall, ALA, T. C. Holmes, P. E. M. Ward, Ms. F. Whittle, Mrs. J. M. Smith, ALA, Miss J. Lyall, Miss C. E. Jarrett, Ms. Z. A. Smallwood, C. M. Sear (acting), Mrs. F. Klipstein (acting)

CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—D. J. Plowright, Miss N. Harland

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—P. R. Davis, J. S. Came, D. B. Inns, Mrs. A. J. H. Mara, D. A. Brown, J. P. Brevitt, M. Greenhill (Head Library Attendant)

VOTE OFFICE—

DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—G. R. Russell

DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster

ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—C. D. Lister

SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—Mrs. S. Fuzio, B. G. Underwood, A. J. Ashton (Sales Office)

VOTE OFFICE ASSISTANTS—T. S. Wilson, G. E. Howard, C. P. Williams, P. Hannett

ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT—G. A. Roberts

FEES OFFICE—

ACCOUNTANT—J. L. G. Dobson

DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis

SENIOR ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—G. P. Brown

ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—A. R. Marskell, M. J. Barram, Miss M. M. McColl, M. Fletcher

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—K. E. Walton

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell, Mrs. P. D. Page, Mrs. N. Norman, Mrs. G. Crowther, Mrs. P. M. Lowther, Mrs. D. Hill, Miss P. Hurford, Mrs. J. S. Peach

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss D. E. Johnson, D. M. Allen, Miss L. J. F. Clay, Mrs. D. K. Euesden, D. J. D. Woods, Ms. M. R. Morris, Miss R. Harrison, G. L. Turner, Miss P. R. Mills, Mrs. J. D. Mead, Miss G. Bauman, P. F. Dawson, Miss S. E. Flavell, Miss S. A. Weaver, P. H. Olden, A. D. Rowlands, P. J. S. French

ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—

HEAD OF OFFICE—B. A. Wilson

DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. R. A. White, V. H. Stocker

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—N.P. Crawley

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—P. C. Kingsley, R. S. Harrison, Miss J. Bremner, M. Page

COMPUTER OFFICE—

COMPUTER OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc

ASSISTANT COMPUTER OFFICERS—Mrs. G. S. P. Smith, Mrs. S. C. White

INTERNAL AUDITOR—A. A. Cameron

STAFF INSPECTOR—R. C. Collins

WELFARE OFFICER—Mrs. A. Mossop

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—K. S. Morgan

DEPUTY EDITOR—I. D. Church

PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley, J. Withers, P. Walker

ASSISTANT EDITORS—W. G. Garland, Vee Grainger, J. Ledgerwood, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Miss H. A. Hales

COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—D. Crosswell, Mrs. A. Roberts, Miss L. Sutherland, S. M. Hutchinson, Miss V. A. Widgery, C. Fogarty, Mrs. H. J. G. Natzler, Miss M. Babington, Mrs. A. Street, L. Gilmore, Ms. G. Hardgrave, P. Oglethorpe, P. Hadlow, Miss C. Hanly, M. Watson

REPORTERS—Mrs. E. J. Gregory, Miss J. A. Bradshaw, Miss K. Stewart, Miss E. Morris, Mrs. J. Martin, J. Ransley, Miss J. Goodman, Ms. J. Dall

PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—D. N. Harrington, MBE

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBERS—Mrs. M. J. Harding, Miss J. L. Brown

PRINCIPAL HANSARD ASSISTANT—D. J. Lawler

SENIOR HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington

ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—G. Carpenter

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

GENERAL MANAGER—W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF

DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER—E. J. Nash, MCFA

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO GENERAL MANAGER—Mrs. A. G. Lunn

BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths

CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA

ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley

EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay

HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe

HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER (PSA)—B. C. Sewell

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent A. J. Coxon

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. J. Garbutt

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—R. H. Hyde

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-EIGHTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 149**

EIGHTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1988-89

House of Commons

Monday 13 March 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Railway Inspectors

1. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the full establishment of railway inspectors; and how many fully trained inspectors are currently in post.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): The full complement of railway inspectors is 24. At present, 22 are in post, of whom six with relevant experience have been recently recruited and are undergoing short-term induction courses. With the continuing recruitment campaign, I expect the railway inspectorate to be at full strength by the middle of the year.

Mr. Taylor: Does the Minister accept that there is concern that the railway inspectorate is not at full strength? Is he convinced that when it is it will be adequate, and what does he think about the observations made in *The Observer* at the weekend that, beginning in October, British Rail intends to abolish local health and safety representatives?

Mr. Portillo: That abolition does not relate to the statutory committees, which will continue in being. The chief inspecting officer of railways has been reviewing staff resources available to him, especially in the light of the Fennell report, which recommended the use of the Health of Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to enforce measures for passenger safety. I am expecting his report to be presented to the Secretary of State shortly.

Mr. Prescott: For how long has the railway inspectorate been under establishment? Was the inspectorate consulted about the removal of the one-way leg from the diamond crossing involved in the Glasgow rail tragedy, which was a carbon copy of another collision two years previously? Were the Department and the inspectorate consulted as clearly economic reasons overrode safety priorities?

Mr. Portillo: The first reference that I found made to these crossing was in 1958; this sort of crossing has been installed since that time. The railway inspectorate believes that simpler crossings may be safer because less can go wrong and they are more reliable. It is content with that sort of installation. The railway inspectorate has been under strength for some time, but we have eight inspectors doing traditional railway inspectorate work—approving new works and accident inquiries—compared with five in 1979; and 14 dealing with matters relating to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act compared with five in 1975.

Channel Tunnel

3. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the north-west regional managers of British Rail to discuss the implications of the Channel tunnel for the north-west.

Mr. Portillo: I meet regional managers from time to time on regional visits. I look forward to the plans for freight and passenger services from the north-west to the Channel tunnel, which British Rail is obliged to publish by the end of the year.

Mr. McCartney: Is it not disgraceful that, in the run-up to 1993, the Minister cannot announce an overall plan for infrastructure in the north-west to take advantage of job

opportunities and the improvement in transport infrastructure? Given his failure to make a statement, does he share Lancashire county council's commitment, which it expressed at its conference in January when it called for a bridge head between Europe and the United States via a free port at Liverpool and for the construction in the Liverpool-Manchester area of a freight terminal capable of improving links between the Channel and the north-west? If such a link is not introduced by 1993, does the Minister agree that there will be a reduction in jobs and job opportunities in the north-west and a train drain from the north-west to the south-east and Europe?

Mr. Portillo: British Rail has already invested £600 million to improve services between the Channel tunnel and every region of the country. I have made it clear that the Department is happy to co-operate with the Liverpool land bridge concept. It is appropriate to produce plans by the end of the year—the tunnel will not open until 1993—because otherwise there may be a danger of plans being made too early. British Rail has make it clear that the first international site will be at Leeds and that there is a clear need in Strathclyde, Birmingham and Teesside for other freight facilities. It is also considering south Wales and the north-west.

Mr. Tredinnick: Bearing in mind the £500 million that British Rail is spending on the Channel tunnel in Kent, does my hon. Friend agree that for only £23 million the line from St. Pancras as far as Leicester could be electrified?

Mr. Portillo: I do not know whether my hon. Friend's figure is correct, but if a sound investment case were put to Ministers for the electrification of that line, or any other, Ministers would be happy to approve it.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Is the Minister aware of the traffic chaos on the M1, M6 and other roads leading from the north-west? Would it not be logical for the Government to put some money into establishing a major freight depot in the Greater Manchester area, possibly at Tameside, where the Secretary of State has seen a good site? Such investment would not only bring jobs to the north-west, but would relieve traffic congestion on the roads by ensuring that freight travelled by rail, which would be much more suitable for it.

Mr. Portillo: I am not at all sure that Government investment is needed to achieve those purposes. As the hon. Gentleman says, there are already pressures pointing in that direction. Section 8 grants are available for establishing freight facilities where they would take freight lorries off sensitive roads in unsuitable areas.

Mr. Favell: Of course, every north-west hon. Member will want to endorse the plea by the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) for a rail freight terminal in the north-west. However, is there not a danger of thinking that all the country's freight will disappear down the Channel tunnel? How much will be able to get down there? Is the lack of proper road links developing between the north-west and the Channel, the East Anglian ports and Immingham in East Yorkshire not an even greater danger? Clearly, all freight will not be able to get into the tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: I can assure my hon. Friend that Ministers are aware of the pressures on roads and he has made a perfectly valid point. It is true that the amount of freight passing through the Channel tunnel, although significant and an important psychological change for the country, will be only a tiny proportion of the total freight moved in this country.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is the Minister aware that British Rail's present plans allow for only four trains a day in and out of the north-west, which is equivalent of about 280 lorries a day? Does he realise that that would not effectively clear one large international container ship? Is he aware that that would displace almost no worthwhile traffic from the motorway system? What does the Minister intend to do to ensure that we have a system that will take goods and people from the north-west?

Mr. Portillo: I cannot confirm the hon. Gentleman's figures and the figure of four trains a day is not familiar to me. I am still waiting for the plans to be brought forward. However, from British Rail's document on the new proposed rail link published last week, I know that in 1993 there will be 35 train paths available daily each way through the Channel tunnel and that 75 per cent. of freight using the Channel tunnel is expected to come from beyond the south-east or to go beyond the south-east.

Dame Peggy Fenner: I appreciate that the proposals are still at an early stage and that they will not proceed until 1993. However, is my hon. Friend satisfied that the King's Cross connection and terminal is the right choice, as that is the choice that the House will be asked to make early?

Mr. Portillo: British Rail has made it clear that it believes that King's Cross is the right choice and a number of hon. Members from various parties have said that they believe that that is right because of the superior connections from King's Cross to the north of England. However, the investment proposal has not yet been put to the Government, so the Government have not taken a firm view on that yet.

Urban Areas (Rail Networks)

4. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the provision of local rail networks in urban areas.

Mr. Portillo: Urban rail services are mainly the responsibility of British Rail and the passenger transport executives, where they exist. The Government are happy to approve investment in such services wherever it offers value for money. Our general policy is explained in our response to the report of the Select Committee on Transport on the financing of rail services.

Mr. Michael: Will the Minister join me in welcoming the success of the partnership in investment created by south and mid Glamorgan in extending the rail pattern in the Greater Cardiff area? Does he agree that for areas such as the Vale of Glamorgan and the south Wales valleys, increased investment and the development of those services is essential to the future communications network? Does he agree that the Government should take the lead in providing public investment to encourage that?

Mr. Portillo: One of the features of the area that the hon. Gentleman represents is that because there is no passenger transport authority covering it, the services on the provincial sector of British Rail qualify for public sector obligation grants, so the Government are involved

in providing money for services in the hon. Gentleman's area. I am aware of the contribution that mid and south Glamorgan are making to those rail services and I have explained the Government's policy in my first reply.

Mr. Amos: Is my hon. Friend aware that the main concern is not about British Rail's published timetables but about the non-arrival of the trains that are due to arrive? Will he please do something about the 7.48 am from Hexham to Newcastle, which is cancelled more often than it turns up?

Mr. Portillo: I hope that my hon. Friend will pursue that matter with the chairman of British Rail with his normal vigour. The Government are concerned that the highest quality of service should be provided by British Rail, and I know that my hon. Friend will take the matter up.

Mr. Snape: May I press the Minister on recommendation No. 6 in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on other provincial services and ask him whether the Government have accepted the recommendation that the services should be transferred to existing or newly formed passenger transport authorities? If so, will the Government continue to make their current financial contribution to the maintenance of those services?

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman will understand that it would be premature for me to pick off a recommendation in the MMC report and respond to it. The Government will have to consider their position and reply in due course. It has been an interesting suggestion, and we shall formulate our response to it. I simply make the point—I know that the hon. Gentleman is familiar with it—that public sector sector obligation grant is not available for areas that have PTAs so there are both pros and cons in the MMC proposal.

Motorway Repairs

5. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the speed with which motorway repairs are undertaken.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): We receive various representations about the way in which motorway repairs are undertaken. We aim to programme works when traffic is lightest and complete the work as quickly as possible.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend think that the public is satisfied that motorway repairs are undertaken in the minimum possible time? I accept that there has been some improvement, but does my hon. Friend intend to take any steps further to improve the situation, which still leaves a great deal to be desired?

Mr. Bottomley: The simple answers are no and yes. Members of the public are dissatisfied. Things may appear to have been improved in the second half of last year, as we undertook fewer motorway repairs than we expected. We now manage to complete small repairs much faster. In addition, the development of the long-term programme and the fact that we are building roads to a higher standard will contribute to an easier journey for motorway users.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that safety on motorways is related not only to repairs and to the speed at which roads are improved? Will he consider urgently the carriage of dangerous substances to see whether heavy goods vehicles are conforming to the safety standards necessary to protect other motorists?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who launched the motorway safety package, and I are determined to have the safest possible motorways. At the moment the safety records of both Switzerland and the Netherlands appear to be slightly better than ours but we are determined to overtake those countries.

Mr. Higgins: Given the inevitable delays that motorway repairs cause, however quickly they may be carried out, will my hon. Friend consider carefully improving the system for notifying road users that delays are likely to be experienced? In particular, will he consider whether appropriate notices could be displayed and study the experience of Tokyo, which has a unified system for warning drivers when delays are likely?

Mr. Bottomley: I accept my right hon. Friend's point, and both my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I want to do better. I am not sure that the system operated in Tokyo is that much better than ours, given that it takes up to four hours to travel 40 km to the airport, but we shall try to make the system better in this country.

Shipping (Freight Movements)

6. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he is making in the European Council of Ministers to liberalise freight movements by ships within European countries.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): I have continued to press strongly for the liberalisation of cabotage, and substantive discussions are now scheduled for the June Transport Council.

Mr. Field: Will my right hon. Friend list the EEC countries that continue to use cabotage to restrict trade, and tell us when he expects to take up the powers vested in him under the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, which will enable the red ensign to sail into all the ports of EEC member countries without let or hindrance?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend probably knows that the Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain restrict cabotage, but we have an agreement with the German Government allowing access to the German cabotage trades. My hon. Friend is right that I have powers under the Merchant Shipping Act, but my primary objective remains liberalisation through a binding Community regulation. That would be very much better than using the powers, although I should certainly do so in the last resort.

Mr. Benn: Will the Secretary of State comment on the judgment by the court last Friday——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State cannot comment on a judgment that is still before a court.

Mr. Benn: Has the right hon. Gentleman's attention been drawn to the judgment by the court last Friday overturning the Merchant Shipping Act to which he has just referred and issuing him, as Secretary of State, with an

order not to proceed with regulations made under that Act? That means that for the first time in our history the courts of this country have actually ruled that a law passed by both Houses of Parliament is invalid.

Mr. Channon: The right hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not deal with the point that he raised. The matter is in the Court of Appeal, where the Government have launched an appeal.

Mr. Cash: My right hon. Friend will recall that, when the legislation was being introduced, its legality was challenged. The Government put forward their case, and won it on a preliminary hearing, with costs awarded in their favour. Therefore, is it not extraordinary that, after the Act has been passed, we should now be faced with a similar situation which is causing considerable doubt and confusion about where our powers really lie?

Mr. Channon: I have great sympathy with what my hon. Friend says. As I told the House a moment ago, the entitlement of foreign beneficially-owned fishing vessels to remain United Kingdom-registered is now before the Court of Appeal so, I am not in a position to comment today.

Mr. Salmond: If the liberalisation of freight were to increase maritime traffic, how confident is the Secretary of State that the coastguard service could cope, given that the coastguard union has already argued that existing rationalisation is compromising public safety at sea?

Mr. Channon: I am confident that the coastguard service could cope. It is receiving a great deal of support from the Government. I am determined to improve it to provide an even higher standard, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will see that in practice. An event today has proved the point.

Roads Expenditure

8. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the expenditure per capita on roads in *(a)* the south-east and *(b)* other regions for the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Channon: Over the last three years, my Department's average annual expenditure on national roads has been £18·14 per head in the south-east, and £17·68 per head across the country as a whole.

Dr. Clark: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, although those figures show that the south-east is marginally better off than the nation as a whole, many people in the south-east believe that our region does not get as much money as other regions? Bearing in mind the large level of commuting in the south-east, does he think that there should be better roads in the south-east? In particular, when does he expect the Rayleigh weir underpass and the Rochford-Southend relief road, the 1013, to be finished?

Mr. Channon: As my hon. Friend will know, more than £1 billion has been spent in the past three years on building, improving and maintaining roads in the south-east and East Anglia. That represents 40 per cent. of total expenditure on national roads in that period. We are planning to spend over £½ billion next year alone on roads in that area.

As to my hon. Friend's specific question about Rayleigh weir, a matter which is close to my heart, we expect to issue invitations to tender in May or June, to award the contract in August or September, and to start work in the autumn. Advanced works are expected to start in May, and I expect later this week to announce a decision on further facilities to protect pedestrians.

Mr. Tony Banks: We in the south-east are quite happy if the right hon. Gentleman wants to switch expenditure on roads away from this area and to the north. It seems strange that those who want to use public transport in the south-east are now being expected to pay for that investment, whereas those who want roads will find them being provided out of general taxpayers' expenditure levels.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman has overlooked the fact that the motorist pays in vehicle excise duty and petrol tax much more than the cost of the roads. He is on a false point. On the question which concerns him about roads expenditure in London, he should not confuse the different issues of Greater London with the general issue of the need for roads in the south-east. Expenditure in London, which is a different matter and which I should be delighted to debate on another occasion, is much lower.

Mr. Waller: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one problem which causes delays in the provision of an adequate road network in the south-east, which is crowded, and in other areas, is the slowness of the planning process? From the time that they are visualised, roads can take as long as 12 years to come to fruition. Will my right hon. Friend seek to find ways of speeding up the planning process, while still giving a right to be heard to those who are directly affected?

Mr. Channon: I certainly think that the process from start to finish is still too long. I am not sure whether much can be done in speeding up the planning process. I am determined to speed up the long procedures before roads get to the planning stage. We can probably manage to speed up that process by as much as three years. That will make a great difference to the roads programme.

Mr. Haynes: The Secretary of State is not doing very well in the east midlands region. Will he look seriously at the expenditure provided for the county councils which are responsible for the roads? The roads in the east midlands are shocking and it is high time that money was found for repairs to be done properly. The right hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic is supposed to be interested in safety on the roads and the east midlands' record is appalling. The Secretary of State should wake up and do something about it.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman has done his best to make me wake up in his typical way and with his kind and courteous understatement. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that in the east midlands, as indeed in other parts of the country, maintenance of a large proportion of the road network is the responsibility of the local authorities. He will also be interested to learn that the outturn on national roads expenditure in the east midlands in 1987-88 has now reached £83 million. No doubt, the hon. Gentleman would like to see it higher, but I believe that the figure speaks for itself.

Passenger Air Transport

9. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to seek further to deregulate passenger air transport in Europe.

Mr. Channon: Yes. The Community Ministers will be adopting further liberalising measures by June 1990. We have already given the Commission our views on what the measures should include, and copies of the paper have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Squire: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Is he aware that, despite welcome advances, made in recent years, as of today the single fare for a flight from New York to Washington is £56? The single fare, however, for an identical distance in Europe—namely from London to Paris—is £88. Does that not show that we still have some way to go in deregulation?

Mr. Channon: Most certainly we do. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend and I expect that it is common ground throughout the House that European air fares are far too high. Our priority is to bring them down. We need much more real competition among airlines. However, several lower fares are available as a result of strenuous activities over the years. For example, the fare that Air Europe can offer from London to Paris is 12 per cent. lower than was previously available. We have other liberal bilateral arrangements with Ireland and the Netherlands and we hope that more will proceed shortly.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: In encouraging deregulation and, obviously, an increase in air traffic, will the Secretary of State accept that safety must go hand in hand with that increase? In the light of the fire on the aircraft at Manchester airport, does he accept the need for smoke hoods on aircraft?

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman that safety must remain the top priority. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority and I understand that it is making a statement on all those matters this afternoon.

Mr. Hind: My right hon. Friend is currently engaged in discussions with the American Government about flights from Manchester to Boston and New York. Does he appreciate that north-west people want to fly direct from Manchester and not to have to come into Heathrow and Gatwick, and that they would prefer to do so via a privatised Manchester airport?

Mr. Channon: I think I agree with all that my hon. Friend has said. I hope that further negotiations can take place about that matter. However, I was asked about deregulation of passenger air transport in Europe.

Mr. Prescott: Is the Secretary of State aware that the studies of deregulation in the American air services have shown that fares have been reduced, but sometimes at the expense of the quality and safety of the service? Is the right hon. Gentleman also aware that economic and commercial pressures from the operators and the plane producers have combined to weaken the Government's power of enforcing safety? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the same pressures are more than evident in today's much delayed report on the Manchester inquiry, which shows that economic pressures for more seats reduced the possibility of safe exit from the plane? The report of the inquiry has been delayed for far too long. The accident involved 55 deaths and that must justify our demands that the Secretary of State should now consider that his Department and the CAA are completely inadequate to deal with matters of safety and that they should be passed over to the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman may have overlooked the fact that we are not responsible for aviation safety, anyway. The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for aviation safety which, if the hon. Gentleman had done one moment's homework, he would have realised before he asked his ridiculous question.

Mr. Prescott: The report is to the right hon. Gentleman, and the CAA is answerable to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Channon: It is from the air accident investigation branch. The hon. Gentleman has done no homework on the subject at all.

Mr. Prescott: It is the right hon. Gentleman's responsibility.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman has just read out his own brief of which he has not troubled to check the accuracy. He has not consulted his hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape). Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should resign—*[Interruption.]* Beneath the bombast and rhetoric of the hon. Gentleman lies a serious point that has been answered by the CAA. I hope that when the hon. Gentleman has had time to read the Manchester air crash report, he will realise that as a result of what has been recommended the three and a half years spent on it will yield greater increases in safety.

London Road Assessment Studies

10. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the London road assessment studies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A number of representations have been received, including several from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that his Department is spending about £4 million on road assessment studies in London and that thousands of people have made representations, the majority of whom strongly oppose any new road building in London and resent the idea of a great deal of public money being spent on road building which can result only in the destruction of a large number of homes in my constituency and about 20 others? Does he acknowledge that the Department's current policy is, essentially, to subsidise the private commuter motorist through tax relief and road building and to punish public transport passengers, who account for 82 per cent. of commuter journeys, by making the fare-paying passenger pay for the new investment in public transport? In the circumstances, would it not be better to abandon the assessment studies and concentrate solely on improving public transport in London, diverting freight vehicles around London and improving the environment for Londoners rather than appeasing the road builders and the freight transport lobby?

Mr. Bottomley: No, Sir. The hon. Gentleman seems to have little idea about what is going on in London. London passenger transport is growing faster than in any capital city with the exception of the opening of the underground in Hong Kong. During the past five years Underground passenger journeys have increased by 70 per cent. and the number of British Rail season ticket holders has increased by 20 per cent. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman listened with his ears rather than his mouth he would learn that the number of people commuting by car into central London has dropped from 190,000 per day to 160,000 per day. The hon. Gentleman should therefore be applauding the Government.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that any assessment of London roads must take into account the safety of children crossing those roads? Is my hon. Friend aware that it is virtually impossible to get lollipop ladies in my constituency and other parts of London because the pay is much too low? Will he see what he can do about increasing the pay levels for lollipop ladies and gentlemen?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir. It would also help to try to separate through traffic from residential areas and to have safe routes to schools which do not require children to cross busy roads. Although that cannot be achieved everywhere at once, it is a worthwhile aim, whether in Haringey, Ealing or anywhere else in London. The casualty rate in London is higher than it should be. If we can go on with through roads and through traffic, which the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) will not like, and try to go for a partial exclusion of traffic and an emphasis on residents in some areas, we shall achieve mobility, access, environmental improvements and a reduction in casualties.

Ms. Ruddock: Despite the Minister's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), will he acknowledge that the road assessment study proposals are meeting total opposition from local groups, from residents and even from a number of Conservative Members? Will he admit that the money being spent is an absolute waste because wherever the capacity of roads is increased in London it will simply mean an increase in car and lorry traffic? The Minister has said that he does not want that, so will he put an end to those foolish reports and get on with providing even more public transport in London and giving priority to buses on the roads rather than to private car users?

Mr. Bottomley: That is very interesting. If the hon. Lady had come with me by train to Wandsworth town about an hour ago, she would have seen how one of the objecting councils, Wandsworth, has just put four lanes of traffic into the southern end of Wandsworth bridge, paid for with public money. She might also have seen that one can go by bus from Cheyne Walk to Shepherds Bush, a journey which takes between 10 minutes and 40 minutes. If the western environmental improvement route proposal goes ahead it may be possible to achieve improvements for bus passengers.

If the hon. Lady also visited my constituency of Eltham and studied the Rochester Way relief road she would see how one can separate the through traffic from the local traffic and give a great bonus to the local people. If the hon. Lady has a spare half day we might go round together and see some good road and rail improvements.

Central London Rail Study

11. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received on the central London rail study.

Mr. Channon: Relatively few as yet. It is still too early to expect many considered responses.

Mr. Bowis: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in my constituency we have the busiest rail junction in the world, Clapham junction, but that it is not linked to the Underground system? Is he aware that the only part of the Underground system that runs through my constituency is the most inadequate bit of the whole system—the southern end of the Northern line—which, according to all the reports, cannot be improved? Will my right hon. Friend therefore respond to the genuine concerns and hopes of my constituents that the central London rail study will bring the Underground system south of the river to Clapham junction and beyond and thus provide a new link for local people and relieve the congestion on the Northern line?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his general support of the central London rail study which, on the whole, has received a good reception. In spite of the present investment in London's rail services, more still needs to be done. We need to develop our plans to improve rail services and to cater for the demand that is forecast for the end of the century. The report has been published and I hope that hon. Members will let me have their views on it. We shall decide in the summer what is to be done.

Mr. Spearing: With regard to Clapham junction, the west London road assessment studies and the proposed west cross route, would it not be a good idea to electrify the line from Clapham junction to Willesden junction, which serves a number of important locations and was electrified before the war? Why does not the Secretary of State consider this in relation to the central London rail study? When is the closing date for observations? When the railways are built, what proportion of the cost will have to be met by passengers in increased fares—I believe that they should not bear any of the cost—and how much by the Secretary of State for Transport and the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Mr. Channon: The exact way of costing these improvements—if we decide to go ahead with them—has yet to be decided. The cost will be met from a mixture of fares and—I hope—some contribution from the developers. Because of road congestion and for other reasons, some Government grant may be provided, but that is yet to be determined.

As regards the electrification of one particular line, the relevant issues were considered in the central London rail study. It is hoped that, all the options having been considered, the package produced will be the one most likely to make the maximum contribution to London. The House will want to consider whether that is so. I very much welcome views from Londoners and others as to which option we should take.

M40 (Waterstock to Wendlebury)

14. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement with regard to the Waterstock to Wendlebury section of the M40.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friends have decided that this final section of the M40 should go ahead as proposed. It will be built as a dual three-lane motorway. Subject to the remaining statutory procedures, we hope to start construction later this year for completion in 1991.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend will be aware that the announcement that the route of the final section of the M40 has been agreed will be greeted ecstatically throughout Oxfordshire and the west midlands, where the announcement has been awaited for many years. It is also exceedingly good news that it is to be three lanes throughout. It will be recognised that my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues have taken infinite care in considering the inspector's report and deciding the right route. As regards any possible time gap in the opening of the M40, will my hon. Friend confirm that, following representations from me and from other hon. Members, there is to be a meeting next week at which we and other representatives of the community can put forward suggestions to ensure that the inconvenience caused by any time gap is kept to an absolute minimum?

Mr. Bottomley: I welcome my hon. Friend's reaction and I know that he speaks for all those in the affected area. We have largely accepted the inspector's recommendations. We did not accept three of the recommended modifications because we were satisfied that their disadvantages—including delay—outweighed their advantages. As my hon. Friend said, he and other colleagues are concerned about the time gap. We are consulting hon. Members and county council members on the measures recommended by consultants to mitigate the effect on the trunk roads by completing the northern section first. I hope to make further announcements later.

Driving Standards

16. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are proposed for improving driving standards.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The biggest improvement would come if everyone drove as carefully and considerately as surveys show that they think they do, and nobody as badly as the same surveys show that they think other drivers do. There are good courses, videos and books available on how to improve techniques. The Institute of Advanced Motorists, for example, has just republished its motorway driving manual, which is full of practical advice.

Mr. Martin: I thank my hon. Friend for his impressive list of measures. In the spirit of his reply, would he agree that if some of those who drive on the roads were as sober as they believed that they were rather than as drunk as they believed others to be, the roads would be much safer and there would be less death and injury on them? Will my hon. Friend welcome, as I do, forthcoming legislation which will make the retaking of driving tests compulsory for those convicted of serious offences?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir. Although we have the best record in Europe—I would argue that it is the best in the world in terms of population—we must still recognise that 5,000 deaths per year are too many. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set a target of cutting deaths and injuries by a third by the year 2000.

In terms of traffic, we have saved about 20 lives per week, and there is still further to go. I hope that all hon. Members will find local ways of ensuring that road users treat seriously the business of driving day by day: 5,000 deaths, 60,000 serious injuries and 300,000 other injuries are far too many.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Magistrates

58. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the recruitment of magistrates.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Anthony Newton): My responsibility for the appointment of magistrates covers the shire county of Lancashire and the districts within the metropolitan counties of Greater Manchester and Merseyside.

Any member of the public may serve as a magistrate. I am advised on the appointment of magistrates by advisory committees within the areas for which I am responsible. When a vacancy occurs, the relevant advisory committee puts forward recommendations to me.

Those who are appointed to a bench would normally expect to serve until their 70th birthday.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that, especially in the Stockport part of my constituency and to a certain extent in the Tameside part, it appears that magistrates are not fairly appointed from all the wards in the local authority areas but tend to come from the more affluent areas? What steps will he take to ensure that there is proper representation on the bench in wards such as Brinnington and north and south Reddish?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will understand that although we are anxious to have a proper geographical, social and occupational spread of magistrates we cannot force people to serve. As I think the hon. Gentleman knows, there has been some difficulty in obtaining enough recommendations from some parts of the area with which he is concerned. I am grateful for his efforts to put forward or encourage recommendations over the years. A substantial number of the suggestions that have come from or through him have led to appointments. If the hon. Gentleman can give us any more help, it will be most welcome.

Mr. Skinner: How many of the magistrates appointed wear little aprons and roll up their trouser legs? What percentage of them are freemasons? Instead of appointing magistrates, why are they not chosen by ballot?

Mr. Newton: I do not know how many of the magistrates in that or any other area for which I am responsible are freemasons. I certainly do not think that they should be ruled out on those grounds.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Clerical Stipends

59. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what deductions are made from clerical stipends to take account of Easter collections; and what estimates have been made of such amounts for the current year.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): Easter offerings are an integral part of the clergy's stipend, the total figure for which is fixed by the diocesan authorities having regard to the recommendations of the central stipends authority. No deductions of stipend are made in consequence of the receipt of Easter offerings, though to the extent that income is received in this form there is relief on the diocesan funding of stipends.

Mr. Greenway: May I remind my right hon. Friend of the happy and splendid tradition in the Church of England according to which members of the congregation could put money on the plate on Easter Sunday as a direct gift for the vicar or rector? Is it not sad that that tradition has now become so muted? What can be done to ensure that vicars receive a present from their parishioners in the old way? How about an Easter egg for the vicar?

Mr. Alison: If the Easter offering went directly to the incumbent, it would be taxable. To that extent, it is better that it should be treated like all other weekly church collections and taken to the diocese, where it avoids tax. I would rather not comment on the subject of eggs for the Easter offering.

No. 1 Millbank

60. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement about the progress of the building work at No. 1 Millbank.

Mr. Alison: Work is progressing well, and the new accommodation for commercial letting is expected to be complete by the beginning of 1990. The commissioners have recently accepted an offer for the tenancy of that accommodation and it is hoped that the Church of England pension board will take up its new accommodation in the Millbank complex in May this year.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my right hon. Friend give further consideration to my previous question about moving Church Commissioners' offices to areas of high unemployment? Will he ask those responsible for security whether No. 1 Millbank would be of use as secure accommodation for Members of Parliament with fears about security?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend will understand that the leaders of the Church of England, whether lay or ordained, clerical or episcopal, need to be relatively close to the centre of state power. It is, after all, an established Church. My hon. Friend might start a systematic programme of questions to see whether we might relocate Parliament and Whitehall, but until he succeeds in that respect we must leave the Church Commissioners where they are.

Mr. Frank Field: Might not the Government take the Church more seriously on the need to rebuild the inner cities if it moved its headquarters to such a site?

Mr. Alison: No. 1 Millbank could be entirely rebuilt if it were possible to evacuate both the pensions board and the Church Commissioners to a location such as Church House, but Church House as at present constructed is not large enough to accommodate the General Synod as well as the pensions board and the Commissioners. For that reason, it would be difficult to find a building into which to decant the present occupants while No. 1 Millbank was reconstructed. That is the basic problem.

St. Leonards, Swithland (Benefices)

61. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, whether the Church Commission has received any proposal for the reorganisation of benefices affecting the parish of St. Leonards, Swithland, in the county of Leicestershire.

Mr. Alison: Yes, Sir. The commissioners have published a draft scheme based on these proposals and, having received representations, are consulting the diocesan bishop.

Mr. Latham: Will my hon. Friend confirm that Swithland rectory in the constituency of my necessarily Trappist hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) was donated to the Church less than 30 years ago so that the incumbent could live there? Given that a thousand ages let alone 30 years are but an instant in the sight of the Almighty, is it not unseemly for the rectory to be alienated so soon against the wishes of the benefactor?

Mr. Alison: This is one of the complications that have arisen as a result of the proposed reorganisation scheme. It will have to be considered actively by the pastoral committee and the board of governors when they consider objections to the scheme.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Meetings

62. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission when the Commission is due to meet next; and what topics will be discussed.

Sir Peter Hordern (The Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): Neither the date nor the agenda for the next meeting has yet been fixed.

Mr. Allen: Will the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission comment on EEC fraud, which is now running at some £6 billion including CAP and other cross-border frauds? Does he feel that the National Audit Office is adequately equipped to meet this particular and growing challenge?

Sir Peter Hordern: Strictly speaking, this is more a matter for the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee but I recognise that this is a most serious matter. In considering the National Audit Office estimates, the Commission has to satisfy itself that the NAO has the capacity to carry out the tasks given to it by Parliament. I understand that the NAO has provided written evidence to

the European Parliament budgetary control committee for a public hearing on preventing and combating fraud in the European Community after 1992, and that the NAO joins in regular meetings with representatives of the national audit bodies of the other Community countries, at which this is one of the matters discussed.

Mr. Gow: Is my hon. Friend aware of the continuing consternation in all parts of the House that he is not permanently on the Treasury Bench? As he is seated below the Gangway, can he arrange to answer questions more frequently in the House?

Sir Peter Hordern: That is not a matter for me.

National Audit Office

63. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission if he will list those public bodies whose accounts are audited by the National Audit Office; and if he will list the audit fees charged in each case.

Sir Peter Hordern: The National Audit Office at present audits some 470 accounts. I will write to my hon. Friend giving him the list that he requires. The Comptroller and Auditor General has informed me that, under section 5 of the National Audit Act, in 1987-88 the National Audit Office charged a fee for the audit of 142 accounts. The total income from fees in that year was £3·8 million.

Mr. Field: I thank my hon. Friend for not reading out the entire list, which would have run the risk of filibustering my supplementary. Accepting that the National Audit Office is entirely independent, could my hon. Friend not arrange with the Comptroller and Auditor General to fix a level of employees, expenditure and audit fee below which the National Audit Office would normally employ a private firm of auditors?

Sir Peter Hordern: I will pass on my hon. Friend's interesting idea to the Comptroller and Auditor General, but an increasing amount of work is carried out by private sector firms on behalf of the National Audit Office. Additional provision is made in the 1989-90 estimate for that purpose.

Nevertheless, the Commission has taken the view that, as Parliament intended that under the National Audit Act the National Audit Office should undertake examination of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which Departments and other public bodies use taxpayers' money entrusted to them, it is often more efficient for the National Audit Office to couple this value-for-money examination with the certification audit of those bodies' accounts.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the hon. Gentleman give general circulation to the information that he has undertaken to supply to his hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) so that all hon. Members may know which bodies are audited by the NAO?

Sir Peter Hordern: I will certainly consider that and pass the request on to the Comptroller and Auditor General as it is a little difficult to list all 470-odd bodies in *Hansard*.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Procedure Committee (Reports)

65. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the President of the Council if he will list the topics covered by those reports of the Procedure Committee which have not been debated by the House.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): All Procedure Committee reports since 1979 have been debated with the exception of the first report of 1984-85, dealing with the printing of oral questions to the Prime Minister, which was the subject of a ruling by Mr. Speaker on 15 April 1985 and implemented with effect from 30 April 1985, and the special report on Government replies to reports from the Committee which was published only last Tuesday.

Mr. Allen: Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that those outstanding matters are considered? Will he also consider something which is not directly within the remit of the Procedure Committee—bringing forward for early discussion the reports on private Member's Bill procedure?

Mr. Wakeham: I will see that a reply is given to the outstanding report, and I will seek to have any further reports that are received debated at the most appropriate time.

Sir John Stokes: May I ask my right hon. Friend a more fundamental question about this whole matter? Is there any means by which we can debate topics which are most important to ordinary people but which are seldom debated here, such as immigration and capital punishment?

Mr. Wakeham: The business of the House is arranged to meet many eventualities. Hon. Members on both sides of the House press subjects on me which they believe to be important. No doubt they have consulted their constituents about those subjects. I do my best to meet as many of their requirements as possible. I very much regret that it is not possible to arrange debates on all the interesting subjects which are proposed, particularly by my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes).

Mr. Sims: Further to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a good deal of dissatisfaction in the House about the way in which we handle private Members' Bills and that a combination of frustration and misunderstanding among our constituents is in danger of bringing parliamentary procedures into disrepute? Is it not important that we have an early opportunity to debate these matters and to consider in detail the specific proposals put forward by the Procedure Committee to try to tackle the problem?

Mr. Wakeham: I believe that the Procedure Committee is now having another look at those proposals. I recognise that there is dissatisfaction in some quarters about the way in which private Members' Bills are handled in the House. With regard to the last report, even the Procedure Committee, while making some suggestions for improvement, recognised that it was not always possible for everyone with a private Member's Bill to get it through the House, even if there was a majority in favour of it.

Mr. Hardy: Will the right hon. Gentleman consider the handling of private Bills which may be highly contentious but which are not amended in Committee? The fact that they are not amended means that the Report stage is avoided entirely and only insubstantive verbal amendments can be taken on Third Reading. That does not make those Bills any less contentious, as we know is the case with one Bill which may be before the House before long. Will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider the present rule with regard to the abandonment of Report stage?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman recognises that any Bill, however contentious, must come before the House and that there must be an opportunity for right hon. and hon. Members to express a view and vote on it, whether or not it is amended. It is a wide question, and one directly relevant to the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure. I have undertaken to arrange a debate on that Committee's report soon after Easter.

Mr. Marlow: What procedure does my right hon. Friend suggest should be used to ensure that the issue of abortion law reform is properly, effectively and perhaps finally addressed? Is he aware that the current procedures are bringing the House into contempt with the public as well as wasting a great deal of private Members' time?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government's view is that that subject is best dealt with by the private Member's Bill procedure. I recognise that Bills in recent years have not been successful. That was due to a number of reasons. It has been suggested to me that the Government should consider the matter and perhaps take steps themselves to deal with it. I have not committed the Government to doing so, but I am considering the suggestions that have been made to me.

Westminster Hall

67. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To as the Lord President of the Council if he will consider taking steps to increase the use of Westminster Hall.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) on 31 October last.

Mr. Banks: That is very helpful. I remind the Lord President that in the 18th century, Westminster Hall was humming with life and vitality. It is sad to see it being so underused. Indeed, it is bordering on the criminal to leave that space in its present state. Will the Lord President consider a number of proposals for bringing life back into Westminster Hall? Shops could be opened there. Has the right hon. Gentleman had an opportunity to study a proposal by the Chairman of the Catering Sub-Committee which I read in a newspaper, that the souvenir kiosk should be moved there and its range of facilities and items for sale extended? Will the Lord President consider that proposal very seriously so that a little more life can be brought back into Westminster Hall?

Mr. Wakeham: It may be helpful to the hon. Gentleman if I make it clear that in my previous reply I pointed out that responsibility for Westminster Hall is vested jointly in the Lord Great Chamberlain, the Lord Chancellor and Mr. Speaker. The principles which govern their decision as to its use require the hall to be used only for parliamentary functions, royal occasions, a ceremony in honour of a head of state, or for events with a clear historical connection with Parliament or with the Great Hall itself. My predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), was of the opinion that the infrequency of the Great Hall's use contributed to its character. I share that view. If the hon. Gentleman has any proposals, I suggest that he puts them to the Chairman of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee.

Mr. Latham: Will my right hon. Friend make it clear that a plaque should shortly be installed in Westminster Hall commemorating the visit of Her Majesty the Queen last year to receive the Addresses of both Houses in regard to the Bill of Rights—an event of great interest to schoolchildren, or at least to some of them, who visit the House?

Mr. Wakeham: I will certainly ensure that that suggestion is considered by those responsible for such matters.

Mr. Alan Williams: The Lord President's comment about infrequency of use has its novelty interest, but that is not a very practical approach to one problem that exists. The right hon. Gentleman has probably never had to wait in the pouring rain with visiting parties of constituents, many of them elderly, who may have travelled several hundred miles and have to wait up to three quarters of an hour before gaining access to the House. Will the right hon. Gentleman look again at early-day motion 133, signed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, requesting that the hall be used for the benefit of constituents who travel long distances to the Houses of Parliament, possibly just once in their lives, and who should be able at least to wait in the dry and to pass through security screens in the dry?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the problem. The point has been considered but there are a number of difficulties, not least in terms of security. In the first instance, this is a matter for the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee.

Televising of Proceedings

68. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he is able to announce the date for the televising of the proceedings of the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No, Sir. This is a matter for the House to decide on the basis of the report of the Select Committee.

Mr. Skinner: Is the right hon. Gentleman telling us that the Budget debate will not be televised tomorrow? The Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his Budget speech last year that that would be the last untelevised Budget debate. Has he got it wrong again? He got the balance of payments deficit wrong—it was to be £4 billion and has reached £14·3 billion. He got interest rates wrong; he got mortgages wrong; he has got nearly every sum in his book wrong. Who is holding up the television job? Is it the Prime Minister?

Mr. Wakeham: If the substance of the hon. Gentleman's complaint against my right hon. Friend the

Chancellor is that he said that the Budget debate would be on television but that it is not to be televised the hon. Gentleman must be short of something to say. I believe that the truth is that he cannot wait to become a television star himself. Perhaps I should remind him that there is a vacancy for the part of Dirty Den in a certain television soap opera.

Skills Training Agency

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement about the future of the Skills Training Agency.

The Skills Training Agency provides training mainly in traditional craft skills through a network of 60 skill centres. Skill centres date back to the first world war, when they were set up to retrain service men for civilian employment. The agency has operated on a trading account basis since 1984. Its predominant source of income has been selling training services to the Manpower Services Commission and now to my Department's Training Agency for the training of unemployed people.

In the last five years the agency has financially broken even only in 1987, and this year it is expected to make a loss of approaching £20 million. At present 20 of the centres are seriously under-utilised. These centres are mostly, although not exclusively, in the south of England, where unemployment has now fallen substantially.

The Government have carefully considered the way forward. We believe that the aim should be to enable the skill centres to become a viable business, carrying out training not just for unemployed people but for employed people under contract with employers. Such employer business is now rapidly expanding, and will expand further.

As I told the House before, I commissioned Deloitte Haskins and Sells in December to advise me on the feasibility of moving the skill centres to the private sector. Deloittes has now reported, and advises that there is a viable core business of skill centres and that there is no reason why the agency should not move to the private sector.

In the meantime, there has been a significant development. I have now been approached by some of the senior staff of the Skills Training Agency who would like to mount a management buy-out. They have taken professional advice, and like Deloittes they believe that a business can be created which has excellent prospects of success. The management buy-out team would wish to develop training for employers as well as for unemployed people. The Government see great attractions in that course. We want the Skills Training Agency to become a viable business that provides good training for both unemployed and employed people and a good career for the staff who work in it. A management buy-out would be a most effective way of ensuring that.

In the light of the approach made to me, I have appointed Deloittes to conduct the necessary preparatory work with a view to offering the agency for sale through a private tender process. That sale will be open to all interested parties, but I intend to give the management buy-out team assistance to make a bid. I attach great importance to conducting the sale in a way that minimises uncertainty for both the agency's staff and its customers.

I will ensure through the contract of sale that all staff who transfer into the private sector are satisfactorily covered by pension arrangements. All other terms and conditions are covered by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, and a new clause to the Employment Bill is being tabled today to ensure that staff are protected on transfer to the private sector by those regulations.

Given the current position of the Skills Training Agency, change is both necessary and desirable. In particular, the agency needs to expand rapidly and training that it provides for employers, as well as continuing to improve the training that it gives for unemployed people. I believe that it is now important to move as quickly as possible to remove the uncertainty. I am certain that the agency has a good future in the private sector. A successful move to the private sector will provide a better career for the staff and a more effective contribution to our national training effort.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that his statement today means that the entire public training and employment service is to be dismembered, and almost his entire Department privatised? With the hiving-off of the public employment service later this year to an independent agency and the privatisation of training for the training and enterprise councils, it is the third and final step in the removal of all employment and training functions to the private sector.

The right hon. Gentleman failed to give the House some of the fundamental facts. What is his estimate of the Skills Training Agency's assets? What guarantee will there be against asset-stripping? I understand that, when Deloittes visited the skills centre at Reading, significantly it examined only the land area and its value. Will he take into account the public cost of redundancies and dole payments in the sale price? What credence can staff put on his assurance today that their terms and conditions will be protected by the transfer of undertakings regulations when he has made clear that he intends to repeal those regulations? Is he aware that staff know nothing about a management buy-out and have not been consulted?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is abundant evidence that the untrammelled free market does not work with training and that the MSC was created precisely because of the failings of the private sector? Is he aware that no single successful economy in Europe is without either a state infrastructure for training or the most tightly controlled requirements on employers to meet given targets? Neither is present in the right hon. Gentleman's statement today. Is he aware that, precisely because private employers grossly neglected training in the past, the latest chamber of commerce survey shows that 65 per cent. of manufacturing companies are limited by skills shortages? Yet the right hon. Gentleman now wants to hand over the training of the nation's work force to the very people who have failed to train their own employees.

The right hon. Gentleman says that privatisation will enable the Skills Training Agency to use commercial practices to seize more opportunities. When we compare the performance of public and private agencies in the employment services, the private sector gives extremely poor value for money. Does the right hon. Gentleman recall his answer on 21 February that agency job clubs that have been hived off spend £396 on average to get an unemployed person into a job, while jobcentre job clubs in the public sector spend only £249—little more than half as much? Is he aware that the hived-off job clubs get only 50 per cent. of their clients into jobs, while the public sector finds jobs for 55 per cent. of its clients?

Is it not clear from what has happened to the job clubs that moving the Skills Training Agency into the private sector will produce a worse service at substantially higher cost? Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that when he privatised the Professional and Executive Register nearly a year ago he said, just as he has said today, that it would unleash greater commercial drive? Does he recall that within six months one fifth of all the premises were closed down? What guarantee can he give that the same will not happen in this case?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the major losers by today's announcement will be the long-term unemployed? The Skills Training Agency currently devotes 80 per cent. of its resources to the unemployed. If it is privatised, that proportion will undoubtedly reduce sharply. Since the numbers of those who have been unemployed for more than three or five years are still increasing, what hope will there be that they will ever get jobs?

The Skills Training Agency broke even in 1987 and it lost money last year only because of ET. It provides quality training up to City and Guilds standard, much higher than ET. If it is privatised it will be forced by commercial market pressures to switch to lower budget, high volume, quick turnover and low-skill schemes. There will be no national perspective on a desperate national problem. It is not only the unemployed who will be the losers; it will be the nation.

Mr. Fowler: I must say that the hon. Gentleman has a long and persistent record of getting all his predictions wrong. He has added to it yet again today. On training and the general points that he makes about the training and enterprise councils, he was condemned only yesterday by that well-known Conservative newspaper, the *Sunday Mirror*. Today, the labour force survey shows that for months he has been trying to fiddle upwards the unemployment figures. So I am not inclined to take too many lectures from the hon. Gentleman.

Let me try to spell it out. The case for action is that the present position is not sustainable. One third of the skill centres are seriously under-utilised. They are making a loss approaching £20 million a year on a turnover of £55 million a year. They have made a loss in all but one of the last five years. Perhaps even the hon. Gentleman might concede that ET was introduced only last September. The Public Accounts Committee has made it clear that there is no case for subsidising the Skills Training Agency and that subsidies must stop. I agree with that. I and the Government want to provide skill centres that give good training for both employed and unemployed people. I hope that that will be the result of the change.

There is no merit in having a whole range of half-empty skill centres. That is not doing anything for anyone. We are selling a training business, and what I am interested in are bids from people who want to run a training business. The management buy-out team wants that, and I know of others.

On property, we shall get an up-to-date assessment of the value of every property before the sale, and the Government will share in any development gains in the years immediately after the sale. We shall make provision for that.

As to the management buy-out, it is led by Mr. Stuart Bishell, the deputy chief executive of the Skills Training Agency. The team sees an exciting future for the business and we shall provide financial assistance for the professional advice that it has.

The hon. Gentleman talked about PER. At the moment something like 150 of the 250 staff seconded to it remain with PER. What I remember about management buy-outs is the National Freight Corporation, which was also opposed entirely by the Opposition team, not least by the shadow Leader of the House, and which turned out to be an enormous success, acknowledged even on the Opposition side. The Government should wait before he condemns.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I and many of my hon. Friends welcome very much the proposed change in the status of the Skills Training Agency? There is a crying need in the south-east in particular for a level of training and a sophisticated approach to it far in advance of anything that the Skills Training Agency has been able to provide. In private hands there will be a real opportunity to provide exactly the kind of training for which employers in our area are crying out.

Mr. Fowler: I am sure that what my hon. Friend says is absolutely right. What is crucial is that the Skills Training Agency develops training not just for unemployed people —although, clearly, that is very important—but for people who are in employment. That is not just a very good market but an area that will expand, and I believe that, operating in the private sector, the Skills Training Agency can serve that end.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is the Secretary of State aware that when the Select Committee inquired into the Skills Training Agency in 1984 we were assured by his predecessor that it was necessary, in the public interest, to keep a national network of skill centres "to act as a pace setter"—those are his words—that this network would be under the control of the Department, and that it was of the smallest viable size? Can he explain why he has gone back on that? He said that the STA broke even in 1987 but that it will lose £20 million this year. Is he aware that the reason for that—as I discovered when I visited my local skill centre a fortnight ago—is that, whereas previously it was receiving £150 a week for its training programme, it gets only £30 a week under the new ET programme? That is why it has gone into the red.

What guarantees can the Secretary of State give concerning the future size of the national network? Can he guarantee that, under the new dispensation, it will remain at its present size? If that does not happen, he will have destroyed a valuable training asset.

Mr. Fowler: Clearly, I cannot give a guarantee about the size before I have had offers and the sale process has begun. Obviously, what I would like to do is preserve as many skill centres as possible to provide the kind of training network that the hon. Gentleman wants. If the scheme were to remain in the public sector, there would be a large-scale programme of closures throughout the country. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman must accept that that is the alternative.

Again I have to point out that we are talking about losses that have occurred not just in the last 12 months but over the last five years. The hon. Gentleman referred to 1987. With his knowledge, he will realise that, although the

[Mr. Fowler]

Skills Training Agency did break even in one year, it was a very marginal thing. In the other four of the five years, it made losses.

The policy was set out very clearly in the White Paper that I published before Christmas. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman, as Chairman of the Select Committee, has interviewed me about that. We want good training for both unemployed and employed people. I want to see the skill centres operating more effectively in the private sector, and I certainly hope that training will continue in inner cities and in other areas of that kind. I am convinced that this is the best prospect for the agency.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): My right hon. Friend ought not to be discouraged by the entirely predictable, negative and old-fashioned attitude of the Opposition to what, after all, is very good news. If the management of this agency, which is losing money at present, is prepared to risk its own money to bring it up to date and give it a really good future, that is something that should be welcomed with great enthusiasm. A commercial attitude is much more likely to lead to the provision of proper skills training for the future.

Mr. Fowler: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. The fact of the matter is that Opposition Members—at least those on the Front Bench—have opposed every measure of this kind. It is significant that, once operations have been moved to the private sector, one hears very little about Opposition Members wanting those operations to be returned to the public sector. I think that that will be the situation here. What we want is an effective private sector operation, using marketing and other commercial skills, and, above all, providing training for both unemployed and employed people.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I think we have now moved into the mad Maoist phase of this Government, who are smashing up our national institutions. Because of their mad belief in the power of market forces, they are doing enormous damage. Does not the Secretary of State understand that training, like education, does not make a profit but is an investment for individuals, for the country and for the economy?

The reason the skills centre network has been whittled back and, as the Secretary of State said, is losing money is that he has reduced expenditure on training, and our economy is showing the resulting skills shortages.

It is notable that the Secretary of State said that there is a "viable core" in our training network. That implies major closures and selling off land to make a profit for the few who might go along with the privatisation. Will the Secretary of State give me an absolute guarantee that the Handsworth skills centre will remain open, as it has done valuable work in an area of massive unemployment, despite the constant cuts imposed by the Government?

Mr. Fowler: I repeat what I said but, as it happens, the Handsworth centre is one of those that is generally reckoned to be part of the core business that would exist in the private sector. That is recognised by both Deloittes and the management buy-out team.

The hon. Lady may go on about the cause of all this but one of the great causes is that when unemployment decreases there is a reduction in the demand for training for unemployed people. I should have thought that the hon. Lady would welcome the fact that unemployment has decreased.

The pity has been that we have not been able to develop training for employed people and for employers in the way that should have happened. There is no merit in having half-empty skill centres. I remind the House that the all-party Public Accounts Committee—*[Interruption.]*—this was before the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) was a Member of the House—said that there was absolutely no case for subsidies in this sphere. The present financial position of the Skills Training Agency is a loss of about £20 million on a turnover of £55 million. That cannot be justified. I should like to see a future for the agency and I believe that that will be ensured in the private sector. The proposals of the management buy-out team are an encouraging step forward.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridge, South-East): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there will be a large welcome for this move from everybody who has had any real involvement in training at the coal face, and that there is a great deal of difference between the funding of training and its delivery? Does he also accept that the public sector does not have a monopoly in quality training because the private sector has already demonstrated that it can produce quality training for a large range of skills and at all levels of requirement?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Over the past four or five years, the amount and quality of training that has been carried out by the best employers in this country has been very good. As I said on Friday, at the launch of the training and enterprise councils, the aim must now be to bring the level of the rest up to the level of the best and, in the private sector, the Skills Training Agency will be able to help in that respect.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Notwithstanding the continuing and inadequate levels of training and skills training in this country, if the Secretary of State is to withdraw his Department from this aspect of what should be its legitimate activity, does he accept that a management buy-out seems the least offensive of all the possible options? That being the case, will he give some more information about the type of support that will be provided—to which he alluded in his statement—for those preparing and bringing forward such a management buy-out, especially if he is to adjudicate—presumably this is the case—on the eventual outcome of that process?

Will the Secretary of State note that this country's training policy continues to lag woefully behind those of our major industrial competitors, such as Europe, North America and Japan, in that for over a generation we as a country have not geared the potential of young people coming on to the labour market to the practicalities of the industrial market at home and the export market abroad? If the Government continue to sell off, to privatise and to withdraw from their role, how will we ever overcome that inbuilt disadvantage in our system?

Mr. Fowler: That is the whole point and reason for setting up the training and enterprise councils, which I announced at the end of last week. The purpose of this change is to improve training standards not only for young people—although that is important—but to help people who have been in employment for 10 or 20 years to become

qualified and remain qualified. That is the major, No. 1, aim of the training and enterprise councils. The people concerned in the management buy-out understand and know the business, and to that extent they are in a position to develop it. They are led by the deputy chief executive and two senior colleagues of the Skills Training Agency, who will now hold further talks in the agency, which until now have been confidential. We shall be giving financial assistance to help with professional advice. I believe that they have a contribution to make.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that skill centres can be sold off individually, because no doubt one or two training companies will wish to bid for some of their local skill centres? Will he confirm that of 3,000 staff, 1,600 are administrators? Is not this top-heavy structure the clearest possible evidence that no business should be run by politicians or bureaucrats and that privatisation is urgently needed?

Mr. Fowler: The Skills Training Agency has about 3,000 staff—1,600 instructors, 400 industrial staff and about 1,000 administrative staff. We expect and hope to see a core business with a range of skill centres within it, but that does not mean that offers cannot be made for individual centres. I believe that this is the best way forward for the Skills Training Agency. No change is not an option, as anyone who has objectively considered the matter must accept.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Is not skill training in Britain a complete shambles? First, the Government abolished almost all the industrial training boards. A short time afterwards, skill centres were closed. Subsequently, the Employment Select Committee held an inquiry and found that skill centres were making a profit. The right hon. Gentleman justifies the Government's decision by saying that they are making a loss, but is it not a fact that places at skill centres have not been taken up because industrialists have not played their part in filling them? Is it not a fact that we have the worst record in Europe, and probably the developed world, for skill shortages? When will the Government stop pampering industrialists and introduce one or two penalties to ensure that places are filled and skill training offered?

Mr. Fowler: As far as I understood the hon. Gentleman, he is advocating directing industrialists to use skill training centres, which is a curious policy. I entirely agree that there is a difference between that and direction, which is what the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) require. I should like the Skills Training Agency to provide good training for employers and people in employment, but all too often it does not do so. It has not developed its business quickly or rapidly enough. I should like it to achieve that aim, and if it does so it will attract business from employers, who certainly understand the point and need for further training.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is probable that the beneficiaries of this change will be the unemployed? If, through efficiency and a more commercial approach, it leads to resources being released, and if the skill centres can improve the range and relevance of the courses that they offer, it will be to their advantage. I have a particular interest as president of Sussex Training (West), the local agency for the youth training scheme, and Downs Enterprise Agency Ltd. Is my right hon. Friend concerned about the future role of the training agencies in their new relationship with the management bought-out Skills Training Agency? The White Paper seems to suggest that the Skills Training Agency will almost take over the raison d'être of some of the training agencies, many of which, as I am sure my right hon. Friend agrees, are doing an excellent job in training young people and providing them with permanent employment.

Mr. Fowler: We do not want existing organisations which are doing a good job to be taken over. We do not, for example, want the training and enterprise councils to take over organisations in the area and to push them to one side. That is not the purpose. The purpose of the training and enterprise councils is to act as a focus for training in the local area and to enable more training to take place, which is exactly what my right hon. and hon. Friends and Opposition Members have been asking for. I hope that I have assured my hon. Friend. I agree that, the better the training centres, the better the service will be for unemployed people.

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): Does the Secretary of State accept that his bellicose remarks to my hon. Friends the Members for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) show that, in spite of the numerous statements he has made in the House and outside, he is hiding the Government's total failure on engineering and other training? Does he not accept that the nation is on the point of collapse in employment training? He should take note of what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackley—that direction is the only way to obtain results with bad employers. One cannot rely on good will, so one must use compulsion. What reason does the Secretary of State have to believe that the people involved in the management buy-out will be skilled enough to succeed when it seems that up to now they have failed as much as the Secretary of State has failed?

Mr. Fowler: I have taken the trouble to see the people who are leading the management buy-out team. I leave others to judge, but I regard Mr. Bishell, for example, as an outstanding leader in that organisation. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's statement about the nation being on the verge of collapse. However, he is at least frank in saying that he wants to see employers being compelled and directed to use skill training centres. I do not believe that such a position would work and it is not a way of providing training. One of this Government's greatest achievements is that, over the past 18 months, unemployment has come down by almost 1 million and the figures are now established, to the eternal discredit of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher).

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): I hope that my right hon. Friend will encourage the management buy-out. Does he agree that the evidence of the National Freight Corporation shows any doubters just how advantageous and successful a management buy-out can be in the public sector for employees and for clients? May I urge him to go a little easier on the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who has an uncomfortable week ahead of him eating all the words in the labour force survey?

Mr. Fowler: I take my hon. Friend's point. Tomorrow, we have Employment Questions, in which the hon. Gentleman will doubtless seek to defend his position on the labour force survey. My hon. Friend was right about the National Freight Corporation. When I came to the House almost 10 years ago to announce a management buy-out, it was opposed loudly and by no one more than the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson).

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): The Secretary of State has said that once.

Mr. Fowler: A good line is worth repeating. Few people, even Opposition Members, would now advocate that the National Freight Corporation should go back to the public sector.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What fees were paid to Deloitte for past work? What fees are to be paid for future work? What did Deloitte do in Scotland and the north of England? What were the qualifications of the Deloitte staff? What experience did they have? What was said about land values—which are considerable—going not to the Treasury, but to the privatised company? Who put the case for the long-term unemployed? Did Deloitte discuss the management buy-out statement with Stuart Bishell and if so, what was said? What is the connection of Deloitte with a prominent Conservative Member of Parliament? How much did Deloitte contribute to Conservative party funds?

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it reasonable for my right hon. Friend to be expected to memorise six or seven questions?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot comment on whether it is reasonable to memorise so many questions.

Mr. Fowler: Whether it is reasonable or not, Mr. Speaker, I do not have all the information that the hon. Gentleman requires. I shall let him know about the fees given to Deloitte. Deloitte was employed on the basis of its acknowledged expertise in the area. It was employed to give advice to me on the feasibility of privatising——

Mr. Dalyell: How much were the fees?

Mr. Fowler: If the hon. Gentleman listens, he may get some answers before asking more questions.

Deloitte was employed to give advice on the feasibility of privatising the organisation. On property, it is a direct recommendation of Deloitte, which we shall follow, to obtain an up-to-date assessment of the value of every property before the sale takes place. That was one of the crucial provisions. On the interview for the management buy-out, Deloitte talked to the management buy-out team. Deloitte talked about the feasibility of the buy-out, which was one of the factors taken into account.

Mr. Dalyell: How much were the fees?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have called the hon. Gentleman once. I call Mr. Colin Shepherd.

Mr. Dalyell: This is an absolute racket. I asked a direct question.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford) *rose*——

Mr. Dalyell: How much was paid?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must contain himself.

Mr. Dalyell: No.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. I know that he is upset about not having all his questions answered, but that is not a matter for me.

Mr. Shepherd: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the success of private sector training companies, in areas where there is no skill centre, in achieving an enhanced level of skill capabilities across the spectrum means that it does not matter who owns the skill centres provided they deliver the goods? Is it not the case that the rigid Civil Service structure of the skill centres makes it impossible to recruit skilled instructors in a highly competitive environment, such as electronics, so they are not delivering the goods?

Mr. Fowler: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. I must say first to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that we shall try to obtain the figure for him. I do not have the figure now. If we can obtain the figure before I sit down, I shall give it to him here. Otherwise I shall write to him.

My hon. Friend is correct on what he said about the training provision. It does not matter which sector the training organisation is in. In this case a private sector organisation can provide better training for employed people and facilitate training by employers.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): After 10 years of power and a series of major changes in employment training provision, the Secretary of State must answer many more questions than he has attempted to answer this afternoon. Will he respond to the one question that should be dominant? Is employment training in this country today superior to, as good as or worse than that in all competing countries?

Mr. Fowler: No, not all competing countries. The training and enterprise councils are intended to improve training standards. Not just in the past 10 years, but in the 10 years before that—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Certainly, in the 10 years before that we were behind Germany, Japan and the United States in training employed people. We now seek to improve our standards and, as I have suggested, the way to do that is to set up the training and enterprise councils, which will engage the attention and enthusiasm of employers. A good feature of the training and enterprise councils proposal is that employers are responding to it. They want to take part in the councils in the interests of improving training in this country.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if the Opposition had read his employment White Paper "Employment for the 1990s", they would not have reacted with such surprise to his welcome announcement today? Will he confirm that he will do all in his power to maintain the skill centres in the north-west of England and that in their new privatised role they will be able to react more flexibly to the shortage of skills in industries such as electronics? Will he confirm that that will be of great value to industry in the north-west?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is right on both points. We set out the policy in the White Paper, which was published before Christmas; the hon. Member for Oldham, West

responded to that point. The skill training centres in the north and in Scotland and Wales are among the strongest in the network.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Leicestershire business men—business men in Hinckley in my constituency in particular—with whom I discussed the proposal on Friday will welcome the transfer to the private sector? We have serious skills shortages in Hinkley, and business men believe that the transfer will provide a more flexible response to training need, which is lacking at present, and that it will put an end to ridiculous excess capacity in training establishments.

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is right. Many people throughout the country—including many of the staff inside the Skills Training Agency—will welcome the changes. No change is simply not an option for the agency. The present proposals give the prospect of good careers for the staff and better training for the public.

Mr. Meacher: Is it not an extraordinary and reprehensible omission that the Secretary of State cannot provide figures for the fees to be paid to Deloitte, given that huge rake-offs to City accountants have been such a prominent feature of all previous privatisations? Is not the real reason why the Secretary of State is promoting a management buy-out that he knows that no one else will tender for the Skills Training Agency while it is encumbered with ET? Is he aware that it is the 31 per cent. shortfall in ET placements in skill centres that has caused under-utilisation and a deficit in this financial year, compared with a £200,000 operating surplus the previous year? Is it not his intention to bribe the management buy-out team with the offer of asset-stripping and the selling-off of valuable sites in the south-east in return for their continuing to patronise his increasingly discredited ET programme.

Mr. Fowler: That is even more ridiculous than the hon. Gentleman's previous statements; he is getting hysterical. As I told the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I shall provide the figure. I do not have it with me. The hon. Member for Oldham, West did not even raise this question in his first lengthy intervention.

Other people are interested in tendering. That is why we are making it a general offer for sale. In any case, the loss to which the hon. Gentleman refers has not suddenly appeared in the past 12 months; it has been taking place for the past four or five years.

Birds Eye Factory, Kirkby

4.24 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the closure of the Birds Eye factory in Kirkby."

Last Friday, the 1,000 workers at the Birds Eye factory received news which, for people in Kirkby and in Merseyside in general, came as a cruel kick in the teeth. At about 10 am they were told that the factory is to close, with the loss of all 1,000 jobs. Job losses are always a cause for concern. But in Knowsley—arguably one of the most deprived areas in the United Kingdom—the job losses are nothing short of a disaster.

Over the past 30 years, the people of Kirkby have given a great deal of loyalty to the Birds Eye company. Even now, it is not uncommon for two generations of a family—man or wife and son or daughter—to work together at the factory. Moreover, at a time when the country faces a crisis in manufacturing, the closure represents the loss of real jobs producing goods which, for the most part, have a market. The harsh and sad reality is, such is the scale of unemployment in the area, that, if the proposals are implemented, many of the Birds Eye workers will never work again.

A further cruel and callous twist was added to the drama on Friday. By an unhappy coincidence, the Prime Minister was visiting Liverpool on that day and, as I understand it, purely on the basis of a Birds Eye-Walls press handout, chose to condemn the workers. That is her prerogative, although it would have been much fairer had she first checked the facts.

If the House is representative of the country, and if we are sensitive to the feelings of men and women in these awful circumstances, we must find time to debate the matter. My constituents will be bitterly disappointed if we do not.

The whole community is behind the Birds Eye workers and their trade unions in the struggle to keep these much-needed jobs. We do not accept the inevitability of the closure and I urge right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House to support the Birds Eye workers and to help them to keep the jobs in Kirkby.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the closure of the Birds Eye factory at Kirkby with a loss of 1,000 jobs."

I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said. As he knows, my sole duty is considering his application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for this evening or for tomorrow. I regret that the matter that he has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House, although he may have an opportunity to raise the matter later today.

Points of Order

4.30 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During your Speakership, you have always been concerned with the proper treatment of the House. I put it to you that it is extraordinary that a senior Secretary of State should come here to make a prepared statement, with the support of three junior Ministers and with eight civil servants in the Box, without bringing the information that we seek. He was asked a very direct question about the cost of the report on which the whole policy seems to be based—the Deloitte report—but no figure has been forthcoming. Is it not most extraordinary that the Secretary of State, who should be prepared in such matters, cannot answer an obvious, factual question?

Furthermore, a great deal of money is involved, as some extremely expensive properties are at stake. Without assuming that there is corruption, the House of Commons is at least entitled to ask questions, as large sums are at stake and as it is not at all clear whether benefit will accrue to the Treasury or to some private interest after privatisation.

Clearly, if everything is above board——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I listened with concern to what the hon. Gentleman said, but ministerial answers to questions are not among my many responsibilities. The hon. Gentleman must pursue the matter by other methods, and may even have other opportunities to do so today on the Adjournment motion.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): Perhaps I can help the House. As in all these matters, which company was to give advice was a matter of open competition. We do not just choose one company, we have open competition between several. Deloitte was chosen. I am advised that £128,000 in fees has been paid to it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a matter relating to the security of the House, for which the Leader of the House has said that you have some responsibilities. It relates to the instructions that were given last weekend to some Members of the House of Commons during a particularly difficult period. I raise the matter as a member of the Select Committee on Members' Interests.

At the weekend we read in the newspaper that the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) had given a pass to a Miss Pamella Bordes. I shall clarify the position. The hon. Member for Dover never did allocate a pass to that young lady. I have checked it in the records. The pass was allocated by the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham). When he was informed that the pass was being allocated to Miss Bordes, his secretary wrote to the Clerk to the Members' Interests Select Committee pointing our that that person was not in the employ of the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West. In other words, she was not employed by him, yet she had applied in his name for a pass.

The Clerk to the Select Committee then wrote to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West and told him that, if Miss Bordes did not work for him, he could write to the Serjeant at Arms and give an instruction that the pass be not allocated. That letter was not sent, and the pass is currently in the name of the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West.

Passes cannot be handed around the Commons like confetti. We are dealing with matters of security in the House of Commons. Will you carry out a full inquiry into the affair to establish on what basis that pass has been allocated?

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to comment on individual cases. Matters relating to passes to hon. Members should be raised in the first instance with the Services Committee.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 6570/88 on single member private limited companies be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents. —*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Adjournment (Easter and Monday 1 May)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House at its rising on Thursday 23rd March, do adjourn until Tuesday 4th April and at its rising on Friday 28th April, do adjourn till Tuesday 2nd May.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

4.22 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): By tradition, the debate on the Easter Adjournment——

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is extremely unusual, but I wonder whether it is in order for the debate to be opened by an Opposition Front Bench spokesman. I thought that it was supposed to be a Back-Bench occasion.

Mr. Speaker: It is unusual, but it is in order.

Mr. Dobson: By tradition, the debate—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) would keep quiet, I could get on more quickly.

By tradition, the debate on the Easter Adjournment allows hon. Members—all hon. Members—to raise issues which we believe should be dealt with before the Easter recess, and I propose to do just that. I wish to refer to the Government's treatment of two very different groups of senior citizens. One group is badly off, and the other group is well off. I need hardly add that the Government propose to ignore the badly-off group and to make the well-off group even better off. The first of the two groups are war widows whose husbands' service in the forces ended before 1973. We understand that they are to get nothing from tomorrow's Budget. The other group are well-off pensioners who, we understand, are to get tax concessions in tomorrow's Budget to subsidise their private health insurance premiums.

Let us consider first the plight of the pre-1973 war widows. Most of them lost their husbands in the second world war or as a consequence of injuries received in that war. They have been shabbily treated by successive Governments. Many had a particularly hard time trying to bring up their children and are quite worn out with the effort of trying to scrape a living.

From 1 April 1973, changes in the armed forces pension scheme made much more generous provisions for widows of members of the forces, but that scheme did not include widows whose husbands were killed in action or whose service in the forces ended before that date. Today, no fewer than 57,000 war widows are not covered by the 1973 scheme. They still look to this House to redress their outstanding grievances. In particular, they seek parity of treatment with widows who are provided for under the 1973 scheme.

The Government have estimated that it would cost about £200 million to pay the pre-1973 widows the same as the post-1973 widows. But the British Legion and the British war widows are not even asking for all that extra sum to be found immediately. They point out that the widows are growing older all the time and more and more of them are dying. They calculate that the Government are saving up to £20 million per year on pensions which they no longer have to pay out, so they have asked that the money saved on pensions no longer paid out to widows who have died should be shared out between the survivors. That would give an extra £6 or £7 per week to each pre-1973 widow.

Another more generous alternative has also been suggested. It, too, would not cost the full £200 million. Under the 1973 scheme, a widow whose husband dies of causes attributable to his service gets £25 per week more than one whose husband dies of natural causes. So the Government have a ready-made way to calculate how to pay pre-1973 widows equal compensation for the death of their husbands on active service or from causes attributable to that service. They could give them that extra £25 per week each. It is estimated that to pay the additional £25 per week to all pre-1973 war widows would cost the Ministry of Defence about £70 million—not a great deal in these days of multi-billion pound Budget surpluses. The war widows expect some action to be taken.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I endorse my hon. Friend's remarks. Is he aware of the correspondence of 5 January 1983 from the Prime Minister's office? Before he concludes his remarks, will he make sure that that correspondence is quoted?

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend is obviously closely following my logic. I was about to mention that very point.

The war widows were encouraged in their expectation that some action would be taken by the Prime Minister when she was Leader of the Opposition. On 13 October 1975, a letter sent on her behalf from her office stated:

"Specifically relating to war widows, we promised in our October 1974 Manifesto that we would remove the distinction concerning whether or not the husband had been in service before or after 31st March 1973."

In fact, the Tory election manifesto of October 1974 had promised no such thing, but that mistake was never corrected and, in my view, the letter committed the right hon. Lady to removing the distinction between the two categories of widows.

In case any Conservative Members wish to cavil about basing the Prime Minister's commitment on that letter, a further letter was sent on 5 January 1978—not 1983 as some hon. Members believe—from the office of the Leader of the Opposition, now the Prime Minister, which made a clear promise to the pre-1973 war widows. It reads:

"However, I quite accept that the present situation is unsatisfactory and Mrs. Thatcher has agreed that it is now our wish to establish as rapidly as economic circumstances permit, a scheme whereby the widows of all servicemen killed in action (or dying from causes attributable to active service) would receive a pension similar to that now awarded to widows of servicemen currently in the Armed Forces".

Clearly the time has come for the Prime Minister to honour her promise. She cannot argue that economic circumstances do not permit the Government to find the money because she constantly boasts how prosperous the country is these days.

We have been told that tomorrow the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposes to use some of his Budget surplus to pay off the national debt. Surely he should first pay off our national debt to the war widows. There is no group to whom our nation owes a greater debt. But for the sacrifices of their menfolk and their comrades in arms, we should have lost all the freedoms that we now enjoy. I am sure that most people believe that the Chancellor should pay that debt of honour to the war widows before he starts paying off the national debt.

There is, of course, another priority group of older people whom the Prime Minister has insisted must be helped before the war widows. The Prime Minister has forced the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Health

[Mr. Dobson]

to propose that people over 60 who buy private health insurance should have income tax relief. Like most of the changes proposed by the present Chancellor, that concession would benefit almost exclusively the well-off. Figures from the general household survey show that only 4 per cent. of people over 65 years old have any form of private medical insurance cover. However, 27 per cent. of retired professional people and 12 per cent. of retired employers and managers have such cover. At the other end of the scale, only 1 per cent. of skilled and semi-skilled pensioners are covered by private medical insurance and, if the official statistics are to be believed, no unskilled manual worker pensioners at all are covered by any private medical insurance scheme.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Was my hon. Friend also about to point out that people who have such cover find it astonishingly inadequate as they get older because schemes which have taken their money for 40 years refuse to cover them when they get to a certain age and for certain clear and easily defined groups of illnesses?

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend makes a valid point, to which I was about to come.

As the figures show, only well-off pensioners have the private medical insurance cover to trigger off the tax concession. It is no use the Government arguing that the concession will mean that poorer people, who currently have private medical cover at work, will be able to carry on with such cover when they retire because of the tax concessions. The fact is that in the next youngest age group —the 45 to 64 year-olds—only 3 per cent. of skilled manual workers, 2 per cent. of semi-skilled and 1 per cent. of unskilled manual workers have private medical insurance cover to carry over.

The proposed tax relief is estimated to cost more than £200 million and it is designed to put money into the pockets and handbags of the better off. It will also add in its small way to the north-south divide and to the overheating of the economy in the south-east. Although the national average of people covered by private medical insurance at the time of the last national household survey was 8 per cent., that national average masked enormous regional variations, ranging from just 3 per cent. of the population covered in the north, 4 per cent. in Wales and 5 per cent. in Scotland and Yorkshire to 10 per cent. in what the statisticians call the outer south-east, 12 per cent. in Greater London and no fewer than 17 per cent. in the outer metropolitan ring around London. It is therefore the prosperous south-east that will predominantly benefit from the tax concession.

During the general election the Prime Minister justified her use of private medical treatment on the grounds that she was spending her own money in her own way. Now, as a pensioner, she is demanding a subsidy from other taxpayers to go with it. In some cases that subsidy will exceed the average sum spent by the National Health Service on hospital services for each pensioner. Therefore, there will be no saving to the National Health Service even if those privately insured pensioners were to obtain all their medical treatment privately. However, they will not.

More than half of the people of all ages who have private medical insurance obtain in-patient hospital treatment from the NHS when they fall ill rather than from some of the dodgy private hospitals on offer. As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said, when it comes to the pensioners, the private health insurers specifically exclude most of the pre-existing medical and chronic conditions from which pensioners suffer—such as arthritis, senile dementia or loss of mobility—and 60 per cent. of people aged between 65 and 74 have such a long-standing illness. That figure rises to nearly 70 per cent. for people aged 75 or over.

The tax relief will reduce the funding available to the NHS while doing little or nothing to relieve the demands that the beneficiaries will make upon the NHS. Moreover, we understand that the tax relief will be available not just to the old people themselves but to relatives, such as sons or daughters, who pay more tax but wish to contribute to private medical cover for their parents. Under this Government, the motto is not so much "Honour thy father and thy mother" as "Turn thy father and thy mother into a tax break".

If the Government want to give priority in the Budget to the health needs of the elderly, the answer is not to give tax relief on medical insurance premiums for the well off. The priority should be to provide funds to cut NHS waiting lists for all elderly patients, to increase investment in district nursing, health visiting, chiropody and physiotherapy and to devote more attention to chronic illnesses.

On its own admission, the private sector offers no help in the area of chronic sickness. The latest Private Patients Plan brochure targeted on the elderly specifies what treatment is covered. It defines treatment as

"A surgical or medical procedure, the purpose of which is to cure a Medical Condition and not to alleviate long term illness".

If anyone has a long-term illness, there is no point in looking to the private sector for help. Not to be outdone by PPP, a BUPA representative recently said that chronic illness was

"not a suitable subject for insurance. You've got to find another way of tackling it".

Only the public purse will find the money to tackle that problem for all our pensioners. Tomorrow, however, the public purse is to be used not to help all pensioners, but to single out for special treatment an already privileged group.

That brings me back to the other group of pensioners whom I mentioned earlier—the war widows. After the second world war in which most of their husbands served, this country established a National Health Service on the basis that the best health services should be available to all and that money should no longer be the passport to better or quicker treatment. The Government have no intention of finding the £200 million required to do justice to the war widows. Worse still, adding insult to injury, they propose to spend at least that amount to help an already privileged group of pensioners to receive quicker treatment than the war widows who cannot afford private health care.

Finally, a Private Patients Plan advertisement addressed to pensioners reads:

"Today the dice seem loaded against older people when they need hospital treatment . . . private medical insurance is not generally available to them and the alternative . . . the National Health Service . . . already has around 800,000 people on its waiting list. And more than half these people are over the age of 55.

This could mean six months or more waiting for an operation. Don't risk it . . . apply for membership"

of PPP.

"Like most people you will probably be quite willing to be treated under the NHS but because of the heavy demand on its services this may not be possible unless you wait months . . . even years in some cases.

With Retirement Health Plan you can get the hospital treatment you need . . . when you need it. Here's how it works!"

That is indeed how it works in Thatcher's Britain—no £200 million to redeem our debt to war widows, but £200 million to help the healthier, wealthier pensioners to jump the queue for hospital treatment in ront of those widows.

4.39 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I wish to postpone the Adjournment of this House for the Easter and May recesses until the Central Electricity Generating Board gives a categorical undertaking not to import any more Russian coal now or in the future.

Last week's disclosure that 25,000 tonnes of coal had recently been imported to two power stations in Nottinghamshire shows, I believe, a commercial misjudgment and an insult to the miners there, whom, lest we forget, were the very people who kept up the supply of coal to the CEGB during the miners' dispute in 1984-85.

The reason given by the monopoly industry for the importation of that coal was that it was for a test burn, which sounds dubious when we consider that the stations in question, Staythorpe near Newark and High Marnham, are two of the oldest in the Trent valley. I believe that the purpose of the exercise was to see whether the CEGB could mount an importation of Russian coal without it being discovered.

That Russian coal was mined at Donets, south of Moscow, carted a thousand miles across Russia to a Baltic port, and shipped in two Russian ships to the Humber ports. It was then transported through the country lanes by 40-tonne juggernauts to the power stations at a cost of approximately £40 per tonne.

If that coal was cheaper than British coal, it could be argued that it was a good buy. However, the CEGB could have bought the same consignment from Nottinghamshire collieries situated seven miles from the respective power stations at a marginal cost of £30 per tonne.

During the past month in Nottinghamshire 250,000 tonnes of coal has been stocked at a cost of £4 per tonne. The House will appreciate the stupidity of the board's actions—25,000 tonnes of coal at an extra cost of £10 per tonne is equivalent to £250,000, a cost which, once again, the poor consumer will have to foot. A small price, one might say, to insult the people of Nottinghamshire. Nevertheless, this folly has serious implications for the future of British Coal.

British Coal cannot mothball deep mines and a sudden surge of imports would lead to yet another round of colliery closures—collieries which could be needed in the mid-1990s, and which could be made viable.

The CEGB may find it amusing to play the international coal market for short-term gain but to force the closure of Nottinghamshire pits and to reduce the home supply leaves the British consumer at the mercy of the international coal barons. Do we really want the lights in this Chamber to be dependent on the vagaries of such overseas supplies? This game of poker which the CEGB is playing with British Coal over price and future supplies has already had its effect in Nottinghamshire. Exactly one month ago today British Coal announced 2,000 job losses and one colliery closure. That, after productivity has risen by 75 per cent., a record unmatched by any other industry in the United Kingdom, and with coal prices to the power stations down 25 per cent. in real terms during the past three years.

What more do the people from the CEGB want from the Nottinghamshire miners—blood? They certainly had plenty of that in the past. When the miners were going through the picket lines and were being called scabs they considered it a compliment, but the CEGB has now stuck its knife straight between their shoulderblades.

What British Coal can offer the CEGB, which no other coal supplier will contemplate, is long-term contracts at known prices. Security of supply gives stability to consumers. Gambling with this country's future energy needs, endangering this country's prosperity and inflicting an insult beyond measure on the Nottinghamshire miners is for empty heads. The empty heads at the CEGB who have caused that must go. I sincerely hope the chairman of the CEGB, Lord Marshall, will make amends and offer an apology to the Nottinghamshire miners.

4.44 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I want to raise another matter about a local colliery, this time in Derbyshire—Arkwright colliery which was closed in early 1988. After making profits for many years British Coal finally put the lid on, just as it is putting the lid on the Nottinghamshire pits now, despite the fact that they were used as doormats during the strike.

On November 9 1988 there was an escape of methane gas and almost all the tiny village of Arkwright was affected—56 houses were emptied, as a result of which the local authorities had to be called in to deal with the matter. In 1988 the Coal Board came along and filled the drift with concrete where it had to apply the closure and left it. That is typical of British Coal and that has been its usual attitude over pit closures.

The Tupton seam of the Arkwright colliery drift mine had been subject to methane gas problems for some considerable time, so much so that one of the miners at Arkwright colliery, who is listening to this debate, raised the matter with the local authority and said that British Coal should be warned, having sealed off the drift, that there might be a chance of methane escaping into the nearby village, a quarter of a mile away.

British Coal ignored the letter from the local north-east Derbyshire district council and said that everything had been effectively sealed and told the council not to worry because everything was all right.

British Coal replied to the council on 19 September, but on 9 November between 40 and 50 families escaped with their lives. It could have been a holocaust, a mass funeral. Somebody, quite fortuitously, happened to notice that gas leak. East Midlands Gas was called in and it found methane.

The following day I raised this matter in parliament and I wrote to the Secretary of State for Energy demanding a public inquiry on that and certain other matters. Those who have heard me raise this issue before, know that I called for a public inquiry because British Coal has, until now, refused to accept total liability for the gas leak. Due to British Coal's lack of control after Arkwright colliery was closed, methane gas escaped. Scores of families could have been gassed or could have been the victims of an almighty explosion.

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

The consequences of the leak have been as follows: many families have lost large sums of money for household items—the contents of freezers were destroyed; many people had to take time off work during the evacuation—they were evacuated for about a fortnight in all; one person lost his job because he was evacuated with his family and his employer refused to set him back on; property values have slumped by thousands of pounds. The local authority had to make payments to remove families for that fortnight and payments had to be made to relatives and friends for boarding those families. Families had to be split up and people are still suffering from nerves and other problems arising out of that gas escape.

When I wrote to the Secretary of State for Energy I expected some action, but I did not get it. The Secretary of State for Energy, in typical liaison with British Coal, decided to pass the buck. He passed it to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, who passed it to one of his juniors and down the line it went until I got a reply on 31 January. There was to be no inquiry. The Government said that British Coal had dealt with the gas hazard and they would accept responsibility only on the basis of a good neighbour policy, granting £100 per household. That poses an interesting question. The coal mine existed for many years and was liable to escapes of methane gas—all the miners testified to that. The pit was closed and gas then escaped. Whose gas was it?

East Midlands Gas analysed the gas and said that it did not belong to it, even though it supplied the gas to tenants. The gas was sent to Harwell to be analysed, to discover whether it was landfill gas, but the Harwell institute found that it was not. Most villagers believed that it was coming through cracks caused by subsidence due to the pit. Most people realised that the gas was pushed up through the cracks as a result of rising water levels and 40 families in the village were lucky to escape.

British Coal officials say that they are not sure that it is their gas. That seems incredible, given that the pit is only a few hundred yards away from the village. It is more incredible that British Coal was willing to bore into the mine to get rid of the methane gas. It drilled down about 60 ft and built a chimney. British Coal has already spent an estimated £1·5 million and has managed to bring down the methane levels, yet its officials still say—having spent all that money and carried out all that work—that the gas leak is not their responsibility or liability. British Coal has refused to deal with the solicitors whom the villagers have collectively employed to fight their case.

This is a green issue which involves the environment —a chimney has been pouring out methane gas. Government Members talk about the environment every time they open their gills, and here is a little village with 40 families involved in an incident—many of them are down here today. They cannot obtain proper recompense from British Coal or justice from the Government because the various Secretaries of State are passing letters between them. A junior Employment Minister went up to the coal mine last week and, supposedly, confided to some officials that British Coal should accept liability. I suppose he will now deny that. In letters to me, both Departments involved say that British Coal is not totally responsible.

This is a strange affair, which is all about money. British Coal has made a mountain of money out of Arkwright colliery, from the ribs of the miners and their families, but now, when those people are suffering, it refuses to pay them back. The families are subjected to having little monitors installed in their houses and many of them live in fear. Even worse, British Coal refuses to allow Arkwright colliery's records to be given to the solicitors representing those families. They are being treated with arrogance and contempt. They have been subjected to a horror story; they have been evacuated from their houses for 14 days and they still live in fear. British Coal is acting as it did during most of the miners' strike, and refusing to allow the families' solicitors to see records pertaining to the pit and the period when the gas escaped.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I hope that my hon. Friend appreciates that, under the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946, the Secretary of State has the power to issue a directive to British Coal to release the statistics relating to such a matter. Therefore, the responsibility rests with the Government, not solely with British Coal.

Mr. Skinner: That is one of the reasons why I am raising the issue today. The Government have a responsibility to play fair with these people. The Secretary of State for Energy and the Government have the power to settle this issue and I assure them that the villagers are prepared to take the matter to court. However, I do not want them to spend their money. I do not see why they should have to employ solicitors and spend money in order to obtain the relevant records, a fair deal, a public inquiry and compensation. Why should they not receive those now? The Prime Minister found £500 million to try to save Tory seats in Kent and another £500 million at the press conference at which she gave the wrong figures. We are talking about a smaller amount which is needed in a Labour-held seat.

In response to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), of course, the Government could tell British Coal, through the Secretary of State for Energy, to play fair. Why do they continue this agony? Why do they not play the game? The Government should demand that the records are released, without the villagers having to go to court. Instead of passing the buck between Departments, Ministers should answer the questions and guarantee compensation.

This disturbing case could, as I said, have resulted in mass funerals. The villagers were lucky and that is why they have come to London today demanding the treatment that would have been given if the incident had occurred in Downing street. If even a minuscule amount—compared to that in Arkwright—had escaped in Downing street, at Chatsworth, the property of the Duke of Devonshire, or anywhere within the realms of the establishment, there would have been an inquiry. However, it happened near a pit yard where people produced the wealth of Britain for all those years; the wealth creators have been ignored. The people in the belly of the establishment always get away with it. It is high time that the Government told British Coal to get on with its job and issue the directive referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield.

We are fed up with crocodile tears and British Coal talking about acting as a good neighbour and giving £100 and a little bit on the side. The villagers have come here today to call upon British Coal to shoulder its responsibility and upon the Government to have a fresh

look at what has happened and to call on the Health and Safety Executive to conduct a public inquiry into the affair. The villagers are calling on the Government to release the Arkwright colliery's records so that their solicitors can deal with the matter. They are fed up with all the talk about the environment and now want action.

The matter will not go away. These people have travelled 150 miles to London today and they will not disband as soon as they return to Arkwright. They will fight all the way. However, a great deal of money—such as court costs—could be saved if some fairness and justice were shown in this matter.

4.58 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): It is entirely right that we should seek to adjourn in order to celebrate the divine resurrection. I wish to spend a few moments reflecting on a human resurrection that has occurred in the last 10 years. It is right to pay tribute to the many thousands of people responsible for the remarkable recovery that has occurred in the former steel town of Corby—the central town in my constituency.

The House will be aware that, exactly 10 years ago, it adjourned after the Government had lost a vote of no confidence, and with a general election in prospect. On 3 March, 1979, the British Steel Corporation notified the steel unions represented in the Corby steel works that it proposed to stop steel production in Corby in a year's time. There was nothing surprising about that announcement because it was preceded by months of speculation in the press and rumours of Cabinet discussions. I have no idea whether they were true.

It was not merely a matter of speculation because it was underlined in the steel White Paper of 1973, introduced in the dying months of the Government led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). The White Paper said that steel production was likely to cease in Corby by the end of the decade—the 1970s—for two extremely good reasons. First, steel production started in Corby because of the local iron ore that was mined by opencast mining. That high-quality iron ore was beginning to run out and it was obvious that there would be insufficient local iron ore beyond the end of the decade to be able to sustain the steel making process, which has been carried on for about 40 years.

The decision to concentrate steel production in the five great plants meant that all the smaller steelworks such as Corby, Consett, Ebbw Vale and Shotton, were likely to find themselves under considerable threat as a result of the concentration at Llanwern, Port Talbot and so on. There was nothing surprising, therefore, about the decision announced in March 1979, but it was regrettable that between 1974 and 1979 so little was done to prepare for the closure. I use those dates deliberately. The House will recall that the steel White Paper that made the forecast to which I have referred came out in the December 1973. At that time, 73 per cent. of people in a town of 50,000 owed their livelihoods to the steelworks. So clearly a body blow of immense proportions was dealt to the principal town of what is now my constituency but was then the constituency of Kettering.

There is no question but that a resurrection of staggering dimensions has since occurred. The effect of closure in Corby was an unemployment total of 7,000; it has now fallen to 1,800. I am reasonably confident about forecasting that by the end of this calendar year it will have fallen below 1,000. I can also predict with confidence that there will be full employment in Corby by the end of 1990 —that was not predicted back in 1979-80.

All this has come about as a result of the activities of many human beings. I want to say some words of praise about a wide variety of people—not all of them Conservatives—who have played a considerable part in bringing about this remarkable transformation.

First, I single out the Government's principal agency to have been involved—the Commission on the New Towns. It has worked extremely hard and effectively to construct factory units, to encourage tenants to occupy them and to sell land in its ownership to companies moving in. It has also promoted Corby extremely effectively as a desirable place for inward investment, and has done so with confidence in the future. The commission has turned in a remarkable performance and the Department of the Environment has provided a good many services, too. The Commission on the New Towns is subject to that Department, which has made available derelict land grants on an extensive scale.

Much of the land in Corby consisted of old opencast iron ore workings in a most unsatisfactory condition. It would have been too much to expect private investors to have had the confidence to spend huge sums on restoring this land to a condition in which they could begin the construction of new factory units. The public sector has an important role to play in the sort of activities that have taken place in Corby, not least by providing derelict land grants. In the case of Corby, these grants have been generous, continuous and effective—a magnificent example of public sector pump-priming, which has enabled private sector industry to take advantage of what the state, the nation and the taxpayer have provided.

One of the most important lessons to be drawn from Corby's experience is the paramount importance of derelict land grants. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) is present in the Chamber; he plays a considerable part in drawing this fact to the attention of Ministers. It is important that everyone should understand that derelict land grants are essential if old industrial areas are to be restored and the sort of developments of the past decade in Corby are to take place.

I want to pay tribute to Tresham college in Kettering and Corby. That college of education has done an enormous amount of work with incoming private industry to train the work force in the requisite skills. It is another example of public sector pump-priming which can generate redevelopment and secure and promote a town's future. The work done by the college has been outstanding, and I am proud to represent the constituency in which it has played a pioneering role in the transition from past to future. All the more pity, therefore, that none of the activities I have mentioned were attended to in the mid-1970s—a great deal of suffering would have been avoided if they had been.

I pay tribute to the local authorities that have been working in this area. I said earlier that not only Conservatives had been involved in the regeneration. I pay tribute to Labour councillors and Labour authorities who have done their bit—it has been a considerable bit—to encourage companies to come in and to boost the reputation of the area that they represent. I am glad to report that we have had no loony Leftists ruining the

[Mr. William Powell]

reputation of the area for the outside world—far from it. The local authority and district council immediately set about, not holding demonstrations, but going to the seat of power, even though by May 1979 it was occupied by Conservatives. The authorities tried to work with the Conservative Government for the good of their area.

Other Labour authorities have done exactly the same, and I pay tribute to them. The only way out of industrial catastrophes such as my constituency faced is through partnership between all people of goodwill, regardless of their political persuasion. That is what has happened. During the six years or so that I have been a Member of Parliament I have been pleased to be able to work just as effectively with people who are convinced and committed supporters of the Labour party as with convinced and committed supporters of the Conservative party. Such parterships have been entered upon during the past decade. It is important that they should be made in the future in areas that still face recovery from industrial disaster.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) mentioned the closure in Kirkby, which was announced over the weekend. Although Kirkby faces disaster and huge unemployment I hope that it will realise that there is real advantage in trying to work with, rather than trying to denigrate and discredit, people who may not be of the same political persuasion. Partnership is essential.

I also pay tribute to the work done by the district council and the county council—the latter has been Conservative for the past four years, was Labour for the four years before that, and Conservative before that. Conservative or Labour, the council has done its bit to build up communications, to secure funds from the EEC and the Government and to ensure that the investment in infrastructure, which is so necessary to improving communications, could take place.

In the heat of debate in this Chamber we often hear partisan exchanges which do considerable discredit to the people on the wrong side of them, so it is right that these things should be said from time to time and that people should have the chance to reflect on them.

Over 400 companies have come to Corby in the last 10 years, some of them small, some of them household names. There have been setbacks as well as triumphs on the way. There are many lessons to be learned and applied to areas which have experienced industrial devastation post 1979.

I want to close by paying tribute to two groups of people who have each, in their way, played a unique part. The first of those groups are people, on the whole, private business men, who have invested their own money in the town. Most of the investment which has occurred has not come from the Department of Trade and Industry, the EEC or any other public purse; it has come from the sources of private industry itself. Huge investment has taken place on an immense scale.

There is absolutely no question at all that the whole range of Government policies has enabled this to happen, and it is too easy to say that the Government, the Department of Trade and Industry, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Employment, local authorities or other public institutions have done everything. They have done an enormous amount to prime the pump, but they have led a huge cascade of investment, running into hundreds of millions of pounds of people's own money, and these people deserve public tribute as well. Above all else, as we talk about policies and politics in this country, we should never forget that we are actually talking about people. People are the only resource, the only source which gives us any vehicle or authority for what we do here.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the people of Corby themselves. Every family was affected by what happened 10 years ago and many of them have had to carry the strain in circumstances of the utmost difficulty and poverty. Now prosperity is returning, and I confidently predict that the prosperity will grow and benefit every single family living in the town. I pay tribute to all those people who have taken the strain in circumstances beyond their control, who may well have felt let down by all sorts of things which happened in the past, for which it would not be appropriate to lay too much blame here this evening, when I do not want to distribute blame but to pay tribute. Thousands and thousands of families have taken the strain, have come through it, and they deserve the admiration and approbation of this House.

5.12 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I believe that this very precious time for Back Benchers should be used to explain in very simple terms why the House should not adjourn before it has addressed itself to certain abuses, and it is important that we should guard the time for that purpose. I shall not detain the House long, but the issue that concerns me is very real.

Over a number of months now, the House has discussed the question of BSE, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, which has infected a great many cattle, and there have been discussions on the various ways of dealing with it. I was concerned to discover that infected carcases were being buried in a landfill site in the middle of my constituency, on the Cheshire plain, alongside two specific water sources from which in due course drinking water is taken. When I asked the Ministry of Agriculture whether the animals were being incinerated or buried, it reported that 48 carcases had been disposed of in this way.

Having studied the relevant reports, I appreciate that there are alternative means of disposal, and that the heads had been removed from the infected cattle and taken elsewhere for testing. Nevertheless, I am still greatly concerned at the fact that a landfill tip is being used for such purposes. The site is quite close to housing and while I do not wish to overplay the matter I believe there is some doubt as to whether lime is being used before disposing of the carcases, as is essential when dealing with the destruction of infected beasts.

Having read the Ministrys own reports, there is some suggestion that infected animals may carry the virus infection in the spleen as well as the brain. If that is so, I would want to be assured by the relevant Ministers that in disposing of infected carcases in a landfill site they are not implanting a virus which could have an effect over the next 10 or 20 years. It is all very well talking about caring for the environment, but caring for the environment means taking very careful action where there could be a possible risk to anyone, either now or in the distance future.

I therefore feel that the Minister of Agriculture should be prepared to set up an inquiry into the means of

disposing of Infected cattle. I know that there are very few incinerators available to destroy such carcases easily, and I understand that some veterinary surgeons doubt whether incineration is necessarily the best means, but if there is any doubt about the way in which infected carcases are being treated I am extremely concerned that they should not be left in the earth.

I am anxious not to cause panic or concern among my constituents who live around the landfill site, but I hope that the Government will make a clear, definitive statement about what is happening there and how the carcases are treated. I hope that the Leader of the House will be prepared to ask his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to reply in some detail to the very genuine fears of my constituents.

If BSE is a growing problem, a number of questions need to be answered. Is incineration the best method of disposal? If so, what plans do the Government have for building incinerators capable of carrying the numbers of carcases which will undoubtedly need to be disposed of in the near future? If incineration is the only method, presumably the landfill site will no longer be used. If, on the other hand, it is possible to dispose of infected carcases safely in that way, why are only the heads being removed when the Ministry's own information seems to suggest that other parts of the carcases may still carry the infection?

Finally, veterinary health is absolutely vital because of its effect on the food chain. We know from the treatment of viruses in human beings that it is easy to store up difficulties for future generations by misuse of landfill sites, which could be a potential time bomb. I hope that is not the case.

I hope that the Ministry will not be prepared to allow infected carcases to be quietly disposed of, as they have been so far, on a site which is of great concern to my constituents. I hope that Ministers will consider the methods of disposal and reassure everyone concerned in my constituency either that this is the only safe way of dealing with the problem, or that they will come forward very urgently with alternative plans.

The very fact that the disposal of these carcases has been taking place in what amounted almost to secrecy is bound to concern us all. I do not wish to start a panic or to over-dramatise the situation, but if the House adjourns without the serious concern of my constituents being set to rest, I personally shall be exceedingly alarmed because I shall begin to believe that there really is something to hide.

5.19 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will not consider the length of the contributions today as a measure of the importance of the subjects which have been raised. Obviously the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) raised a subject which will be of concern to all hon. Members. I suspect that the matter that I want to raise will also concern hon. Members on both sides of the House.

My hon. Friend the Leader of the House should be aware that 90 of my colleagues feel as strongly as I do about the problem of land use. Hon. Members have raised the issue of land use eating into green fields on many occasions over the past few months. Many hon. Members have referred to the need to debate the future of the development plans published in a White Paper in January. Those plans should be discussed in this House.

Extra weight was given to the need to discuss the proposals in that White Paper by a statement made by Plymouth city council on Friday. The council believes that it has run out of land and intends to ask the Boundary Commission for permission to eat into 2,000 acres of land in my constituency for building purposes.

Problems with land use have often been discussed in this House. However, the major problem of land use has been accelerated by the view expressed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that nearly 500,000 new houses need to be built on 53,700 acres in the south of this country.

We are all aware of the need to provide more homes. However, there is increasing concern that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has no regard, although he professes otherwise, for preserving the green fields and the environment of the south and south-west. Unless we have an opportunity to debate the future of the development plans and the Government can hear the strength of feeling on the Conservative as well as on the Opposition Benches, they will be doing an injustice to the House and to the country.

There are 85,000 acres of public vacant land. By vancant I mean dormant, under-utilised or unused. That land is on the register of public land which was set up in 1981 by the then Secretary of State for the Environment to indentify waste land or land that was surplus to requirement, but in public ownership. Over the past eight years, an enormous amount of that land has been sold. Many of us on the Conservative Benches were delighted that the land had been sold and used. However, as fast as land comes off the register, more land goes on. So long as we have the present planning system, land will continue to become vacant, dormant and under-utilised in public ownership and will continue to be placed on the register. I believe that the land register will continue for another 50 years or more as public vacant land is sold and new public land becomes available.

There is public waste land in most cities. There is certainly much public vacant land in Plymouth. It belongs not just to the local authority, health authorities and education authorities, but to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and to the Property Services Agency. It is no good the Government saying that they are concerned to preserve the environment and to conserve the beautiful parts of Britain if they continue to allow public vacant land to dominate the scene while they allow the green fields to be eaten up before public vacant land is used.

Instead of debating whether we should continue to use green fields in preference to public vacant land, we should debate the merits of the future of the development plans. Can we discuss whether we want to get rid of the county structure plans in the way that my hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is proposing? Do we want city councils like that in Plymouth or in other major conurbations to commandeer thousands of acres of green fields and destroying the environment because they say that they have run out of land? The Government are not pushing hard enough for public vacant land to be released and used. The land register has indentified the

[Mr. Anthony Steen]

public waste land and vacant land, but the Government have not insisted that they and other public organisations divest themselves of that land.

I was grateful for the comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) about my specialisation in this subject. Some hon. Members have read the splendid publication "Public Land Utilisation Management Schemes" which I wrote in conjunction with others last year. That document identifies the scope and extent of public vacant land and argues how it should be used before the Secretary of State for the Environment eats into green field sites in the south and south-east.

There is no point in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment insisting on more housing being built if public money is not available for the necessary infrastructure to go with it. Ivybridge in my constituency is one of the fastest growing towns in the country. It has inadequate schooling and the police claim that they cannot provide the police presence that they would like because the town continues to expand and there is insufficient public investment. In that town there is insufficient health care, inadequate housing facilities and leisure and recreation services. Similarly, the road network is inadequate.

It is pointless to continue to build on public vacant land or on green field sites unless there is sufficient infrastructure. Problems with inadequate infrastructure can be found in Ivybridge and elsewhere in my constituency. The future of the development plans is very important and we must debate that subject before the House adjourns for the Easter recess.

5.26 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Before the House adjourns for the Easter recess, I want to draw to the attention of the Leader of the House the alarming growth in pollution of the stretches of the Rivers Don and Rother which frame my constituency. I look to the Secretary of State for the Environment for an urgent response.

I spoke about these problems during the Second Reading of the Water Bill. I informed the House that, since 1980, I have engaged the Department of the Environment in correspondence about capital allocations and external financing limits for Yorkshire Water in the light of what I feared then were growing problems of the water supply and pollution. The then Minister of State described my inquiries as unnecessarily gloomy and claimed that the overall trend in river quality was improving.

The expectation then was that Yorkshire rivers would become cleaner during the 1980s. Instead, river quality has worsened throughout the decade. The Yorkshire water authority chairman has admitted to me in correspondence that hundreds of kilometres of south Yorkshire river stretches are still polluted, and the Prime Minister confirmed as much in her reply to me last Thursday. Furthermore, there are growing doubts in south Yorkshire about the quality of domestic water, whether from the Pennines or from the River Derwent. A fear about aluminium from purification processes is associated with the Pennines, and worries about nitrates from agricultural pollution are connected with the River Derwent.

The Government have insisted that when the Water Bill is enacted it will address the problems of water supply and river pollution. Whether the Bill will eventually provide for the appropriate investment and regulatory framework is not my concern today. My continuing worry is that the scale of the problem in south Yorkshire is so huge and probably still deteriorating that the situation cannot await the potential benefits, as the Government see them, of the Water Bill.

Yorkshire Water produced figures last week which show that pollution incidents in the region's rivers have increased more than three fold in the past decade and that complaints about the quality of drinking water in south Yorkshire have also risen steadily over the past two years. Hundreds of Sheffield-area folk have protested recently about dirty water supplies.

Local council officials are considering whether disgruntled consumers may have a case against Yorkshire Water under the Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982. I understand that Yorkshire water authority, in common with others, is reconsidering its policy on the use of aluminium in purification processes, following research studies suggesting a possible link between aluminium and Alzheimer's disease.

There is also growing concern in south Yorkshire about the presence of nitrates in drinking water. One quarter of south Yorkshire's drinking water comes from the River Derwent, which is fed by streams and rivulets running through agricultural land. Even if no more fertilisers are used around York, it is feared that water nitrate levels in south Yorkshire will continue to rise. It takes between five and 40 years for the chemical to seep through. There is the fear that the River Derwent will exceed the Community's limit for nitrates in drinking water by the end of the century.

During last winter, I conveyed those fears to the Department of the Environment. In a letter dated 9 January, the Minister for Water and Planning claimed that the revised capital allocation would enable Yorkshire Water to implement its programmes. The Minister, looking to the future, thought that the authority would benefit in particular from the £1 billion programme planned to bring most sewage works up to the necessary standard by 1992.

My purpose in speaking today is to argue that the situation in Yorkshire continues to deteriorate and that there is a need for greater remedial action in advance of the implementation of the Water Bill. My authority for making those submissions is to be found in the current finding of the *Yorkshire Post* poisoned rivers campaign, in the investigation by the *Sunday Times'* "Insight" team, and consumer perception. According to a survey commissioned by Yorkshire Water published only last week, more people are worried about the state of rivers in Yorkshire and Humberside than ever previously recorded. According to the findings of the *Sunday Times'* "Insight" team, Britain's rivers are being polluted at a faster rate than at any time since records began. Industry must bear the brunt of the blame for that.

My constituency is flanked by the Rivers Rother and Don, which are particularly affected. British Coal Products, a subsidiary of British Coal, is one of the top offenders. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will not mind if I mention that firm, for he will know that its giant coking plant in Chesterfield has appeared to break the law 12 out of the 17 times that tests were undertaken by water authority officials. A sample of the Rother taken by the "Insight"

team downstream of the British Coal Products' plant, bordering my constituency, contained measurable concentrations of both cyanide and mercury—neither of which the company is licensed to discharge—yet that plant has never been the subject of a prosecution.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) will welcome a reference to the pollution problems of his side of Sheffield city. British Tissues, in my hon. Friend's constituency, is another offender. It failed consents on 14 out of 27 occasions that its discharges were tested in the past 12 months. Recently, the company spent £2 million on improvements to clear up effluent, and believes that there will be no further problems. However, problems have been arising downstream. British Coal has been prosecuted 21 times in the past three years for pollution offences, but continues to breach the limits. Again, the biggest sufferers are the Rivers Rother and Don, and the worst stretches frame the city of Sheffield.

As the Rother approaches Sheffield, it passes through Rother valley country park, which is popular with nearly 700,000 visitors a year. What those visitors do not know is that the water in the lake must be pumped from a brook three miles away. The next stop is the huge coking plant at Orgreave. Last year, British Steel made profits of more that £400 million but spent only £85,000 on effluent treatment at that site. According to local anglers, no fish have been caught in the Rother for at least 20 years.

Yorkshire Water attempts to clean up the river, but we have seen only a catalogue of delays and broken pledges. In 1974, the water authority said that the Rother would be grade two by 1979. In 1979, Yorkshire Water put the date back to 1987. In 1987, the authority announced a revised target of 2001. The picture is almost as bleak in respect of the Don, where sewage is a greater threat than industry. I dare not use the language describing the nature of the pollution that was used by *The Sunday Times* yesterday. However, I can tell the House that sewage degrades more rivers than any other form of pollution.

Last year, more than 4,000 pollution incidents were caused by sewage. According to the "Insight" team, cleaning up discharges will cost far more than previously thought. One in five of Britain's sewage works is breaking the law by discharging sub-standard waste into rivers. The Yorkshire water authority is one of the worst offenders. The sewage works at Blackburn meadows, for example, on the boundary of my constituency and within Sheffield city limits, will require more than £30 million to be spent if it is to meet consent standards. At least five miles downstream of the Don disgraceful conditions are observable.

A similar situation exists in Leeds, Bradford and elsewhere in Yorkshire. Last year, Yorkshire Water admitted that about 70 sewage treatment works out of about 600 in the region failed to reach consent standards governing the content of effluent discharged into rivers. Although most of those 70 works are small, substantial investment will be needed if they are to comply. According to the "Insight" team, the total bill could exceed £1·6 billion. That is £600 million more than the figure conveyed to me by the Minister for Water and Planning in his letter of 9 January.

Yesterday's issue of *The Sunday Times* commented:

"A spokesman for the Department of the Environment yesterday confirmed that the cost of dealing with"

storm

"overflows was not included"

in the original figure of £1 billion. That is why I thought that it was urgent to raise the matter today, and why I look to the Leader of the House to convey to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment before Easter how reckless and grievously the shortfall of money is bearing on my constituency, and how important it is to make an early statement.

5.37 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I thought that it would be appropriate to deal today with an issue about which I feel strongly, and in respect of which I believe that strong feelings are held by other right hon. and hon. Members. I refer to the relationship of this country to Europe and the context in which we discuss matters which are directly germane not only to domestic legislation but to Community obligations.

A relevant issue arose in Question Time today, in respect of the validity of the Merchant Shipping act 1988, a matter which is currently before the Court of Appeal. I know that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would not want me to go into detail, but as I pointed out in a question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, only last year when the matter was being considered by the courts the Government took the view that it was perfectly right for them to introduce that legislation. The courts upheld that view on a preliminary hearing and awarded costs to the Government.

We are now in a peculiar position in which an appeal against that finding is in process, yet the court previously ruled that the Government should be awarded costs because of their success in introducing a Bill in the House, even though it was argued at the time that the legislation may be inconsistent with our treaty obligations. I introduce my arguments with that point because of its topicality, but it is merely an example of what I regard as a much graver threat.

I should declare at once that I am and always have been pro-Europe. I was a founder member of "Westminster for Europe". There are, however, trends within the Community which are diametrically opposed to the interests of this House as a legislative chamber. Having just returned from a visit to the European Community as a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, I can say without hesitation that creeping federalism is alive and well. I make no apology for feeling strongly that we have failed to appreciate the extent to which assumptions are made in the Community about the direction in which European legislation is going, and the extent to which the Community's powers are drawing us down a cul-de-sac within the legal ring fence of the treaty of Rome.

I am a strong supporter of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's position as expressed in the Bruges speech. That speech has been gravely under-estimated, misconstrued and misinterpreted. Nothing in it is inconsistent with the position that we could and should adopt in the House, but much of what is happening in the Community, largely in the form of actions taken by the Commission, ought to be challenged by us.

Only a short time ago I asked my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House if he would ensure that we debated the hormone regulation before its adoption in the Council of Ministers. As happens all too frequently, the debate in question was held late at night, at midnight or thereabouts.

[Mr. William Cash]

Nevertheless, the House filled up. The other day we had a similar debate about the heavy commercial vehicles directives, and again the House filled up. The reason why the House fills up when such matters are debated, even at a late hour, is that hon. Members are increasingly conscious of the impact of European measures, not merely on the legislation of this country as a whole but on their constituents.

Hon. Members have a responsibility which cannot be discharged by, for example, Members of the European Parliament. I do not wish to denigrate the European Parliament, but the democratic vote of this country's electorate is expressed through this Chamber to Ministers who are in turn accountable to the House. They sit in the Council of Ministers, but there is a direct relationship between the functions that they perform there and matters determined in British general elections.

Mr. Benn *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Cash: I see the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) shaking his head. Clearly he does not agree with my analysis, but that is how I see the position.

There is increasing evidence of the misuse of powers granted under the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act. An example is the use of article 100A of the treaty, which deals generally with the internal market. The Select Committee took evidence recently from the Treasury Solicitor and although our report has not yet been published I think that it is fair to say that some of us felt misgivings about the extent and nature of the use of article 100A, and that in some instances the treaty as a whole has been stretched beyond all reasonable recognition.

As Community legislation is bound to be implemented through the House and imposed on the electorate, this is a serious matter because such an enlargement of competence on the part of the Commission and European legislators can effectively bypass the national Parliaments altogether. When the basis on which a local authority exercises its power is challenged, our courts tend to cut down the use of the legislation if the possibility that the authority is exceeding its powers is seriously in question. The European Court of Justice, on the other hand, using its interpretative methods, does exactly the opposite—it tends to enlarge the competence and powers of the Commission, with the result that an almost limitless range of options opens up for those who legislate, through the Community, for our electorates.

That tendency should be resisted because in my view it is bound to lead to more federalism than even the Community's sternest critics thought possible. I will add a rider. As a Conservative Member, I would argue that many of the provisions in the social dimension—relating, for instance, to worker participation—which I do not believe are contemplated under the treaty of Rome, are being brought in through the back door to satisfy the Socialist leanings of many Community members.

We must put our foot down and stop the acceleration of this trend. I am in favour of majority voting under the Single European Act, but I believe that we must debate European matters at an earlier stage in their progress through the House. I trust that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will be able to tell us reasonably soon that a change in procedure may allow that. If that happens, we shall be able—in conjunction, I hope, with other Select Committees—to consider such matters at a time when they are relevant to decision-making, and not when it is already too late in the day. At present we are faced, in effect, with a fait accompli which is causing grave concern in the House.

We should consider this matter in the context not only of our own national Parliament but of all the national Parliaments. If we believe that federalism is an increasing trend in the rest of Europe—I believe that it is rampant—it is up to us to encourage Members of those other Parliaments to take a similar stance to ours. Acquiesence to federalism, given its importance to our democracy and our constitution, could be likened to the appeasement of the 1930s. We are dealing, ultimately, with how our electorate is governed, with Cabinet government and with how we legislate in this country. We cannot allow the House to be reduced to nothing more than a regional council.

I am pro-European, but many of the democratic institutions of our friends and colleagues in Europe have relatively recent origins. The true democratic traditions of the House have enabled us to defend liberty many times during the past 75 years. The simple questioning of authority, and the ability to question those who are accountable, remains at the heart of our system. A remote, undemocratic European Parliament is the only alternative way to maintain a form of democracy in Europe. But that would lead to a single European Parliament with a single European Government—which the leaders of the European People's party have called for. That is the inevitable consequence which the House cannot accept. We can live happily with our friends and colleagues within the current system governing the European Community, but we have an economic union and not a political union. We can, we will and we must resist federalism.

5.50 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The point I wish to raise bears on what the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has just said. It would be inconceivable for the House to adjourn for Easter without recording the fact that last Friday the High Court disallowed an Act which was passed by this House and the House of Lords and received Royal Assent—the Merchant Shipping Act 1988. The High Court referred the case to the European Court. Fortunately "Erskine May" makes it clear that matters before the European Court are not sub judice according to the rules of the House. I am not making any comment that would breach the rules of the House, but for the first time in the history of Parliament an Act passed by both Houses and the regulations under it have been set aside.

I shall put on record what I read in *The Scotsman* on Saturday on my way from Aberdeen to Inverness. Under the heading "Law of Britain no longer paramount", it stated:

> "Law aimed at protecting the interests of the British fishing fleet was negated by an unprecedented High Court ruling in London yesterday."

It continued:

> "That was understood to be the first time a British court had interfered with an Act of Parliament in that way . . . Lord Justice Neill, sitting with Mr. Justice Hodgson said that 20 years ago it would have been unthinkable for the High Court to question the validity of an Act of Parliament.

Now, the courts had a duty to give effect to European Community law and where there was a conflict to prefer European law to national law. He said the owners of the . . . vessels were seeking a declaration"

in respect of part 2 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 and the Merchant Shipping (Registration of Fishing Vessels) Regulations 1988. The same theme was taken up in the *Financial Times* under the headline:

"Court blocks fishing law in a constitutional first"

and *The Guardian* which stated:

"Judges block fishery law".

I understand that there is an element of bipartisanship because the newspapers reported that the Government have taken the case to the Court of Appeal and the case may come up in the next day or two. Although I share some of the feelings about federalism expressed by the hon. Member for Stafford, much of what he said has long since happened. The right of the courts to override our legislation was always envisaged in the treaty of accession which was signed by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). I shook my head during the speech by the hon. Member for Stafford because he thinks that when people go to Europe they are accountable to the House of Commons. I know that the hon. Gentleman is a constitutional lawyer, but he may not appreciate that all Acts entered into by Ministers in the Common Market are enacted under the prerogative.

Mr. Cash: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the European Communities Act 1972 effectively grants the European Community power by and through the authority of the national Parliament of the United Kingdom, and that the Single European Act did the same under the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986?

Mr. Benn: I do not want to dispute with the hon. Gentleman, but he must not confuse the legislative provision with the powers of the prerogative under which all treaty-making takes place. We passed the European Communities Act 1972—I voted against it—following the signature of the treaty of accession which was never published until the then Prime Minister had signed it. The Single European Act was signed under the prerogative. I was on the Council of Ministers for four or five years and I was president of the Council of Energy Ministers during the six months of our presidency. One does not go to the Council of Ministers empowered by the House, but under the powers of the prerogative, an entirely different process.

Membership of the EEC threw us back several hundred years in domestic law, to prerogative powers in Britain. We went back into the recesses of feudalism to draw out those prerogative powers we are now using to latch federalism on to us. The House is threatened by its own history as well as by agreements entered into by Ministers when they go to Europe.

I do not want to move away from the subject of the legal judgment, but I believe that if we were to apply our laws properly, judges who negated an Act of Parliament would be guilty of contempt, but that may have to await the appeal when the Government have completed their negotiations.

I want to make it clear to the House that we are absolutely impotent unless we repeal section 2 of the European Communities Act. It is no good talking about being a good European. We are all good Europeans; that is a matter of geography and not a matter of sentiment. Are the arrangements under which we are governed such that we have broken the link between the electorate and the laws under which they are governed?

I am an old parliamentary hand—perhaps I have been here too long—but I was brought up to believe, and I still believe, that when people vote in an election they must be entitled to know that the party for which they vote, if it has a majority, will be able to enact laws under which they will be governed. That is no longer true. Any party elected, whether it is the Conservative party or the Labour party can no longer say to the electorate, "Vote for me and if I have a majority I shall pass that law," because if that law is contrary to Common Market law, British judges will apply Community law. The European Court of Justice is not so relevant—it is very political and would give us enough rope to hang ourselves—but British judges will tell the House of Commons that it has no right to pass that law.

When people discover that whoever they vote for they cannot change the law or the system of taxation under which they are governed, either they will go to Brussels and petition the Commissioners who are the modern kings, or they will say, "Why bother to vote? Let us take more direct action to change the law." That delicate fabric of consent on which our system of Government rests has already been torn. We do not know all the consequences. One consequence is separatism in Scotland, as some people in Scotland believe that they would be better off conducting their own negotiations. The fragmentation of the United Kingdom is an inevitable consequence of membership of the EEC.

We cannot go away for Easter without putting on record in *Hansard* and in the House that on Friday the supremacy of the British Parliament was negated by judges who claimed that what we did as recently as last year was illegal. Before coming back to the matter we may have to wait until the Government succeed in their appeal or make a statement to the House. These are fundamental questions which unite opinion on both sides of the House. Whatever we want to do with our democracy, we all agree that we have to retain it in order to do anything with it.

The time has come to warn the House, and even the passionate Common Market Europeans, that we go thus far but no further. If we dig deeper into the pit, we may find that the courts would not even accept our right to repeal the European Communities Act. We would be in a constitutional crises of enormous magnitude if we were to repeal section 2 to regain the power that we have lost and the court said, "Sorry, but in effect, by usage and practice and common law, Parliament has lost the right to liberate itself."

These issues are more important than might be apparent from the fact that we are discussing the Easter Adjournment. I am grateful for the opportunity of speaking briefly on the matter. It is of a different character from others that have been raised. For all that, it may be an issue that has greater duration than some other important matters that hon. Members have raised.

6 pm

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I should also like to implore my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House not to adjourn the House for Easter until we have had an opportunity to review progress on the reform of private sheltered accommodation for the elderly. I reported to the

[Mr. Michael Jack]

House about a year ago on the establishment of a working party to draw up a code of practice to regulate the private sheltered accommodation industry. I did that because I had received letters from all over the country following articles in the *Daily Telegraph* about people who were suffering difficulties over service and maintenance charges, the quality of repairs, the operation of wardens and matters concerned with ground rents. They were delighted that somebody in Parliament was taking up the issues surrounding the difficulties concerned with private sheltered accommodation.

It is important to debate the issue because the amount of sheltered accommodation in the private sector is growing all the time. I estimate from my research that in 1985 some 5,000 units of sheltered accommodation were built. In 1987 the figure had risen to about 9,000. Today the industry has built well over 20,000 units in total. At selling prices of between £40,000 and £150,000 one can see that it is a major and dynamic part of the housebuilding industry. Every unit of sheltered accommodation that is built and sold usually frees one conventional house. At a time when the House has been debating housing and planning, it is important to consider the issues surrounding sheltered accommodation because it provides a new and additional source of housing which the official statistics may not yet have recognised.

The reason why a code of practice to regulate the conduct of the industry is important is because of the developing care that sheltered accommodation can provide. Today we have what might be called conventional sheltered accommodation—a simple flat built with others in a complex of high quality, with a warden in residence to look after the elderly persons should they run into trouble. The services for the unit are organised on a professional management basis by large companies, some associated with builders and some independent. In simple terms, floors are swept regularly, light bulbs are changed, gardens are tended and the property is kept in first-class order.

That simple formula is changing in a number of ways of which I think the House should be aware. We see now a population who are living longer. Today's elderly mobile are rapidly becoming the elderly immobile. They are in need of continuing care. That is the next stage of sheltered accommodation, where 24-hour nursing and medical facilities are available on the same site as the flat or bungalow development in which the elderly live.

The amount of control and regulation of the accommodation is limited. The code of practice will have relevance to the purchase and running of this type of property, but I put down a marker to the Government that people involved with social services and health will have to watch developments carefully lest the unscrupulous get involved and people's whole way of life is threatened because of poor management.

We also see the development of the leisure village which has arisen out of sheltered accommodation—a complete facility providing for every want of an elderly person. Those too are being developed without regulation or a code of practice to delineate how the developments are sold, and to lay down the terms and conditions of their management and the rights of redress of anyone who encounters difficulties with them.

Looking to the future, I also put down a marker about sheltered accommodation outside the boundaries of the United Kingdom. As sure as eggs are eggs, British developers are already using their expertise to build sheltered accommodation abroad. Currently it is being done by high-quality developers. I do not believe that people are at risk if they purchase such accommodation, but I can see a day when the opportunistic enter the industry and the House may have to debate the difficulties that people are running into over the purchase of sheltered accommodation abroad. Again, the code of practice that the working party is drawing up will serve as a useful indicator to prevent problems.

An article a week ago in *The Daily Telegraph* was occasioned by problems encountered by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths). I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not in his place, but that is not his fault, in that he did not know that the subject was to be raised. He referred to the continuing difficulties even though a year had passed since a debate in the House on home-based sheltered accommodation. The hon. Gentleman drew attention to the fact that, north of the border, people in one development run by a reputable company are still experiencing difficulties over service and maintenance charges. It would appear that the industry still has a long way to go to get its accounting procedures sorted out. That was a key element for the working party.

The working party received widespread support. On it have sat representatives of organisations such as Age Concern, the House Builders Federation, McCarthy and Stone as representatives of major developers, and the National Federation of Housing Associations. The whole gamut of those involved in the building and management of sheltered accommodation was represented on the working party organised under the aegis of the House Builders Federation. I want to take the opportunity to put on record my thanks to Roger Humber, who chaired the working party, and to Vivien Aldred, who, as assistant director of the House Builders Federation carried the burden of much of the work in drafting the comprehensive approach to setting new standards for the private sheltered accommodation industry.

The draft code of practice went out for consultation to a wide range of bodies, including councils professional bodies and others. We have received the consultation papers back and the code of practice has incorporated the recommendations. We have tried hard to incorporate points of good practice in setting up a well-managed scheme covering sale and resale, services, service and maintenance charges and budgets. We are trying to introduce regularity and uniformity into the approach of the industry so that when people study the sales literature, in no way can they be misled about what exactly the deal will be.

During the last year our efforts have been aided by the introduction of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 and the code of practice drawing the attention of potential purchasers to that important legislation. That means that, in future, service and maintenance charge statements must be accurate and must not make misleading statements. If they do the law will apply. It is a comprehensive code designed to make certain that the buyer can beware because he is fully furnished with information. The code goes on to say that in the case of every new development, from now on, there should be a post-purchase pack giving the purchaser all the necessary information. This would set

out the obligations of the builder, the managing agent and anyone else with a legal responsibility, lest it should be necessary to respond to complaints.

We have picked up many of the problems that the 150 or so people from all over the country who have written to me on this matter have raised. Their evidence has been laid before the working party. Thus the voice of the consumer, so far as our activities are concerned, has been heard.

I want to deal with one or two points that have arisen from our investigations. Some of the agents that manage sheltered accommodation are also closely associated with the builders. The industry must now consider very carefully the separation of construction from management. Those who are responsible for managing sheltered accommodation should act in a truly independent manner, in the interests of leaseholders.

Then there is the question of value for money. Many elderly people who buy this type of accommodation are seduced by its superficial attractiveness. The quality is high, but these people's financial base is fixed. While interest rates are high, the investment income from the capital freed by the sale of their conventional home and the purchase of sheltered accommodation enables them to meet the management and service charges easily. However, when interest rates fall, some of these people will be in difficulty, bearing in mind that service and maintenance charges rise inexorably. The industry must take urgent steps to address this problem. The last thing we want is a new breed of welfare cases.

Today's sheltered accommodation caters for the mobile elderly. In 20 years' time the residents may well be the elderly immobile and may have to break into their capital base to re-equip their homes with bathrooms and kitchens to cater for their new circumstances. This is something that the industry must take into account in formulating its future policy. The code of practice will do much to redress many of the problems. Its credibility will depend on the spirit with which it is applied by the industry.

In the year of the code of practice, the industry should give urgent consideration to the formation of a trade association, or the creation of an ombudsman facility whereby people with genuine complaints could find proper redress. This code of practice answers many of the complaints to which I drew attention in the House last year. Currently we are negotiating, within the National Housebuilding Council, a new mechanism to give it teeth. It is a voluntary operation, welcomed by the industry, and it should do much to protect the good name of sheltered accommodation, as well as to redress the problems that have been identified.

6.14 pm

Mr. Alex Eadie (Midlothian): I want to raise the matter of the decision of the Secretary of State for Scotland to withdraw funding from Newbattle Abbey college in Dalkeith, which is in my constituency. The decision was intimated on Thursday 9 March, in the answer to a written question, to which I shall return later. Parliament must consider whether it is right to adjourn for Easter, in view of the fact the decision to which I refer concerns a national question of importance to the whole of Scotland, which should be debated.

Newbattle Abbey college is an adult residential facility. It has been christened the second-chance college for mature students who, for a variety of reasons, decide to undergo a period of disciplined residential study. It is specially equipped for this purpose and has the necessary experience and environment. Its success cannot be challenged. The best parallel I can think of is Ruskin college, Oxford. This is Scotland's equivalent of Ruskin. That is one of the compelling reasons for its being a national question. With the withdrawal of funding, Scotland will lose its equivalent of Ruskin, and there is no similar adult residential college in the country. In educational terms, the blow is the harder to take, in that there are four such colleges in England and Wales.

It is easy to understand the anger in some education circles in Scotland at this decision. The manner of its taking must be questioned by Parliament, for it could be a sign that, in decision-making, all is not well in the Scottish Office—that there is evidence of faulty administration, if not maladministration. The Secretary of State for Scotland announced last year that he was considering the withdrawal of funding. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and I had a meeting with him, and I have kept the notes.

One of the first issues that we raised concerned consultation. We put it to him that it was rather peculiar that there had been no consultation whatsoever with any of the education bodies involved including the trustees and the board of governors. I received a very strange and rather garbled reply. The Secretary of State said that the Scottish Education Department had raised the issue. One wonders who is in control of the Department. We put it to the Secretary of State that there was plenty of time for consultation, as it was anticipated that funding would not end until the 1988-89 academic year. We pointed out that all the statements in his letter to my hon. Friend had a tone of total finality.

That tack was changed very quickly when the purpose of the college was questioned at the interview. We asked why there had been a tone of such finality, why there had been no consultation, although an attempt had been made to imply that the matter just might be given due consideration. The argument advanced was that the college had served its purpose, that there had to be a change and that resources could be better used. If the argument is that adult residential colleges have outlived their usefulness, that is in direct contradiction of the Alexander report. Indeed, to some extent it was argued that there should be no adult residential colleges, whether in Scotland or in England and Wales.

We pointed out to the right hon. and learned Gentleman that our arguments deserved an answer. Surely the Secretary of State must consider the issue of adult education in Scotland—in this case what we have described as the last of the Ruskins. One of the arguments that the right hon. and learned Gentleman put forward concerned funding. He criticised other public bodies, such as the trade unions, for no longer assisting. I must nail the lie of the statement at the weekend that the Newbattle Abbey residential college was funded by trade unions and was meant to be funded by trade unions. That is being economical with the truth. It is simply not true. If it was felt that there had to be some new system of funding, surely there should have been some consultation instead of that shooting-from-the-hip style of Government. Why take a totally arbitrary decision on whether the college should raise its own revenue?

We even had to correct the Secretary of State about the college population. Correspondence had been submitted

[Mr. Alex Eadie]

to the Scottish Education Department and we presumed that, because the Secretary of State was interested, he would have seen it. We pointed out that, according to his figures, 45 people had been "lost" and that the typical figure since 1979 was 95. In an aside, somebody said he was quite sure that cannibalism was not practised in the Scottish Education Department. The mature students of Newbattle Abbey had also sent a letter to the Department about the college population. When I asked whether the figures that had been submitted were accurate, I received the reply that the Secretary of State would look into it.

When I mentioned that the students' letter also referred to the annual finances, the Secretary of State fell back on the ploy of saying that the figures had come from the Scottish Education Department. I have been a Minister in my time, and I would say that a Minister is responsible for the figures that his Department give. It is a pretty weak defence if someone as esteemed as the Secretary of State for Scotland blames his Department for the figures.

I pointed out that the students had explained the geographical areas from which they came. I was fortunate in having with me the statistical bulletin of the Scottish Education Department. Although I do not want to go into this in any detail, on the argument about students coming from south of the border, I quoted the references in the bulletin to St. Andrews university in the county of Fife. I have great knowledge of St. Andrews because I am a former chairman of the Fife county education committee and some of my family are graduates of the university. The statistical bulletin showed that, on the question of adult residential colleges taking students from south of the border, St. Andrews university should be closed because a preponderance of its students come from south of the border—and they are most welcome.

The Secretary of State produced the strangest argument of all—when I said that Newbattle was the equivalent of Ruskin college at Oxford or of Coleg Harlech in Wales and that those colleges will still be allowed to function although the Secretary of State is proposing to put Newbattle Abbey to death. I received the weak answer that the Secretary of State for Education and Science finances those colleges but that he, the Secretary of State for Scotland, finances Newbattle Abbey.

The final decision was the most distasteful of all and it is why I raise this issue today. I tabled a written question on 1 February asking the Secretary of State what response he was making to the letter from the governors and the chairman giving him a short outline scheme of how the college could be retained. Despite the fact that that was a priority question, the written reply was that the matter was still being considered and that the Secretary of State would let me know. I waited for a while and then did what hon. Members often do—on 16 February I tabled another question, pursuant to the first. The answer was that a response would be made soon.

Then, last Thursday, 9 March, the Secretary of State announced his decision, by what we must assume to have been an arranged question, tabled by his hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). A civil servant came to my home with the letter on Thursday afternoon but I was not at home as I was attending a meeting in Sheffield. The chairman of the governors received a letter announcing the decision at 2 pm, half an hour before the governors' meeting. Incidentally, the letter was delivered to the wrong college, to Eskbank college in Dalkeith. Not only was there indecent haste in reaching that decision, but the procedure followed would not score high marks for Government efficiency.

It is with great regret that I have to say that I have already had occasion to question the administration of the Scottish Office. I have had occasion to write to the Secretary of State for Scotland, asking for a meeting—the subject of the meeting does not matter now—but it took him a month to reply—and the reply refused the meeting. A month later I received an apology about the length of time that he had taken to reply to my letter. The Secretary of State admitted that that was a disgraceful way to treat an hon. Member.

That story proves that there is an element of maladministration in the Scottish Office; perhaps that is one reason why the Scottish Office is treated with such political contempt in Scotland at present. Indeed, it is predicted that the Conservative party will probably be wiped out in Scotland at the next general election, which is not surprising if the Government carry on in this manner towards hon. Members and respected figures in education in Scotland.

The central issue is whether there should be a change in the organisation of Newbattle Abbey college. The governors' request was reasonable. They asked that there should be a five year leading-in time if there were to be any changes. As we know, there is nothing more constant than change. A strange irony that will not go unnoticed in Scotland is that, if the college came under the Department of Education and Science, a minimum two-year period would be required before any change could be made.

This is a sad and disgraceful case, and the Scottish Office has not come out of it very well. The issue must be debated before the House adjourns. It is in the Government's interests, never mind the education interests that I have mentioned, that the maladministration of the Scottish Office be investigated.

I shall conclude with a quotation:

"We trained hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form into two teams we would be reorganised. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation."

That is a quotation from Petronius Arbiter in 210 BC. The Scottish Office is doing a wonderful job trying to ape that statement.

6.30 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): I was lucky enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during last year's Easter Adjournment debate. I began by saying that the House should adjourn so that I could remind my wife and children that they are not a single-parent family. I repeat that on this occasion, as it is so good it deserves wider currency.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend at the beginning of his remarks, but would it not be appropriate to record that, since that event, his family has increased with the gift of a further daughter, whom we all welcome?

Mr. Porter: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of that.

I should like to raise the subject of education in so far as it relates to recent developments. My assessment as I go around my constituency is that many teachers—perhaps most—are beginning to accept the changes that we have introduced. Recently, a trade union activist at a school in my constituency said, rather sadly, that it was a tragedy for the Labour movement that a Tory Government had introduced the GCSE, as it was exactly what was needed.

There was much scaremongering about governors during the passage of the Education Reform Act 1988. It was wondered whether there would be enough of them and whether they could cope with the amount of work that they would have to do. There is no shortage of volunteers to be school governors in Suffolk.

We are hearing more nationally about governors' opportunities and less about their problems. We have much public relations work to do to convey our aims to the public, such as those for assessment, standards and the national curriculum. Much harm is being done by some governors who have taken office even though they are fundamentally against what we are doing.

In general, parents are accepting that schools take more local decisions and have more local responsibilities and that they have a part to play. However, there is still a credibility gap, when we remove surplus places through school closures in rural areas, especially at a time when the young population of schools is increasing.

I should declare a kind of interest, as a former high school teacher. It is nearly seven years since I finished teaching in classrooms, but it has become a different world. The reality of our entrepreneurial world, business and commercial realities and education reforms has fundamentally shaken secondary schools and colleges. Enormous changes have been absorbed. The same will happen in universities and primary schools, which are beginning to get to grips with new realities. In some ways, it will be painful for them, as it was for secondary schools.

The changes are not all related to money, although it has a place. Historically, the needs of and funding for primary schools has too often been under-estimated. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has frequently stressed the importance of the primary education sector. The primary and home phase are crucial. If, when children start primary education, everything is not quite right or on target for their development, it can be put right. If it is not, by the time they reach middle school it is sometimes too late, and by the time they reach high school it is a damage limitation exercise.

The modern practice in primary schools demands much more equipment. Many primary school teachers believe that the position is deteriorating. The Education Reform Act set up a new formula to determine the funding of primary schools, about which they are quite worried because they believe that the historic under-estimate will be perpetuated. They believe that all pupils of statutory school age should be treated similarly and cite what may seem silly examples, but none the less they illustrate the point. Infants use more materials than older children, which is self-evident. Infant library books are brief and read in a day or two, so a larger selection is necessary. Frequent handling by less-skilled hands means that equipment must be replaced more frequently. In many primary schools, that view is perfectly valid.

Valuable teacher time is sometimes wasted on trivia, such as collecting and locating scrap materials instead of stock-cupboard supplies, mixing paint, cleaning equipment, tying shoe laces and all the things that are an ancillary's job. Teachers believe that it is time that discrimination against young people was ended. I urge my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to pass to the Secretary of State for Education and Science that concern about the primary sector. What I have said may not apply in London, where priorities are often different.

There is talk of teacher shortages, both in subjects and geographically. Answers to questions that I tabled last week gave the figures for Suffolk, but they appear to be out of date. I am asking for more up-to-date figures from local teacher representatives rather than anecdotal evidence that there is a teacher shortage in some areas. Reports vary, but clearly teachers are still applying for jobs. House prices, especially in East Anglia, where they have doubled over the past 18 months, are a serious problem. Golden hellos, regional differentials and individual deals with teachers under the new school powers should help enormously.

The problem of subject shortages must be addressed. The national curriculum is at risk if we cannot recruit quality teachers and the necessary number of them. I caution against differentials of salary whereby secondary school teachers are compared with primary school teachers, which would further devalue the primary sector.

I hope that the period of upheaval, confrontation and dispute of a few years ago has passed. We must maintain an all-round partnership if reforms are to work and to stick between teachers, parents, taxpayers and children.

I urge praise from the Government for those who have adapted and a period of encouragement and self-value that can be cultivated among teachers, on which public esteem can be built. Without public esteem, education will be relegated and we cannot afford, with fewer and fewer young people, to allow that to happen.

6.37 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I wish to raise the pressing problems experienced in my part of the world with water. We have problems with our beaches, flooding, our water supply and especially sewage treatment.

I especially wish to address my remarks to water quality. Most frightening is the question mark still hanging over the Camelford incident in north Cornwall, in which 20,000 people were affected by aluminium contamination of their water supply on 7 July 1988. At that time, South West Water said that there was no risk to health, but there followed reports of sickness, blue bath water, people's hair turning green and, far more serious, implications for long-term health regarding sulphuric acid contamination of the water supply.

On 5 August—almost a month after the original incident—it was admitted that the contamination had been caused by 20 tonnes of aluminium sulphate being pumped into the wrong tank at Lowermoor treatment works. Over a month later, South West Water finally accepted full responsibility for poisoning the water supply. It was not until mid-December 1988 that it was admitted that the level of poisoning was nearly double the level originally disclosed. Health tests are still continuing on the people of Camelford, but the Government are about to remove themselves from a responsible role by selling off the water authority.

The secrecy surrounding this incident is unforgivable and the Government have colluded in trying to sweep it

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

under the carpet by refusing to hold a proper independent inquiry. I have called for such an inquiry before, and I do so again now in the strongest possible terms. It is a disgrace that no inquiry has been held. The issue should be debated by the House because it has implications generally for water treatment, the protection of consumers and the Government's privatisation strategy. The Government are about to wash their hands of yet another responsibility, but they have failed to solve many of the problems of the water industry in Cornwall or in the running of South West Water.

In 1987, when the South West Water corporate plan was submitted, 196,000 of the authority's customers received at some time water that failed to comply with the bacteriological standards set by the European Community, 129,000 received water that failed the aesthetic acceptability test and 20,000 received water containing excessive undesirable chemicals. By that time, 33 supply areas had been granted delays in coming up to the standard required—and that was before the Camelford incident.

In 1988, 23 of the 109 designated beaches in the South West Water region failed to meet European standards. *The Sunday Times* yesterday revealed that one in five of Britain's sewage works was breaking the law by discharging sub-standard waste into rivers, often by storm overflows, which were cited as one of the worst culprits. Almost one fifth of the beaches in the South West Water area have failed to meet the EC standards and experts have said that it will cost at least £150 million to clean up 14 beaches, including Marazion and Mounts bay. Yet the Government plan to privatise the company and the question mark that hangs over that privatisation is whether a future private company will be able, willing or interested to make the necessary investment.

It is no wonder that there is a problem, for South West Water has admitted that 55 out of the 75 main sea outfalls and 129 out of 134 main estuary outfalls have been judged unsatisfactory. That does not even take into account the storm overflows and minor discharges, which could bring the total number to more than 2,000. The result is that, although we live in an area that relies heavily on tourism to raise money, many of our beaches have failed to reach the safe bathing standards. In the borough of Restormel, for example, Readymoney cove, Fowey, Charlestown-Duporth and Pentewan beaches have failed to reach those standards. Pentewan was found to be pollluted at four times the European limit.

My colleague, Councillor Malcolm Brown from St. Austell, attended a recent structure plan meeting and roundly condemned our sewage problems. He said:

"As a country we are way behind our neighbours in Western Europe."

He was right to highlight that tragedy and we should debate public investment in the water supply before we pack our bags for the Easter holidays. I suspect that many hon. Members will go to foreign climes where such problems do not exist and hope they can quietly forget about them.

I have received many letters from constituents on the same issue. Gorran and District residents association wrote to me saying:

"raw untreated sewage flowing down the main street on to the beach and into the stream which also flows across the beach must be a health hazard."

The Pentewan Sands sailing club, which relies on a clean sea for its income, wrote:

"This year we are holding the World Division 1 Board Sailing Championships. We are greatly concerned over the increasing level of pollution which is adversely affecting the attractions. . .it would be a tragedy if due to the continuing and growing discharge of effluent into the bay, major sailing events were directed away."

The experts back up that concern. A report issued by the Marine Conservation Society and the Coastal Anti-Pollution League says that 300 million gallons of raw sewage are disposed of every day in our coastal waters, much of it in the wrong places and untreated, contrary to the Prime Minister's recent comments on television. She seems to be unaware of the fact that untreated sewage still goes in to our coastal waters. A survey by environmental health officers revealed that 52 per cent. of the beaches in England and Wales failed to meet EEC standards, whereas the Government claimed that the figure was only 38 per cent.

Many of our rivers are deteriorating as well, as a result of changes in farming practice. In 1980, 88 per cent. of rivers were in classes 1A or 1B. By 1985, the figure had dropped to 66 per cent., with only 58 per cent. of monitored river lengths satisfying the river quality objectives.

Part of the problem for Cornwall has been that it has the least dense population, with only 132 people per sq km in comparison with 328—the average for England and Wales. I come from a rural area, where the cost of transporting water and sewage per person is far greater than elsewhere. I am concerned that people in Cornwall will have to pay to clear up the mess after privatisation simply because successive Governments have failed to invest properly in clean water and proper sewerage systems.

Although only 1·5 million live in the South West Water area, at times there are up to 500,000 tourists supplementing that number. Local people therefore have to pay for the infrastructure to support a heavy influx of visitors. Those visitors are welcome, but I am sure that they expect the beaches to be cleaned up through national intervention and Government money, rather than depending on an over-stretched local private company which will not be able to find the money for investment. South West Water is trying to clear up the problem, but the Government have restricted its borrowing powers and, as a result, it is unable to spend any more than its charges. It has no permission to borrow. South West Water must have the opportunity to increase its programme, but the restrictions on borrowing make that impossible.

The result of poor investment in sewage treatment in earlier years has placed an embargo on the building of new homes in many areas of Cornwall. Truro is a prime example. I do not want to seem to be considering only my own patch, so I shall quote from a letter I received from Councillor David Hocking of Penryn, objecting to the embargo in his area. It highlights well the impact that such an embargo can have on local people. He writes:

"The proposed embargo I understand will be a total embargo on all housing, including extensions, which causes great concern. Penryn and Falmouth since 1980 have lost 23 per cent. and 21 per cent. respectively of council owned housing to the private sector with no houses to be built by the District council to replace them the housing problems

continue to get worse . . . In Penryn I have several housing associations interested in building houses on a shared equity scheme, some to rent and some to sell to the private sector to fill an urgent local need, this I feel is under threat as the embargo could last for 5 to 6 or even 7 years and the figure quoted to carry out the necessary work is in the region of £10 million."

Such an embargo on house building, especially in much-needed shared ownership and housing association housing, is catastrophic, especially in view of the difficulties my county has in housing people who are much in need at present.

The Government's only answer to any of that is privatisation. It is hardly a surprise that this Government take that attitude. They believe that, if the shares belong to someone else, the problems do as well. However, whether it is poisoned water or polluted beaches and streams, the problems are public, not private. South West Water has been boasting that it has been reinvesting its profits to start to tackle those problems, but privatisation will transfer those profits into the pockets of already wealthy shareholders.

Prices are already rising for privatisation and the burden is falling on the local population. It is time that the Government started to think about the public good rather than private affluence. After all their words about the environment, they could not do better than to start by investing some of the Chancellor's surplus billions in tomorrow's Budget into cleaning up our water. They would be doing so by public demand and the House should be given the chance to respond.

6.48 pm

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): I wish to refer to compensation following compulsory purchase orders. I ought perhaps to declare an interest—or should I say a non-interest—because in my farming activities I am currently subject to a compulsory purchase order relative to the construction of the M40. That compulsory purchase order is already in place, however, and in the light of that experience I am looking towards the future.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for his recent response at Prime Minister's Question Time. I am grateful that, following our exchange, our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has published a consultative document, albeit rather low-key and somewhat specialised. In general, the proposals—for example, the proposal to rationalise the payment of interest on deferred compensation for a variety of public purposes—are welcome. It is, however, typical of the thinking of any Government that the document appears to have been triggered off by the rather contingent fact that the abolition of the rating system for the domestic householder left no key in place for the calculation of home loss payments so a new formula has had to be devised.

In addition to those detailed considerations, a number of much more general issues of public policy need airing and we should have a full debate on them in due course. The first concerns the very special problems of equity when one privately owned piece of land is taken over by another undertaking which is already, or is about to become, part of the private sector. The House rightly feels that compulsory purchase will be required for public utilities, whether privately or publicly owned. There may be a danger—this is recognised in the consultative document—that one farmer, landowner or householder may have his property taken over and used by another private undertaking for profit. For example, some of the land taken under compulsory purchase order in connection with the Channel tunnel was taken for duty-free shops and the like.

There is another anomaly, on which I may have more to say on another occasion—the anomaly in compensation for the fencing of fast roads. If one's land is taken for a motorway one gets a free fence; if it is taken for a high quality dual carriageway, a fence may be provided but it may be knocked off the calculations. Similarly, there is still a residual problem in the operation of the Crichel Down procedure, which may be of benefit to some landowners but not to others because of different treatments by different public or other requiring authorities.

Those are examples of problems which remain, and a sense of unfairness undoubtedly still pertains. I stress that we have a common interest in straightening out the procedures and in getting things done. We do not say that there is never a case for compulsory purchase—rather the reverse—but the system must be seen to be fair. If it is not seen to be fair, further delays will result in the construction of very necessary works. To cite an example that has arisen just this week, one has only to consider British Rail's experience in trying to construct its Channel link to realise how difficult it is to get proposals accepted over the caucuses of interest in the way.

Such a system will not be acceptable in the future. I will identify three major advances that will be necessary in the planning of any new major infrastructure. First, it will be necessary to show that there is at least some measure of compensating environ-mental benefit for any environmental damage. Secondly, local communities through which the works may run, or which the works may affect, should obtain a measure of compensation for their losses. Thirdly, there needs to be a better deal for the individual. I should like the old philosophy of the compensation law—that one receives market value and no more—altered to allow an uplift of 10 per cent. or some other figure to reflect the fact that the sale is not made with the consent of the seller. In that sense, compensation does not at present reflect the seller's loss.

In any case, we are talking about a matter of public prudence, because it is essential to get common consent if works are to be carried out. The M40 was conceived 20 years before construction began. That is far too long a period. This debate is about delaying the Easter Adjournment, but it draws attention to the dangers and costs of delay in the matters to which I have referred.

6.54 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): One of the themes of our brief debate today has been the need for more public money to be spent. That has been mentioned by Conservative Members, by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and, of course, by Labour Members. We therefore hope that tomorrow's Budget will not be a repeat of last year's Budget, which benefited only the rich and prosperous and held no appeal for the overwhelming majority of ordinary people.

I want to leave a few minutes for my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), but there are two matters that I wish to raise. The first is the report on toxic waste published last week by the Select Committee on the Environment. That report was an

[Mr. David Winnick]

indictment of the appalling extent of the dumping of toxic waste in Britain. Paragraphs 264 and 265 and onwards refer to the situation in my borough, where there is much antagonism between the local community, including the council, and a company whose operations involve toxic waste. Everything in the report proves that the people of Walsall have been absolutely right to demonstrate against toxic waste and to protest against the borough being used as a dumping ground for it. I urge that the report should be debated as soon as possible and legislation introduced at any early date. No one can doubt that the report was highly critical of the way in which the dumping of toxic waste operates in Britain and of the Department of the Environment. We need early action and early legislation to deal with the matter.

The second matter that I am keen to raise, albeit briefly, is one that I raised long before it became a subject of great controversy in connection with a certain novel. In recent months thousands of political prisoners have been executed in Iran. Amnesty International has spotlighted the terror in that unhappy country. A few weeks ago—before the international furore over the novel—a number of Labour Members urged the Government at Foreign Office Question Time to protest in the most effective possible way against the terror, and against the executions taking place in Iran.

Young people in their teens—boys and girls alike—are being put to death by the present regime in Iran. An Amnesty report quotes a prisoner in Iran as follows:

"One night a young girl . . . was brought straight from the courtroom to our cell. She had just been sentenced to death, and was confused and agitated. She didn't seem to know why she was there. She settled down to sleep next to me, but at intervals she woke up with a start, terrified, and grasped me, asking if it were true that she really would be executed. I put my arms around her and tried to comfort her, and reassure her that it wouldn't happen, but at about 4 am they came for her and she was taken away to be executed. She was 16 years old."

That happened not in Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy but in present-day Iran. The use of torture in Iran is widespread—perhaps worse than in any other country since the end of the last war. All honour to those in Iran who have resisted the terror and the continuing mass murders—the time will come when they will be internationally honoured and recognised for what they are doing, just as those who resisted the Nazi tyranny in the 1930s were honoured.

Hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives in the futile Gulf war. I do not say for one moment that Iraq was blameless—I do not have much time for that regime either—but Iran more than any other country was determined to keep that war going and not to allow peace negotiations to take place. It agreed to end the war only at the last moment, when it knew full well that it could not continue because it did not have the manpower to carry on after all the loss of life over the years, and it knew that the regime would be endangered if it continued.

To some extent, Iran has used the controversy about the novel to try to improve its own image, but most Islamic countries as well as Europe and the United States recognise that Iran is a murderous tyranny. Its rulers have been keen to continue to allow torture and murder. Just as in Nazi Germany the first victims before the war broke out were Germans, so today in Iran most of the victims and those who continue to be tortured—boys and girls as well as adults—are devout Moslems. In their last moments before they are executed, they say the prayers of their religion.

It is not for the Iranian regime to make out that it is the sole defender of the Moslem religion—far from it. That is why most Islamic countries recognise Iran for what it is. I hope that we shall have further opportunities to debate the subject after the recess. The regime in Iran has been a party to mass murder, torture and kidnapping and its rulers have shown the same contempt for international law as they have for human rights. There is no need for the United Kingdom to apologise to the Iranian regime. Above all, the Iranian regime should apologise to its own people.

7.1 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The House should not adjourn for Easter unless hon. Members have had a full debate on the poll tax—not a clinical objective debate on the pros and cons of the measure but an opportunity for hon. Members who wish to see its defeat make an unashamed attempt to convince working people, as an act of solidarity and defiance, to join the mass campaign for non-payment.

On 10 March, in a debate about lawlessness, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) said that he will not stay within the law and will not pay the poll tax. If *Hansard* is anything to go by, the hon. Members for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), and for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) and others almost had apoplexy. I hope to raise their political blood pressure a little further in the couple of minutes available to me. Their reaction was to my hon. Friend's legitimate objections to the draconian economic and undemocratic attacks of the poll tax by his strategy of

"selective non-payment by people who wish to give a political lead".—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 1151.]

Either on my hon. Friend's basis or on my preferred strategy of not paying the poll tax as part of a mass campaign of non-payment, over 10 per cent. of Labour Members have already made a similar declaration since 19 of us drew up a non-payment declaration in July of last year. Important or interesting as that may be, far more important is the reaction of ordinary workingclass families.

On Saturday 4 March, 450 delegates and visitors, representing six regional federations and 150 affiliated bodies, attended the founding conference of the All-Scotland Anti-Poll Tax Federation, ranging from the Shetland Islands to the urban heartlands of Lothian and Strathclyde. The federation's affiliated membership is already over 300,000. I searched through every newspaper in the Library, but on Monday 6 March not a word was said in London or Scottish-based newspapers about the conference. The Tory press lowered a cloak of silence on that movement. It may be easy for the Leader of the House to dismiss such observations as part of a conspiracy theory, but I cannot believe that it is a coincidence that there was no report, but no matter. Less easy to hide from the working class of Glasgow will be the 20,000 people on the anti-poll tax march and rally next Saturday 18 March, at a demonstration organised by the Strathclyde federation and the YTURC.

This is the last opportunity for hon. Members to ask for a full debate on the poll tax before its introduction into Scotland next month. It will be introduced into England and Wales one year later, in April 1990.

Most adults in Scotland are now receiving community charge voucher books—12 tear-out slips—to prepare them for their monthly visits to the post office. Despite the severely cushioned and artificially low level of the tax in its first year—the 20th-century version of Danegeld—in a couple of weeks, each single person in employment in Glasgow on a take-home pay of as little as £55 a week will have to pay £25 a month or £6 a week. A man and woman living as a married couple will be jointly considered. If one partner is not employed and not registered as unemployed —therefore, receiving nothing—they will still be liable to the poll tax, even if their partner takes home as little as £110 a week.

In my constituency, the position will be at least as bad. Our city treasurer estimated that, by next April, the poll tax will be £350. I think that it will be nearer £400.

The unemployed, pensioners and students will be expected to pay 20 per cent of the poll tax—that is about £60 a year in Strathclyde or £70 in Coventry. To Tory Members, that may seem to be a minute sum, but no one in the dole queues in Coventry, Scotland or elsewhere can afford to lose the price of two pints of milk, a loaf of bread and a small tin of beans each week. Perhaps that is one reason why, this morning, over 12 months before the introduction of the tax in Coventry, England and Wales, I received a petition from 1,330 pensioners in my area asking for the abandonment of the tax.

Millionaire Tory Members and Lords will save thousands of pounds. Perhaps that is how they managed literally to dig up 100 extra Lords to defeat the Mates amendment last summer. That wealth transfusion will result in individuals such as Lord Vestey saving £4,700 a year—perhaps as compensation for his little local difficulty in paying his tax bills a couple of years back.

At least the current rates system has some correlation with income—the higher the value of the property, the higher the income. The poll tax takes no account of ability to pay. It is regressive, its method of registration is draconian, and it attacks basic civil and democratic rights —for example, the right to vote. My hon. Friends have put those arguments.

We are told that the poll tax is the flagship of the Prime Minister's third term. I prefer to think that, in retrospect, we will regard it as her Titanic—the point at which she and her party's political fortunes went into terminal decline.

From next month in Scotland, and from April 1990 in England and Wales, people will have a choice. They can either pay the poll tax and let the Government continue to ride roughshod over working-class people, or they can refuse to take any more and decide to fight back by refusing to pay the tax, not as individual martyrs but as part of a mass, collective refusal such as that being organised by the Scottish Anti-Poll Tax Federation and by the growing anti-poll tax union movement in the rest of the country.

7.7 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): We have had a long haul since Christmas, but, during that time, we have made good progress with the legislation. Sadly, though, we have suffered the loss of Sir Raymond Gower. He was widely respected and liked on both sides of the House, and his work for his constituency won the esteem of all. We shall miss him.

The debate has raised many national and international constituency issues. In all, there have been 16 contributions. I did not detect much feeling against adjourning for the Easter week. I hope that the House will agree the motion after I have responded to as many as I can of the issues that have been raised.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) took the opportunity to open the debate. He is entitled to do that. He seems, at least for the present, to have given up the traditional role of Opposition Front-Bench Members commenting on Back-Bench speeches, which is a pity. It seems to show perhaps one further move from the days when the Labour party had any responsibility for the Government of this country.

The hon. Gentleman raised two subjects. He referred to the Budget. Obviously, he would not expect me to comment on the Budget. A full and detailed account of the position regarding war widows and their payments was set out before Standing Committee F which considered the Social Security Bill on 7 March. It would not be right for me to quote from the proceedings or go into great detail. I shall make just one or two brief comments on the hon. Gentleman's speech. First, if he thought he was quoting from a letter of the Prime Minister dated 5 April 1983, I must tell him that that letter was a forgery.

Mr. Dobson: My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) referred to that date. In fact, I corrected him and said that it was a letter in 1978.

Mr. Wakeham: I am glad that that has been cleared up, because a number of hon. Members have been talking about a letter dated 5 April 1983 and that was given some currency, when the date was not correct. There was a letter written when my right hon. Friend was in opposition. Of course, since that date there have been a number of changes in the post-1973 position. The tax relief for war widows has changed and there is now age allowance. A substantial number of those war widows also receive full retirement pensions.

As my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security said in Committee, there would be substantial difficulty if we were to apply the post-1973 occupational pensions to war widows because, of course, a number of others would be affected—such as the disabled, other groups of widows and public sector workers—and the cost would be substantially higher than the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras stated.

Mr. Dobson *rose—*

Mr. Wakeham: I shall not give way, because the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) took more time than it was agreed that he should, and I shall not have time to answer a number of the matters raised.

The Minister for Social Security promised on 7 March in a Standing Committee debate to study the details of any particular cases that are sent to him and to assess them on the basis of hardship and need. He will be consulting members of the Committee to consider some of the cases mentioned.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras also mentioned tax relief on private medical insurance

[Mr. Wakeham]

premiums. We believe that relief is needed because members of company medical insurance schemes usually lose their benefit on retirement. We shall need to provide help for those who wish to continue with medical insurance when their income falls and premiums rise.

I can understand the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) about the imports of Russian coal into the Nottinghamshire coalfields. As I believe he recognises, the level of imports is a commercial matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I understand that the small volume of coal imported represented less than one day's burn at the stations involved. Those imports hardly represent a major threat to the relationship between the electricity industry and British Coal. We have always made it clear that the electricity industry must be free to buy its coal where it judges best. Coal will, of course, continue to be the major source of fuel for electricity generation for many years to come. Indeed, I understand that British Coal and the Central Electricity Generating Board have recently agreed to an extension of their existing agreement on coal supplies until 31 December of this year.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) mentioned the methane gas at the Arkwright colliery; indeed, we have corresponded on this subject. He wished to have the release of some documents. Of course, those are British Coal's internal management documents and release of them is a matter for the corporation and not for any Minister. We have no statutory power to compel the release of that information. However, I have every confidence that, if British Coal were asked by the Health and Safety Executive, it would make those documents available.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) rightly mentioned the resurrection of Corby. It was very much a steel town. I remember with affection his predecessor, Bill Homewood, who sat on the other side of the House. He was a steel man all his life. I was sorry to read in the papers that he has recently died. My hon. Friend mentioned the progress that has been made in Corby and gave a lot of credit for that to many people. Not so long ago I visited him in his constituency and I agree with everything he says, except that I believe that my hon. Friend was too modest to include himself in the people who have shown drive and enthusiasm in rebuilding Corby after the difficulties of earlier years. He is right to point other areas to the lessons of Corby.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) mentioned the concern about the burial of diseased cattle in a landfill tip in her constituency. Incineration and burial are both safe methods of disposing of cattle suspected of having BSE, and local needs and circumstances determine which method is used. I appreciate that it is obviously of concern to her constituents, and I have asked my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to write to her to give her the reassurance that I am sure is available.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) spoke about land use. When he speaks about land use, the House is well advised to listen because he knows much about it. As he knows, we have recently encouraged local planning authorities to increase the coverage of local development plans and to keep them up-to-date, so as to provide a clear framework for day-to-day decisions on planning applications. The White Paper entitled "Future of Development Plans" published in January takes that approach further by proposing a single tier of mandatory district-wide development plans to be prepared and adoped by district councils using streamlined procedures. Such plans would need to be consistent with national and regional guidance issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and the planning policies of the county councils.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) rightly raised the question of rivers and pollution in his constituency. I was present when he recently raised the matter with the Prime Minister. The River Derwent near York, which provides a lot of water for his constituency, is of the highest of standards. The Rivers Don and Rother are not so good. Some £25 million will be spent on improving a stretch of the River Don, and improvements to the remainder of the Rother will be made through the extension of the sewage treatment works' capacity that should enable the Rother to be upgraded. I shall certainly draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to the hon. Gentleman's points.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) for raising a number of questions about the EEC. He is right that the way in which we deal with those matters in the House is not as satisfactory as it should be. I am having discussions with a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House to consider whether there can be some improvement.

The hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) raised the concern about the entitlement of certain foreign beneficially owned fishing vessels to remain United Kingdom registered vessels. I believe that he and the Government are on the same side of the matter. That is now before the Court of Appeal and I know that the right hon. Gentleman would not expect me to comment in more detail than that. The judgment is expected on 15 March and then, of course, the case may go to the House of Lords.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) mentioned the working party the House Builders Federation that produced the report to which he referred. I know from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that the report which my hon. Friend produced together with his colleagues is an admirable document and is being considered by the Department of the Environment and others.

The hon. Member the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) raised the question of Newbattle Abbey college, and the Government's decision to cease payment of a grant to that college. Of course, the future of the college is a matter for its governors and trustees. I understand his disappointment at the decision, but I do not accept that the decision was made in haste. It would take too long to deal with the detailed arguments tonight, but I believe that they are set out very clearly in a letter to the hon. Gentleman from my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) raised the question of teacher shortage in primary education. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support of the GCSE and I shall draw his comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. There are more than enough

primary teachers nationwide, but there are recruitment difficulties in parts of London and the south-east. However, recruitment to primary school training is buoyant so there is scope for employing more teachers to meet present shortages. The implications of the national curriculum will change the pattern of demand for secondary subject teachers in the 1990s. We shall have enough teachers overall, but shall need more in some subjects, such as technology, science, and modern languages, and less in some others.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) spoke about the quality of water. The general point needs to be made that one of the great advantages of the Water Bill, which will privatise the water industry, is that it will create the National Rivers Authority. Then we shall have a much better mechanism for improving the quality of our rivers and waters. Privatisation will, of course, enable much more money to be spent on capital investment than in the past. Our recent record for cleaning up bathing waters is a good one—two thirds of the 348 waters in England, Northern Ireland and Wales now meet EEC standards compared with only half in 1986.

My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) raised the question of compulsory purchase. Recently, on behalf of the Prime Minister, I answered a question from my hon. Friend and I was pleased to hear his views tonight. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has issued a consultation paper, but my right hon. Friend is right to stress that, where compulsory purchase is required, compensation must be fair, must be seen to be fair and there should be no undue delay.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) raised the question of the report of the Select Committee on the Environment about toxic waste. As the Prime Minister said to the House the other day, many of the issues raised in the report are already being dealt with. Consultation is near completion, legislation is being prepared and a detailed response to the report will be given by the Government in due course. He was also right to raise the question of Iran and I share his concern about the disturbing reports.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East wants a debate to urge people——

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 22 (Periodic Adjournments).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House at its rising on Thursday 23rd March, do adjourn until Tuesday 4th April and at its rising on Friday 28th April, do adjourn till Tuesday 2nd May.

Orders of the Day

Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

The Arts

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

7.23 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I am glad of this opportunity to celebrate the arts of this country and to apportion credit where credit is due—to my right hon. Friend the Minister and his team at the Office of Arts and Libraries and also to the many administrators in local government and in the arts centres for all that they do to make artistic achievements possible. I should also like to draw attention to the vitality of the arts in Britain and among British artists. In celebrating the arts, we should also look for ways in which to encourage them still further.

Last Saturday, as I was sitting in Southwark cathedral for the installation of our local archdeacon, I found myself considering this debate and how to frame it. I was sitting alongside the memorial to William Shakespeare. Perhaps that was an omen, as I believe that it sums up the theme of my debate—the past excellence of our arts and the ways in which we can emulate that. Looking around that cathedral—not just at the Shakespeare and Chaucer windows, but at the fine architecture—my awareness of that excellence was heightened, and as I listened to the anthem by Thomas Tallis I realised that the ceremony was a celebration of our artistic excellence.

On Saturday afternoon I went with my 11-year-old son to the Festival Hall to attend one of the Ernest Read children's concerts. My son was performing with his school choir as part of that concert, which to me was as much a symbol of our debate on the arts as the excellence of the cathedral and its service. Those concerts introduce young children and their families to the best of British musical performance and encourage them to participate. I stress the importance of participation as well as of understanding and observing the arts. In my own childhood I recall being introduced to music by being persuaded to take up the piano at an early age. I later took up the clarinet. Then, finding that one could get the maximum enjoyment with the minimum effort by changing instruments, I switched to the double bass. That enabled me to get into the school orchestra, so I got to know a lot of music without quite so much rehearsal and practice time as the clarinet would have required. I then discovered that the double bass was a somewhat unwieldy instrument to play in a military band, so I took up the tuba. Such was my introduction to music.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The hon. Gentleman is a real one-man band.

Mr. Bowis: I look forward to hearing the percussion from the Labour Benches a little later.

Alongside my introduction to music I was persuaded to take part in school performances—anything from Lear to A. P. Herbert. I rendered a performance—if that is the right term—of the Mikado and did something to Gilbert and Sullivan. I am not sure what I did, but shortly afterwards D'Oyly Carte closed down. All this shows that from a young age one can participate in the arts. It also shows that if one takes up the tuba and indulges in a little thespianism one can end up on the Back Benches of the House of Commons, but if one does it will be the last that one sees of the pleasures of the stage and the concert hall.

For about 12 years one of my indulgences was being a performer in the Blue Review. Very often I trod the boards under the directorship of my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert). I well remember on one occasion before I came here being taught of the perils of the whipping system and how the Whips did not encourage hon. Members to depart from this place to enjoy the arts. I will put on record one version of my hon. Friend's composition, although I hasten to add that I do not intend to sing it:

"There are many, many ways to keep on top.
When they say 'go' we often have to say 'stop'.
At night they all seek leave to see the opera.
To stay, we say, would be more right and properer.
We get some argy-bargy.
If they miss their Pagliacci;
But they stay in place
Or else they face
The chop!"

I have learnt from bitter experience that this place limits our ability to get out and enjoy the arts as we might like. However, we can play a part in encouraging others to discover the arts. We should encourage people to set out on a lifetime of discovery of the arts.

That voyage of discovery is not just a discovery of the enjoyment of the arts—although that is important. There are many ways in which the arts contribute to society. When I was chairman of an education committee, we endeavoured to bring the arts into education, not just by teaching pupils to appreciate music and drama but by encouraging drama, music and painting as part of the teaching of other subjects to bring history, geography, language and science to life in a way that the drier forms of teaching cannot.

There is a great role for the arts in what may broadly be called enforced leisure, which may be due to sickness, unemployment or imprisonment. Throughout those periods of enforced confinement, the arts can play an enormously important part in helping people to find self-confidence and self-awareness and to regain their self-respect. The arts also play a part at work. We know the need for good designers and the good use of language at work. The arts also have a role to play in public life, in ensuring that we in public life bring artistic qualities to bear when making judgments and decisions as to how to improve the environment.

The social benefits from the arts are legion. The basic facts against which this debate takes place are that 251 million people attend arts events, of whom 49 million attend theatres and concerts, 70 million attend cinemas, 73 million visit museums and galleries—it is not just west end theatres but houses outside London and even local arts centres—and 10 million people attend concerts, of whom 2·5 million attend symphony concerts, 2·2 million attend chamber music concerts and 5·7 million attend rock and pop concerts. Specialist, local and independent museums attract vast numbers of people. Those figures show the vitality of the arts, and the industry directly employs 200,000 people.

The arts also provide therapeutic benefits—the social good that comes from the arts for the individual and the community. Some years ago, I went to Greenwich for the introduction of a community arts project on a difficult estate where there was much vandalism. By bringing in a community arts team and encouraging the people of the estate to come together to create a wall painting, the project brought a feeling of pride in the estate which had not existed before. It also encouraged a determination to protect the estate from outside vandalism and produced a new feeling of self-awareness and self-confidence in the people living there. That example could be repeated throughout the country.

The person who finds that he or she can create through the arts rarely becomes a vandal, graffiti merchant or litter lout. People who find that they share a common interest in the arts are rarely social misfits but instead join others to promote that interest. People in prison can find a new purpose in life through the arts. All too often we are forced to say what a pity it was that such people were not introduced to the arts before they got into trouble because they might have been prevented from ending up in that position. It is much better if we can encourage a person to become interested in the arts at the ground floor level of life so that the arts become a basic part of his or her make-up.

The arts can provide an integral safety net so that when we face tough times we can fall back on our knowledge, understanding and love of the arts to help us through. The arts are not a luxury but a necessity, an essential ingredient in the life of the individual and the nation. The state and the taxpayer should therefore never opt out of supporting the arts. The Government and the state have a role as a patron. That has always been so and it always will be so. Patronage cannot come out of the clouds—the Government must play a part because of the costs and implications involved.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): I have been waiting for the hon. Gentleman to come to this point. All that he has said so far has been acceptable—anyone who does not encourage the arts is foolish—but having come to the question of supportive systems for the arts, is he satisfied that the Government have put enough into the arts? Should we appeal to the Government to put more into the arts? What are his views on the fact that some hon. Members believe that we should have more voluntary supportive systems for the arts?

Mr. Bowis: The brief answer is no—we shall never be satisfied that there is enough support for the arts. However, the Government and particularly my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts have gone a long way to increasing that support and the confidence with which we can plan future support. The plural nature of funding and work to encourage other sources of funding is equally important, but we can never be satisfied that there is enough funding. There will always be new developments in the arts to be considered and funded.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): The Government's expenditure programme on the arts has increased by 33 per cent. in real terms since they came to office in 1979, so they have certainly made a contribution.

Mr. Tony Banks: That is a highly questionable statistic.

Mr. Bowis: I entirely accept the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) that there has been a substantial and significant increase in the arts funding. Even more important so that people can plan ahead we have three-year funding, which has been rolled forward for the fourth year. As well as the role of patron, the state also has a role as the guardian of standards. If the Government and Parliament did not play a role in encouraging high standards in the arts but opted out completely, we should have a mixture of the tawdry and the pedestrian. That is all that the market alone would produce. The market has an important role to play, but it needs guidance from Parliament and Government.

The state must encourage the innovator with talent, because too often the innovator is left behind by private sponsorship, so support must be given from the public sector. In a sense the message that we should give is similar to that which we give to new, young exporters—that we shall provide some export guarantee back-up for them. The state has a role to play as educator—through schools, youth services and continuing education.

The Government's role should be the pursuit of excellence, and to provide cash support for that which is of top quality. The Government should promote the spread of excellence in both central and regional development. I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister has done a great deal to encourage regional development. That applies as much to London, which is far more than just the west end, as to areas outside London. What happens in the boroughs is crucial to the development and health of the arts. Support for touring companies and performers is important, as is support for taking things out of the cellars and drawers and putting them on show, around the country and abroad, to advertise the quality that this country possesses.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): My hon. Friend mentioned the role of the boroughs, and I presume that he was referring to local authority support for the arts generally. Is he aware that some of the regional opera companies have expressed concern that clause 28 of the Local Government and Housing Bill will restrict grants for economic development, and that grants for regional opera companies and other arts organisations may be caught by it? If that is so, does my hon. Friend agree that it is a wholly undesirable development?

Mr. Bowis: If that presents an obstacle to good arts funding, we should certainly examine it. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Minister will say something about it. It also underlines the need to scrutinise Arts Council funding as well as local government funding. The one can help to balance the other.

Mr. Greenway: This has been one of the great successes of "The Glory of the Garden". For a short time I was governor of the Theatre Royal in York and we implemented "The Glory of the Garden" policy to great effect by persuading local authorities to make their contribution.

Mr. Bowis: I accept that point, particularly for regions outside London, although the glory of London occasionally leaves something to be desired.

Continuing to summarise the Government's role, I believe that the Government must encourage the crucial participation to which I referred earlier and tell people to try doing things, not just to sit still. That message must go out to people of all ages. The Government must also provide incentives for plural funding so that new funding opportunities are created and total resources for the arts increased.

Besides what the Government can give the arts we should highlight what they can receive from them. We should put grants into perspective by reminding ourselves of the 200,000 jobs involved and the 250 million people who attend, and of the £30 million that is estimated to come from the arts through local rates. VAT on the arts now contributes £55 million, compared with £35 million in 1983, and the arts earn about £1,500 million directly and indirectly from overseas earnings and from overseas visitors to this country. In addition to all this, the education, industry and social fabric of our nation benefit unquantifiably from the arts.

The Government can be proud of their achievements. My hon. Friends have referred to some of those achievements and I shall highlight a few others, particularly the work of the British Council to which increased funding has been given. The British Council and our embassies, high commissions and consulates do good work abroad. I went to a detention centre in South Africa for young men who had got into trouble in Soweto and found to my surprise that funding from Britain had resulted in English literature being learned there. I went in unannounced, only to discover that they were reading "Macbeth" with evident enjoyment—a plus for British literature as well as for the work done for people in need.

Mr. Leadbitter: The hon. Gentleman has mentioned a commendable body of people. Those of us who have seen the British Council at work can confirm the amount of personal time, expertise and professionalism that its staff put into their work, for the benefit of the people of the countries that they serve. However, whenever I meet British Council staff, as I do fairly regularly, they complain that they have suffered cuts and have had to undo the damage done by those cuts through extra effort and raising revenue themselves. I commend what the Government are doing, but I make a plea to them to raise the expenditure limits in the spirit of the hon. Gentleman's submission.

Mr. Bowis: I have nothing against people raising additional money from elsewhere. I, too, have spoken to the British Council recently and I understand that it received a substantial increase in funding this year, so perhaps the pleas of the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members in all parts of the House have been heard. The British Council's work can therefore continue with confidence.

I also want to highlight the success of the Government's policy of helping inner-city regeneration. I commend the work done with other Departments which led to the British music industry sponsoring the city college for the technology of the arts. I commend the record number of museums that are opening and the record attendance figures, which are soaring towards the 100 million mark —the figure has doubled during the Government's period

[Mr. Bowis]

of office. Theatres that were closed for some years are reopening, which is good. A great deal of business sponsorship is being found, and the three-year funding is a healthy development. I plead with the Arts Council to feed it through. Sometimes the client bodies do not receive the three-year funding, at least not on the level commensurate with the Government's funding of the Arts Council.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent Central): Before the hon. Gentleman gets too carried away by his own rhetoric about museums and starts congratulating the Government on opening private, independent museums in which the Government are not involved, will he reflect on the attendance figures this year, about which the Minister has just replied in a parliamentary written answer? Attendance at the British museum, the Imperial War museum, the national gallery, the science museum, the Victoria and Albert museum and the Wallace collection has declined, and that is related to the fact that the Government have so underfunded the museums that they have to charge for admission, so attendance is falling catastrophically.

Mr. Bowis: Figures fluctuate. The figures for the national maritime museum show that attendance has risen over the years. The hon. Gentleman should examine the results of charging rather carefully. It often means that museums can open on days when they had hitherto been closed. That presents new opportunities for people to go and see them, so let us await future developments.

I should like my right hon. Friend the Minister to seek means of additional support for, and to remove occasional obstacles to, the success of opera. Enormous strides are being made to bring opera to new audiences. I do not mean only "Aida" at Earl's Court or productions in docklands but the whole range of initiatives, outside and inside London. I commend Westminster council's work in taking over performances so as to provide cheap seats at the Coliseum for people who have not seen opera before. The record of the English National Opera is to be commended, too. It has done good work to improve receipts from the box office and from sponsorship. Over the past five years those receipts have risen by 72 per cent., and sponsorship by more than 140 per cent. Grants have risen by 16 per cent. and are increasing by 2 per cent. per year—nothing like the rate of inflation, or the 13 per cent. given to the Arts Council by the Government.

I hope that the Government will look carefully at the financing of bodies such as the ENO. The funding that used to come from Westminster council can no longer do so because of the new local government finance system. The triumvirate of the Office of the Arts and Libraries, Westminster council and the Arts Council needs to come together to resolve the problem.

Grant funding for the Royal Opera House—it is, after all, three companies—has fallen from 53 per cent. in 1985 to about 37 per cent. and is heading towards 34 per cent. One continually needs to assess the danger point for these establishments, because the switch from a balanced budget of public and private sponsorship to excessively private sponsorship can lead to a rather dull programme. At the New York Met, which is 90 per cent. privately sponsored, there is no new work at all and certainly nothing of the quality of this year's Covent Garden programme. I sound a warning note that we should not let that balance get out of kilter.

Staying with the world of music, but moving across the river, I believe there is some good news coming on the south bank. I welcome the proposal to bring the private and public sectors together and Terry Farrell's designs to improve that concrete jungle. That is good news. It is also a good example. It will certainly improve the concert halls and the Hayward gallery. I would question whether we actually need to build a rehearsal hall more or less identical to the main Festival hall right alongside it. I understand from musicians that one either needs to have the actual hall available for the top conductor and top orchestra, or one can make do with the Henry Wood hall, Holy Trinity, which is available now, and perhaps that space could be better used for some other purpose—for example, a theatre of dance for London.

Also we need to encourage those who will take the decisions to address their minds to the need to have an orchestra in residence on the south bank. It has worked successfully at the Barbican with the London Symphony Orchestra. The royal philharmonic orchestra is now an ad hoc touring orchestra, and I would have thought the London philharmonic orchestra, either on its own or merged with the Philharmonia, if that is practical, could become the resident orchestra of the south bank and raise the quality of music there.

Turning to theatre, I am a great believer in the Institute of Contemporary Arts, and I am sad to see that a question mark still hangs over it. If one looks at the quality of that institution over the years, starting some 40 years ago with the young artists Bacon, Hepworth and Moore then coming through and being promoted as the face of modern art, one sees what they have done since to encourage not just the visual arts but also theatre and film, the theatre de complicité, DV8, the programme coming in now of novostroika from the Soviet Union with the Almanakh group of poet performers. These things are excellent examples of the encouraging of modern innovative art, and the continued partnership between the ICA and the Arts Council should be encouraged.

On the smaller theatre, I have referred before to pub theatre, with which I have had some involvement, and the need to look at licensing. These are too small to qualify as fully fledged theatres and tend to be lumped with clubs, thus needing 48-hour membership, which deters people from coming in. They have all sorts of difficulties, and now they are plagued by some London authorities, the latest one being Camden with the Hampstead theatre and the Viceroy. We need something like the initiative being taken by the London Association of Studio Theatres, which is drawing up a code of practice. If that code of practice could be adopted, by all local authorities but especially in London, we could remove that particular hindrance to the small theatre.

An even smaller theatre is the Theatry of Puppetry. Puppetry does not often get a mention in this place, but I will mention it because its national centre is in my constituency at the Battersea arts centre.

Mr. John Greenway: The place is full of them.

Mr. Bowis: I used the word "puppetry". On the whole, the puppets are not here today to participate.

There is a danger that this national, indeed, international, resource was overlooked in the changeover from ILEA to the local boroughs, and I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister to look carefully to see that its interests are preserved.

I cannot pass by on today of all days, the eve of the Budget, without mentioning the danger to the nation's reading posed by the constant threat of VAT on the written word. I put in the plea, which I hope and am confident will be heard, that it would not really be helpful to the arts, the literary world or education in this country if a 15 per cent. tax, surcharge, penalty or whatever one likes to call it were imposed on the written word. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will join me in making that message very clear to our right hon. Friend the Chancellor. There is no legal requirement for it and it could only damage the education and indeed the economy of the country. I know from my own inner-city area how many people need to benefit from learning to take advantage of the economic opportunities which exist.

Mr. Leadbitter: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important matter. He has just completed a quartet of important concerns, referring to the Royal Opera House, the theatre and the written word. He referred to the amount of money going to the Royal Opera House, which has dropped from over 50 per cent. to 33 per cent. He will recollect that his hon. Friend indicated following my first intervention that there had been a Government improvement in funding of 33 per cent., so, with the shortfalls to which the hon. Member has referred and the increases to which his hon. Friend has referred, does this not suggest an organisational problem and that the imbalances to which he referred might arise from conflicts within the art world, the power of certain personalities and the institutionalisation of the art forms that he has described?

Mr. Bowis: I shall not go into personalities, but a danger of imbalance is implied. It does not conflict with what my hon. Friend was saying because, of course, total figures can go up. I was referring to the percentage of the total and the need to keep the balance right. It will still be possible for the overall figures to increase, as I hope will be the case.

Finally, there is the question of libraries. I went to the launching of the library campaign and I welcomed it as such because it is right that people should be made more aware of their libraries and should put greater pressure on local authorities to keep them as a high priority in local government spending. Although the Library Association has it right, the library campaign is fighting a campaign which relates to the position before my right hon. Friend made his announcement on the Green Paper consultation.

Having looked at their literature, which refers to 165 library service points closing down, one knows that the actual figure has gone up from 14,000 to 18,000, so that is misleading. Reference is made to a 13 per cent. fall in the number of books, but one knows that there has been no fall. There is reference to library book stocks falling by 4 per cent., but the actual stocks have increased from 110 million to 116 million, so that, too, is misleading. There is reference to a cut of more than 1,000 jobs, when one knows that staffing is up to the highest level for 10 years. That, too, is misleading.

One sees reference to the Government forcing libraries to make people pay when one knows that the Government have actually introduced legislation prohibiting local authorities from charging for lending books but permitting those who wish to bring in some additional income from other sources. All that is a pity, because it takes attention away from what should be a good campaign to look for ways of encouraging more people to make better use of their libraries and to put greater pressure on authorities to spend more on them.

To summarise, Bishop Creighton said that the one real object of education is to leave a man continually asking questions. I believe that the object of the arts is to enable men to seek answers to those questions within a framework of aesthetic and cultural understanding. I believe that the arts bring an awareness of what is beautiful and hence a determination to avoid and reject what is ugly. I believe that the arts give individuals, communities and nations an identity and self-confidence. I believe that the arts demand of Governments a light and sensitive touch which seeks to nurture without seeking to mould. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, we have the environment in trust for future generations. In the same way, we have the artistic heritage in trust for future generations. I hope that future generations will look back on our stewardship and say that we enhanced the artistic life of this country.

7.59 pm

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): I came into the Chamber—it seems only a few moments ago—to find that for the first time in my experience of 20 years in this place, special time had been given to the arts. That is not to say that the arts have not been mentioned before, because nothing new happens in the House of Commons. Perhaps I missed other debates on the arts.

The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) has raised a subject which touches the very pulse of human personality in our society. The search for the enhancement of human dignity and our latent talents begins with a child's education. The teacher pursues those talents. The essence of teaching is not to instruct, but to ask questions and see how best the great discovery of seeking answers can generate a child's activity. When I was a teacher I used to have a saying that there is success in every child if only we can find it. That is the teacher's function.

The hon. Member for Battersea has done a service for the House by considering a broader brush of the world of the arts. He has referred to opera houses, the written word and the theatre. I cannot recall whether he mentioned the film industry. If he did not, that may have been an oversight, but we must consider that very important topic.

The very seedcorn of dealing with the larger parameters of the arts begins in our schools. When I talk to teachers I find that they are very worried about budgeting in schools. That worry is pressing on teachers to such an extent that we must listen to them. My teachers are not well paid for their excellent work. They have to take money from their own pockets to meet the expenditure shortfalls and so pay for the necessary equipment and instruments to present wider artistic opportunities to their children.

The arts are the great regenerative force within the educational process. The arts are fundamentally useful even to the child pursuing a career in civil engineering.

[Mr. Ted Leadbitter]

They are also fundamentally useful to budding economists. If a child entered that profession, he would be wonderfully 100 per cent. correct because no economist agrees with another and each believes that he is right.

Apart from that degree of cynicism, the Government are not sustaining the very foundations of the art world which are present in our schools. Geniuses like Attenborough have brought this country a remarkable reputation for producing films which attract thousands of people outside this country. Those films provide inspiration, which is part of the experience of art, to go out and try to emulate that genius in some other form within an individual's own abilities.

I went to see a film directed by Attenborough not very long ago. I came away feeling a little proud of the fact that I had learnt something about India. Before then I had read some of the more diverse views and the historical distortions in the British press which were responses to the power struggles of the time and which failed fundamentally to give us the true picture of what happened in parts of the Commonwealth and before that in the British empire.

There are real truths in film art. I am only a lay person and I am limited in the language referred to by the hon. Member for Battersea. Perhaps I could do better in the written word. However, the Government must be mindful to promote and encourage the arts and be acquiescent in areas like the film industry where we must do more. There is genius trying to gain expression in this country. As I said about children, there is success in everyone if only we can find it.

I believe that one of the great art forms is conversation between human beings. People may say that that is not an art form, but it is. When I listen to people who unfortunately are not well off, who are exceptionally poor, who cannot really spend much time thinking about anything else but how to make ends meet, I discover that their conversations are limited, prejudicial, restricted and unhappy. We need money to solve that problem. There is a great deal of latent talent imprisoned because of poverty and simply because people's houses are cold. Who the hell can read a book in a cold house?

All human experience is art. The enhancement of art's separate parts will never reach the desired heights if we neglect what makes the human emotions tick and if we neglect what makes people move and do things. Ambition is good enough for many people, but great ambitions have been buried because people have not had the opportunity in society to open out and flower.

The hon. Member for Battersea referred to the theatre. It is a long time since I had the chance to go to the theatre because this House is a bit of a crazy place. Of course we like to be here, but 100 per cent. of my time is interesting only to me. I love this place and I want to be in it. I do not have time to go out, so I am ignorant about the theatre. When I was a young boy I used to write one-act plays; I did not get much further because one must accept one's own mediocrity. Nevertheless, I know that the theatre is important for the players, the playwrights and those who make profits from it. I would not deny people the right to make profits, because that is an important element of the industry. I do not deny that the theatre is important, and if it is not supported properly, it will wither away in the same way as the film industry.

Mr Bowis: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, although support for the arts has been apparent in respect of teaching drama and English literature, it has not until now been in evidence in respect of music and the arts, which for the first time have entered the national curriculum? Does the hon. Gentleman celebrate with me that step forward?

Mr. Leadbetter: Yes: the hon. Gentleman and I are at one. My comments are meant as an attack on the institutionalisation of our systems. What frightens me to death is the abrasiveness of the Government, who have gained power partly by telling people that they will widen choice and freedom of expression—but instead, we have seen 10 years of interventionism of the worst possible kind.

This is no longer a namby-pamby debate about percentages and extra funding: it is a debate about attitudes. When we leave the Chamber after this three-hour debate, will we say to ourselves, "That was a good debate—now let us us have our dinner," or will we follow it up by insisting that this and any future Government will give proper attention not only to finance but to the other great armies of encouragement that can expand and promote the whole world of art, so that people may experience the joy and satisfaction of learning, of being responsive to the talents of others, and of living in the world of imagination? Simply enjoying the company of creative people is itself a great part of art.

We must embrace the comments of the hon. Member for Battersea and become ambassadors for the arts in our own constituencies, not just prattle statistics. I wonder whether right hon. and hon. Members are conscious of a new trend, whereby the Prime Minister, and senior, junior and aspirant Ministers visit constituencies and instead of reading their prepared Whitehall briefs, as was the tradition, make announcements of moneys that will be dolloped here and there. There are agencies all over the country dealing with unemployment, and they are given a few thousand pounds here and there. However, I can tell the electorate that the Government are not really handing out any money. There are great schemes afoot, all associated with the arts.

A few days ago, in the northern region, the Government were handing out money. I said to one colleague, "It is not fair." We have been promised support for a great project. I am told that the principles involved will be pleased to provide donations for Hartlepool arts school and for its college of further education. They will make those donations because they are decent people, but they know that if the project does not develop, the Government will not give the millions of pounds that they have promised, and a stopper will be put on it.

I return to the fundamental heads of art that lay people such as myself understand: drama, film, libraries and museums. I find in every quarter that the people concerned with their management complain that they lack resources. That appears to be the truth. I am not in a mood to question the claim that there has been 33 per cent. extra funding, or that the Royal Opera's funding has not been reduced from 50 per cent. to 34 per cent. However, I find it strange that honest, decent and highly professional people in opera and the theatre should complain if there

has been increased funding. They complain because of the lack of adequate funding to keep pace with the demands made on the particular head of art with which they are concerned.

I have not prepared any figures, and one must be amiable and not challenge the claims of right hon. and hon. Members. Nevertheless, there is a three-line Whip, so that any right hon. or hon. Member who speaks in tonight's arts debate must appear to be at one with all the others. Not a single right hon. or hon. Member wants any harm done to the arts. Countrywide, we all want to improve the system so that we shall get the best from the arts. There is unanimity on that point. If there is that unanimity, we must not be afraid of acknowleging that in some sectors of the arts—such as the film industry—we must listen to the people who run them, and accept that they are the professionals and are not wasting our time by bleating about nothing. In other words, just for once will the Government, instead of talking, listen?

8.17 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter), to whom we all enjoy listening, will forgive me if I do not follow him through all the highways and byways that he described with such precision. I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) not only on his good fortune in the ballot but on choosing the subject that he did. His speech was as thoughtful, perceptive and elegantly phrased as I have hard for a long time. I cannot promise to follow him in his eloquence or precision, because I did not know until six o'clock that this debate was to take place. For the past week I was in America, in the company of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), and learned only this evening of the debate—with mixed feelings, I admit, because I had to withdraw from a rather splendid publishing party.

I also congratulate and thank my right hon. Friend the Minister. Hon. Members on both sides of the House know that if I congratulate a Minister I really mean it. My right hon. Friend has held his present post for longer than any of his predecessors, and has held it with an amiable distinction that is thoroughly admirable. There are few Ministers in any Government of whom it can be said, "He has made no enemies." My right hon. Friend has had opponents from time to time—people who have disagreed with his emphasis on this or that—but he has made no enemies in the arts world.

I must be frank. When my right hon. Friend became Minister for the Arts there was some scepticism about his appointment, because he had not been publicly identified with the arts before. He quickly showed himself, however, to be the best kind of Minister, a ready listener and a quick learner anxious to master his subject as well as to know his brief—for there is a real difference between the two.

My right hon. Friend has travelled around the country. His policy has been that of the open door; he has never refused to see anyone with a legitimate interest to advance. He has made countless friends and, as I have said, no enemies.

Mr. Tony Banks: He should be canonised.

Mr. Cormack: Not yet; that will come later.

My right hon. Friend's tenure has been very distinguished. Moreover, although the present Government's actions have not always earned my unqualified approbation, our arts record has been good. We need look only at the list of our achievements: the creation of the National Heritage Memorial Fund—a particular interest of mine, as my right hon. Friend knows—the Historic Building and Monuments Commission, now more generally known as English Heritage, and the building and opening of the Tate in the north. I could name many more such achievements which I am sure will prove lasting.

Funding, after one or two leaner years, has been nurtured by my right hon. Friend. I entirely support the concept of plurality, but I was very glad to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea point to the dangers that can be created by too much sponsorship or too much of any kind of individual funding. Too much sponsorship can lead to a lack of initiative and adventure; too much state funding, on the other hand, can lead to a stultifying of creative endeavour because people feel that they must respond to a particular mood or desire.

That does not mean, however, that I agree with all that the Government have done, even in this regard. I was closely involved in the Select Committee report, published as long ago as 1981. We laboured long with that report, taking evidence in many places and from many people—including the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), whom I hope will have the good fortune to catch your eye later, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman gave the Committee some excellent evidence, and we began a friendship that I hope will last while we are both in the House of Commons—which I hope will be a long time for both of us.

The Government did not respond to that important report with the alacrity and comprehensiveness that I should have liked. Many of its recommendations still have not been implemented, although they could and should be. There is certainly no cause for complacency. That is another of the endearing characteristics of my right hon. Friend the Minister. He is not a complacent man.

Despite our lobbying year after year, we still have VAT on repairs to listed buildings. As our heritage is a particular interest of mine, I hope that tomorrow when the Chancellor stands at the Dispatch Box he will be able to excite an extra-fervent cheer from me by announcing a move in the right direction.

Much remains to be done, and my hon. Friend was right to say in reply to an intervention by the hon. Member for Hartlepool that we should never be satisfied. A particular cause for concern, if not dissatisfaction, is the crisis—I use the word deliberately—surrounding one of our greatest national institutions, the Victoria and Albert museum. I do not wish to castigate or pour scorn on any individual, because I believe that that achieves little other than making people angry and resentful, and I should like to see peace break out. It must be acknowledged, however, that the Victoria and Albert museum, which houses one of the greatest collections of collections and is one of the glories of the museum world, is in a sad and sorry state.

My point is not that some of the museum's collections have not seen the light of day for many a long year or that parts of the fabric are in a dangerous condition, although I know both to be true. I am referring to the crisis that has developed in relations between the director and trustees on the one hand and the staff—especially senior staff—on the

[Mr. Cormack]

other. I do not seek to apportion blame. I do not wish to impugn anyone's integrity, or to accuse anyone of acting from base motives.

Mr. Tony Banks: That is all the fun gone.

Mr. Cormack: The trouble is that we have reached a stage at which we must put the fun aside and try to solve the problem. It will not help to solve it if we give vent to spleen in the Chamber tonight, amusing as it may be—and I occasionally enjoy jousting in invective with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West.

I have received numerous letters—marked "confidential", so I should not dream of naming the authors—from people serving in the V and A who feel deeply disturbed. They are not troublemakers but people who have devoted years, in some cases decades, of their lives to scholarship and to that institution in particular. I am not referring to the eight who have reluctantly accepted redundancy. I refer to others who are still there and are still anxious that the museum should succeed; who are concerned that visitor figures have plunged from 2 million to 1 million over a relatively short time; who recognise that there is indeed a managerial problem, and that the time has come when many solutions that might not have been contemplated a few years ago will have to be contemplated. They are not narrow-minded bigots, nor do they refuse to move with the times. They are genuinely troubled servants of a great institution.

Those people are troubled, not because someone has proposed a radical solution to their difficulties, but because of the manner in which that solution has been proposed. I hope that nothing that I say this evening will make the position worse, because I hope to do exactly the opposite. I shall make no comment on the trustees, many of whom I know and all whom I know I like and respect. I believe the chairman to be a man of great distinction who has shown—for example, in the selfless service that he has given the Royal Opera House for many years—that his heart is in the right place. Let me nevertheless say to him and to his fellow trustees that, whether they have got the solution right or wrong, they have certainly got the methods wrong.

There has been a lack of consideration—or apparent consideration—a lack of sensitivity and, certainly, a lack of consultation. A group of people, many of whom have given years, if not their whole working lives, to the institution, feel that their expertise has been set at naught, their experience ignored, their contribution discounted and a theoretical solution imposed on them without any chance to discuss it. That is how they see it. As hon. Members know, appearances and how things are perceived are terribly important. It is sometimes said that perceptions are more important than realities in politics, and we all have to bear that in mind.

I am not accusing Lord Armstrong or his trustees of anything. I am not suggesting that they have anything other than the future of the museum close to their hearts. I am not suggesting that they are doing anything other than what they consider to be right. But I am telling them as gently and as firmly as I can that their approach is wrong.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts has always demonstrated a genuine belief in the arms length principle. He has always taken the line that one appoints trustees and lets them get on with the job, that the trustees appoint a director and let him get on with the job and that it is important that the relationship between the trustees and the director should be right. So far, so good—I do not quarrel with that—but an even more important ingredient for a successful institution is that staff should have confidence in the director and the trustees. The staff of the Victoria and Albert museum, or a great many of them, do not have confidence in their director or the trustees. It may be due to misunderstandings, misinterpretations or over-hasty reactions—I am certainly not suggesting that all is right on the one side and all wrong on the other—but the staff do not have that confidence and we would be doing them, the nation, and one of its greatest institutions a disservice if we pretended otherwise.

There comes a time when the Minister has a role to play. I know that my right hon. Friend would be reluctant to acknowledge that. If I were in his position—and I sometimes wish that I were—I should have an equal reluctance, so I do not criticise him. But when a crisis of confidence has reached such proportions, someone has to step in, and the obvious person is the Minister. At the very least he should try to initiate some proper discussions conducted with equal respect on each side. The trustees, or a group of them, and the senior employees, or a group of them, should sit down together and discuss where they are going with the Victoria and Albert.

It is important that those who want to make far-reaching changes explain precisely how and why, and answer and argue, in a way that we seek to answer and argue when debate in the House is at its best. It is important that the trustees listen most carefully to the misgivings—they may be misapprehensions—of those over whom they have been set in trust. The Minister must intervene in the gentlest way to get that process going, as that is absolutely essential if the problem is to be resolved. I hope that he will.

I shall not be so presumptiously pompous as to suggest precisely how he should do that, as every Minister has his own approach. My right hon. Friend has shown that he is good at winning people's trust and confidence. He has made a lot of friends and he has no enemies, and he knows many of the people concerned. My suggestion is not a prelude to the sacking of the director. I knew the last director of the Victoria and Albert, Sir Roy Strong, very well indeed. I do not know the present director. I have met her but I have never had a proper conversation with her, so I make no comment about her competence. But if the museum is to take its rightful place in the artistic life of the nation in future, as it has in the past, the director has to enjoy the confidence of the staff, which she does not at the moment.

I am told that the director has not gone around from department to department and discussed in detail how they are run. If that is so, and I hope that she will forgive me for saying so, she has been mistaken, but mistakes can be rectified and the situation is not beyond recall. The talks and correspondence that I have had make it plain that all those people want is for the institution to flourish in future, as it has done in the past. They recognise that there are difficulties, and, as all-party Committees of this House have recognised, they see that things have to be put right. It is not a perfectly run institution and all the objects within it have not been properly displayed or, in some

cases, conserved. Some things have to be changed, and tighter management may well be needed. But nothing can be achieved until confidence has been restored.

My right hon. Friend did not have a good reputation in the Foreign Office for nothing. I hope that he will use his considerable diplomatic abilities to get the people who matter together and to tell them that the stakes are far too high to allow personal vendettas or petty squabbles to ruin the future of a great institution. The trustees, the director and the staff all have roles to play and they should play them together. If, as a result of tonight's debate, so splendidly initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea, there is the beginning of a solution at the Victoria and Albert, we shall not have forgone our parties and our suppers in vain.

8.37 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). I listened with great interest to the paean of praise that he delivered to the Minister, although a little later he let slip that he would like to be in his place. I think that he would make a very good Minister in a Conservative Government, although he is not always certain that he is wholly with his own party, and for that reason we like him even more. I hope that I do not do him a disservice in urging his appointment on his colleagues, any more than he did for me in revealing to a startled world that we were together last week in the United States of America.

I have one major disappointment I will announce immediately and that is the debate will not be graced by the presence of the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) who brings a certain muscular approach to the arts that we find at least amusing, and from time to time he even stumbles on a grain of truth. But we know that his contribution to the arts in Britain resembles that of the Luftwaffe to town planning.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on initiating the debate. Indeed, I was impressed by his range of talents. I am surprised that he bothered to come into politics. He obviously could have pursued a profitable and, who knows, a more rewarding career elsewhere. Perhaps he too aspires to sitting on the Front Bench as Arts Minister. There are quite a few on the Government Benches, and one or two on the Opposition Benches, who would like to be considered if a short list were to be drawn up.

The hon. Member for Battersea commented on the fact that the Prime Minister has been "greened" recently. His one mistake was to bring her into any consideration of artistic matters. We all know that she is into re-reading Freddie Forsyth and going to "The Mousetrap". I suppose that that is a start, but she has a long way to go before she can genuinely claim to be one of the muses—*[Interruption.]* I am afraid that good taste makes it impossible for me to answer that question.

I was interested to hear that the hon. Member for Battersea's kids go to the Ernest Read children's concerts at the Royal Festival hall. I acquired what taste I have in musical appreciation by going to the Robert Mayer concerts in the Central hall and then in the Royal Festival hall. I want to say how deeply grateful I am to the Inner London education authority for all the benefits that it gave me through opportunities to go to concerts, plays and other artistic events. I hope that the Minister and some of his colleagues realise what great damage they have done to the arts and to the artistic education of young children by destroying ILEA.

The hon. Member for Battersea mentioned the Royal Festival hall. I hope that he goes over and enjoys the open foyer policy that was pioneered by the Greater London council when I chaired the arts committee. There was an empty space, much like the empty space in Westminster hall that I complained about earlier this afternoon. It is criminal to have so much empty space when so many young artists—dancers, sculptors or painters—would like to use that space to display their talents to an appreciative world.

I noticed that during the day the Royal Festival hall was used just by people, mostly from Shell middle management, who came to a rather over-priced restaurant. The rest of the place was empty. I thought that the best thing to do was to turn that space to use. It was a great move by the GLC to open up the Royal Festival hall, with 25,000 people a week coming in at lunchtime to enjoy the free music and the various exhibitions, and perhaps overcoming the fear of the threshold that many people have when they view great artistic buildings.

The sordid bit that I leave to the end is that it was good value for the ratepayers of London because it made money. The GLC did not turn away from that, because it meant that not only were we involving more people in the arts, but we were providing more funds for other artistic activities in the capital. I am delighted that the South Bank board retained the open foyer policy of the Royal Festival hall that it inherited.

I am alarmed and concerned at the proposals that are emerging from Mr. Stuart Lipton and Mr. Terry Farrell for the south bank. I am sure that Mr. Lipton is altruistic and that his only concern is the welfare of the arts in London, but more cynical Members might suggest that he wants a return on the £200 million of investment that he intends to put into the south bank. I am worried about that because for such investment he will require a commercial return and commercial activity that could grate against what has been achieved so far.

I do not believe that such an important development should be something upon which the Minister says nothing. I am ready to give way to the Minister at any time. The matter is too significant to be left in the hands of a non-elected body—the South Bank board—accountable to no one save the Arts Council and therefore himself. Certainly, it is not accountable to the people of London, or to the people of Lambeth or Southwark who live in the immediate vicinity. That sort of development should be left to private developers, looking for a return on capital, and to a non-elected body.

That the Minister says nothing about it is not right. It could be argued that it is the cultural centre not only of the capital but of the whole country. That being so, the Minister should intervene and at least let us know exactly what he intends to do. He does not want to intervene. I suspect that my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), the next Arts Minister, wants to intervene. No, he does not.

Mr. Fisher *rose*——

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend had his opportunity and he blew it.

Mr. Bowis: Let me not come between the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and his Front Bench. Am I not right in saying that just a moment ago the hon. Gentleman was praising the perspicacity and perceptiveness of the South Bank board for what it has done in the open spaces in the Royal Festival hall? Surely that is the board that will have the final say in what goes into the new development. Does the hon. Gentleman also agree that it proposes to extend the artistic provision in that area and on those draughty concrete walkways where, for 35 years in the public sector, nothing happened?

Mr. Banks: The South Bank board retained the open foyer policy because it would have been calamitous and unacceptable if it had done anything else. Of course, the policy was showing a good return as well. I do not say that I have only praise for the South Bank board because what used to be the literary centre set up by the Greater London council in the restaurant to which I referred has now been turned back into a restaurant. So I will not be unqualified in what I say about the South Bank board.

I am concerned about the development that has been proposed. I want genuine public consultation about the scheme. I think that in London we have a right to demand that. Indeed, the House has a right to demand it on behalf of the country as a whole. I do not want to see Disneyland on the south bank. I know that the gentlemen concerned in the new enterprise have to make a return on capital. The South Bank board might not want the scheme but it will have little choice unless the Government are prepared to put up funds through the Arts Council to provide some of the things which the hon. Member for Battersea mentioned, such as covering up those appalling walkways. I want to make sure that decisions are not taken behind closed doors by the South Bank board, with no public involvement and no press or public allowed in to those meetings. I do not want it all to be done cosily by the South Bank board, with us having no influence at all.

There is a shopping mall element in the proposals. Probably we will have hamburger stands and sock shops. I do not want those. If I did, I could go to Victoria station. That is not the way to use the South Bank. When I chaired the GLC arts committee I put forward proposals for covering the walkways. If this wretched Government had not abolished the GLC in 1986, against the wishes not only of myself—I agree that I was biased—but of a majority of Londoners, we would have had schemes to cover the walkways. We would not have had McDonald's and sock shops but something that was compatible with the south bank as a centre for the arts in London. When the Minister replies, I hope that he will tell us what thoughts he has had so far about the proposals for the south bank.

I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Battersea talking about the economic benefits of the arts and saying that they were not a luxury but a necessity. He would not have found favour with his hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington or with other hon. Members who are not here, I am relieved to say, although they might have learnt a few things if they had been. Ministers need to accept that we are talking about a cultural industry and not about something arty-farty, a bit of icing on the cake. We are talking about something that makes a genuine and economic contribution to the fabric of society. Therefore, I do not look on this as a subsidy for the arts. Government funding is an investment in the arts. I can think of few finer forms of public investment than investment in the arts. If that approach is taken, I can only say that I do not shar the feelings of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Soutl who had such great praise for the Minister. The Ministe has done better than some of his predecessors, but that wa not very difficult.

Looking at the amount of money that the Governmen have put into the arts, I challenge the figure that th Minister throws out from time to time—33 per cent. in rea terms. When one starts to disaggregate it, it does not lool like that at all. Taking into account the money that th Government took away when they abolished the GLC anc the metropolitan county councils, as well as investment ir the British Library, one gets round to a far more modes figure in terms of the arts—certainly the performing art —in this country.

The Policy Studies Institute has just announced in a report—I do not think that the report has yet beer published—that between 1983 and 1988 it was estimated that the growth, in real terms, in arts expenditure was 1 per cent. a year. I am one of those people who would be quite happy to submit these various statistical claims to some arbitrating body so that we might know the truth. We have seen the Government manipulate so many sets of statistics so often that the Minister can hardly be surprised if we find it very difficult to believe everything that he says.

On the rolling programme basis for arts funding, I welcome the idea of providing a degree of certainty. The certainty that the arts seem to have been given here is the certainty that they will lose money next year. As I understand it, we are talking about an increase of 2 or 3 per cent. in the Arts Council's budget for next year. With inflation at 6·5 per cent.——

Mr. Fisher: It is 7 per cent.

Mr. Banks: Very well—7 per cent., and rising.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Seven and a half per cent."] Seven and a half per cent.: it is rising so fast that I can scarcely keep up with it. What we are talking about, therefore, is a cut in real terms. The Minister should bear that in mind when next he comes to the Dispatch Box to talk about what a wonderful job the Government have done for the arts in this country.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): My hon. Friend keeps calling it a rolling programme. It is not really a rolling programme but a three-year programme. A rolling programme is one in which, each year, thought is given to what will be happening three years ahead, with minimum and maximum expansion percentages.

Mr. Banks: It is rolling rather like a steamroller, and it is going backwards downhill. It is something like that—it is all in there somewhere. Pick the bones out of that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Someone today drew my attention to a figure concerning the Northern Ireland Office. Apparently, it has increased arts expenditure by 21 per cent.

Mr. Fisher: That is right.

Mr. Banks: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the shadow Minister, who clearly has the expertise to enable him to switch sides and give us the facts. I hasten to add that we could all switch sides with him.

That increase seems remarkable. I welcome it, of course, but I should like to know the reason behind it. Surely the Minister for the Arts must be very envious of

the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. If such a large increase is felt to be necessary in Northern Ireland, why not in the rest of the country?

I want to mention something else that I saw in *The Times* today. Tomorrow is Budget day, and there is just a possibility that the Chancellor will talk more about tax concessions—who knows?—for the arts. A report—again, one yet to be published—quoted in *The Times* this morning, says:

"Tax concessions on funding for the arts introduced in the 1986 Budget have been a flop.

The changes which took effect from April 1987 were designed to boost company-giving, to introduce payroll-giving and higher rate relief on covenants for individuals.

A draft of the report by the management consultants Touche Ross showed that incentives have not been enough . . . A particular failure has been gifts from individuals. Response to payroll-giving has been negligible—of the 91 organisations which responded to inquiries, six had introduced the scheme and only one still operated it."

Of course, the fact is that it has been a flop. So, indeed, I might add, has been much of the Chancellor's economic strategy, but we are concerned about this flop within the arts.

The Minister made great play on the amount of business sponsorship—contributions from corporations and from individuals that the arts could fall back on. But that simply is not enough. We on this side of the House have no ideological hang-up about accepting private money for the arts. However, it is really just top-up money. It can never be anything more than a little bit on the side—though perhaps that is an unfortunate expression, given the revelations about Members and their research assistants that we have been reading in the newspapers recently.

The Minister should not place too much faith in private sponsorship. Public investment in the arts is generally disinterested—disinterested, in the sense that it is not looking for a commercial return. Business men do not give money for nothing. They do not give it as an act of total generosity. They expect and, indeed, receive a great deal back. In fact, they add very little to the great body of the arts that we have inherited.

The hon. Member for Battersea mentioned the New York Met. He said that it was producing no new work. Of course, the United States relies very heavily, if not exclusively, on private sponsorship of the arts. We are not going to add to our great cultural inheritance in this country if we allow the managing director of Shell, of Metal Box or of GKN to decide who and what is going to be funded in artistic terms. It is not surprising that this scheme has been a flop. I suspect that the Chancellor will not want to refer to it in any great detail tomorrow.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the disturbing features of commercial sponsorship is that the sponsors do not contribute for altruistic reasons? They would gain more credit if they did, with a very small acknowledgment on the back of some card or programme. In fact, they insist on scattering their name and logo over every bit of paper and other material they can lay their hands on. In fact, they are prostituting the arts for the sake of advertising.

Mr. Banks: That is true of the generality of corporate sponsors of the arts. Indeed, they go further. They insist on being allocated large blocks of seats to entertain their clients. The orchestra or the artist is often required to come to a reception, perhaps provided by the arts body itself, so that the chairman of the board and the directors, and whoever else is involved, can be seen with famous people. That is the way it is done. These people do not contribute out of altruism; they contribute—and I do not blame them—because it is very good for public relations. Many of them, when they underwrite exhibitions, for example, do not have to contribute anything at all, particularly if the exhibitions are very successful. They get a very good return in terms of corporate image-building.

As I came in on the District line this morning, my attention was caught by one of the poems on the Underground. Again, this is something in the setting up of which the GLC was very much involved. We wanted far more street murals. We wanted to have poems and paintings on buses and Underground trains. We wanted to take the arts into public places where there was greater democracy and where people could enjoy them whilst going about their daily activities. We wanted to put the arts into public buildings and on to the streets. Too much of a barrier still exists around many of our arts institutions and it deters many people.

In so far as I would ever agree with anything said by the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington, it would be that so much of the arts have become white middle-class preserves. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is more concerned about them being white or middle-class, but what he said in our last arts debate was something that many of my hon. Friends have been arguing.

That poem on the Underground was by Cicly Herbert and called "Everything Changes". The last line runs:

"We plant trees for those born later."

That should characterise our whole attitude towards the arts. We are planting trees that might not necessarily flourish in our time, but we will have the satisfaction of knowing that they will be in full blossom for the generations that come later. If the Prime Minister is interested in the earth as a whole when she says that we have only a leasehold and that we should make improvements, that should be true for the arts in this country also, so that we really do

"plant trees for those born later."

Public funding is truly disinterested funding. Taste and popularity should not be the dominant considerations in decisions about funding particular art forms. We must continue to build on what we have inherited. If we do so, we shall pass on to the next generation, to those who are not yet born, the arts in the flourishing state in which we would wish them to be.

9 pm

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): I join my colleagues in paying a warm and generous tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) for the manner in which he introduced the debate. I congratulate him on his good fortune in the ballot, on his choice of subject, which has brought us into the Chamber, and on his excellent speech.

It is true that the richness of our culture, our life and our traditions is utterly dependent on the arts. That being so, the Government's record on the arts is worthy of commendation. The House will expect me to prove that, and I shall seek so to do.

[Dr. John G. Blackburn]

My right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts made one of the most courageous statements on the arts ever made in the House. In a written answer on 3 November he said that his aim was

"to give arts bodies a firm basis on which to plan their future activities and to encourage greater self-reliance and diversification in their sources of funding." [*Official Report*, 3 November 1988; Vol. 139, c. *705*.]

Within the confines of that statement, we have the kernel of success in the arts.

Unlike the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) I am a dedicated disciple of private sponsorship for the arts. We owe a great deal of gratitude to people who sponsor the arts with private funding. At the end of today, I shall walk to my home and pass the wonderful epitaph to Joseph Mallord William Turner, our greatest British painter, whose works are stored and displayed in the Clore gallery. I am unashamedly grateful for the £6 million that was provided after 150 years to house the wonderful collection of Turner's work.

We must not only safeguard our heritage, but following the wonderful tribute to the arts that was picked up on the Circle or Central line——

Mr. Tony Banks: It was the District line.

Dr. Blackburn: Well, it is a piece of good Conservative philosophy that we must look to the future and to future generations because we have a responsibility in such matters. Indeed, we stand united in saying that there can be no dispute on this because the Government have spent record sums on the arts. That is not a matter for debate. Such debates are futile. I, like many hon. Members, have continually stressed that annual funding of the arts is absurd beyond belief. Galleries, museums and theatres could not make positive plans when the arts were financed annually. I pay a warm and generous tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister, who in future will be known as the Minister who introduced forward planning under the three-year rolling programme. That was a wonderful achievement to the benefit of the arts.

When we read the debate tomorrow in the *Official Report*, we will note that it centred on the metropolis. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea concentrated his remarks on the metropolis; my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) centred his remarks on the Victoria and Albert museum; and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) naturally dealt with the metropolis. I should like to take the debate north of Watford, because until now no reference has been made to the provinces.

It is critical that we consider what is happening to the arts in the provinces. There is a desire for the arts there, which is substantiated by the fact that 70 per cent. of all business sponsorship of the arts is in the provinces and not the metropolis. I was especially encouraged when I discovered that the Royal Ballet is moving to Birmingham, which is tremendous news for the provinces. There is an audience and thirst for the arts, so let us take them northwards.

I speak from rich experience. I remember many years ago visiting the Albert dock in Liverpool. A member of my family was the policeman in charge of a bonded warehouse there for 20 years. It was beyond my wildest dreams that one day that bonded tobacco warehouse would become the Tate of the north. It is a miracle that the Tate of the north is situated in Liverpool.

I am sad that the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) is not present. He was concerned about the British film industry, to which he paid a correct tribute, which I endorse. Within the past five hours, I have tabled a question to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster about the film industry. The tenor of it was: what sum was passed to the Secretary of State on the dissolution of the British Film Fund Agency and to what purposes connected with the British film industry will the money be put? That shows my concern for the British film industry and the fact that I believe that there is genius, art and skill within it.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be standing at the Dispatch Box tomorrow and it will be interesting to learn the figures that he may reveal about the earnings from some of those sectors of the art industry. I use the expression "the art industry" deliberately because it is an industry which employs 200,000 people and produces profits of more than £250 million. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, who have just returned from America, will be able to give adequate testimony to the wonderful features of the British theatre industry in the United States.

When we consider the movement of the art world northwards, it would be unfair not to pay a sincere tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister, who has visited my constituency within the past 12 months. While he was there, his first visit was to meet the local people who supported the arts in the Dudley area. He received a warm welcome, especially from the Socialist mayor, and he spent a day looking at the arts coming to life in the black country of the west midlands. I applaud him for that. He was able to see much, although at times with some discomfort, and he was able to climb the ramparts of the 900-year-old Dudley castle. He visited the castle not because of the heritage, but because he could see the potential that we are now exploiting to develop Dudley castle as a centre for the arts in the middle of the west midlands. Dudley castle has not yet fulfilled its destiny. I should like to see the arts come alive there, even at the expense of my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill).

As has been said, art cannot develop in poverty, and artists cannot display their skills in bad economic circumstances. I shall always take great pride in the fact that I was born in Lancashire, one mile from the little house in which Lowry produced his works. I am now by adoption and tradition a midlander and I join many in the midlands in celebrating this year the centenary of the birth of David Bomberg. He was born in Birmingham, the son of a Polish refugee and one of a family of seven living in one room. He was able to produce the works of art that were shown 12 months ago in the Tate gallery. I bow at the throne of art because it is a place where I find apostles such as Lowry and Bomberg, who have enriched this country by their art. I recommend my right hon. Friend the Minister not only to give great emphasis to the points raised this evening, but to hear my cry that the arts are alive north of Watford and need encouraging.

9.14 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Can you really assure us that the arts are alive north of Watford? Have you seen that?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not addressing me.

Mr. Buchan: I knew that you, Mr. Speaker would know the answer to that, but I was wondering whether the hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) could confirm it. I am struck dumb by the hon. Gentleman's remarks —a fact which may be helpful to other hon. Members who wish to participate in the debate. I am reminded of a famous occasion during the folk song revival when an enthusiastic MC said, "Folk song is here to stay." Folk song had been with us since the beginning of time but just because there had been a revival lasting two years people claimed that it was here to stay. What the hell do you mean when you say that the arts are alive north of Watford? They have never been dead. The trouble is that you have not realised it——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Buchan: I told you, Mr. Speaker, that I had been bowled over by the speech of the hon. Member for Dudley, West.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the visit by the Minister to a 900-year-old castle, built long before Ministers produced subsidies for art or architecture. The arts have been alive for a very long time. We are talking not just about the narrow meaning of the arts but about British civilisation in general. The arts go very much wider than we often seem to realise in our discussions—art is not merely that which is sponsored or subsidised or funded by the Arts Council.

We have all been disturbed at what has happened at the Victoria and Albert museum, although I am not sure how helpful it is to discuss it here. I think that it would be useful if the Minister tried some approach to those involved. I do not believe that there is malice on either side. The parties are not so far apart in their intentions, but they are finding it difficult to distinguish between the curatorial and administrative functions. The problem ought to be solved and it would be solved if sufficient funding were available. A great deal of strain is being put on the museum, which is being asked to look after the care of the permanent collection while at the same time providing open exhibitions. To a large extent, it is a financial problem and I, for one, am sorry that the director, whose work I know, has felt compelled to act as she has. The matter has been allowed to go too far without anyone intervening.

Another tragedy is that by introducing admission charges the V and A has reduced the numbers of visitors, just as we said that it would. It is nonsense to create a museum for people to visit and then immediately impose a barrier to prevent them from visiting it. This will prevent people from making initial contact and from seeing things that might spark off their interest and develop their awareness and understanding of the arts. I am not talking merely about scholastic or academic considerations—museums can trigger interest and a response, but that function is being blocked by admission charges.

We grossly underfund our museums. Italy has the largest open-air art gallery in the world, which is free to the majority of Italian people. I understand why visitors are charged, because the cost of running the collections is enormous. Admittedly, there is a tourist return, but if Italy can offer art free to its people, I do not see why we cannot. Our national museums should be better funded, and above all they should be free. We should not erect barriers at the very point of contact between the public and our collections.

Those who are already experienced or educated or who have been dragged along to museums will continue to go to them when charges are imposed, but some youngsters never get such a chance, because they are never taken to museums. At one time a couple coming to south Kensington from the working-class areas of London could visit the science museum, the Natural History museum and the V and A free, but now they all make a charge, so that opportunity is blocked.

I argued the case with Mr. Cossons who, while at Greenwich, was the first to break ranks and advocate charging for entry to a national museum. I said that it was permissible in that case, because people tended deliberately to set off to Greenwich. It was not a matter of dropping in. That gentleman said, "Quite right—I would never have considered doing that in south Kensington." In south Kensington, it would be a matter of dropping in, but now he has taken the same decision in south Kensington, and attendance has dropped. If the Minister could restore funding, he could help to solve the immediate crisis at the V and A.

Secondly, an appalling list of barriers, in the form of specific Government legislation or proposals, have been put in the way of the development of our civilisation. I refer to the Green Paper on libraries. Fortunately, the Government got a bloody nose over it and have withdrawn the main thrust of it. For the first time, a Green Paper had encouraged libraries to charge for the loan of special books, new books and biographies. That encouragement has been rejected. The Government have failed to understand that libraries represent a good deal more than the arts. They are part of our information services. I cannot understand why they should introduce charging for computerised information.

Above all, there is the appalling White Paper on broadcasting. I hope that the Minister for the Arts puts up a fight before that terrible paper was produced. We know the consequences of it, and we knew the problem facing those who produced it. We know the problems in having some kind of direction or control in satellite broadcasting, but we cannot afford to have a Government who surrender to technology and say that they cannot cope. By surrendering to technology, they have carried technology further, so that it now controls us instead of our controlling it. An instrument which could have been a marvellous means of expanding human experience has been chained within the exigencies of market philosophy so that we now have the profit motive instead of the sharing of human experience.

The development of satellite television is comparable to the invention of the alphabet. We can speak immediately and simultaneously to the rest of mankind. It is a marvellous instrument, but it has been turned into a financial market operation so that it can be created as cheaply as possible and sold as expensively as possible.

Exactly analogous with entry fees at museums is the movement towards subscription broadcasting. The moment we have subscription broadcasting we shall begin to set up a barrier to contact. I refer to the same example

[Mr. Buchan]

as I did in relation to the White Paper. Who would have subscribed to a channel which said, "We will show you a programme depicting man with gorillas, bats in caves, and new reptiles in the Brazilian jungle"? None of us would have subscribed to such a channel. But, because there was open access through public service broadcasting, a mass programme has been built for Bellamy, Attenborough and others. These are mass programmes, not minority programmes.

None of the kids who are involved in such actitivities, thoughts and experiences would have seen those programmes if it had depended on their parents paying into a subscription channel. The Government have blocked people's experience. Instead of the marvellous new technology being used to expand human experience and to bring young people into contact with a wide variety of human experience, it is being blocked by charges in museums, the inhibitions that will come from the Green Paper on libraries, and by the switch away from free, open universal access to public broadcasting.

Thirdly, we have the beginnings of specific Government intervention in the arts. I refer to section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, for example. I doubt whether anyone will be charged with breaking section 28, but that is not the problem of censorship. Censorship is not designed to use laws to take people to court and to punish them. The function of censorship and censorship law is to inhibit the development of programmes because they might be subject to censorship. Thus censorship prevents creation.

We have seen the extension of the Broadcasting Standards Council. I have spoken to the new director, who I think means well. He appears to believe that somehow the Broadcasting Standards Council is a substitute for the existence of regulatory broadcasting. There is nothing in the White Paper on broadcasting to ensure good standards, but only provision to control decency and taste. That is another factor which will inhibit the proper development of our arts. The threat of another obscenity Act is also still with us. There is intervention in all those ways. *[Interruption.]* I am receiving all sorts of signals that I should shut up and sit down. It is a pity that I did not know earlier that this debate was on or I should have been here at the beginning.

The south bank is not for London alone—it was created by a Labour Government to be part of a national celebration of a national festival, so we have a major responsibility to get it right. The last thing that we should do is to turn it into a pork pie festival. The south bank has much to offer. Unfortunately, its functions have narrowed since it was started and I share the distaste of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that in place of the open space where books were available there is an expensive restaurant.

The problem with private sponsorship is that it sets the agenda for the arts. Matching public funds will be called into play to support private funds. I should like to see public funds setting the agenda for private funds, if necessary, to follow, and there are ways of doing that without determining what should be supported by a particular company.

Sponsorship is, of course, advertising. The benefits must be proved if the matching funds are to be forthcoming. Another thing wrong with sponsorship is that it is limited to the safe and the glamorous. The Royal Insurance Company helps to determine the Royal Shakespeare Company's touring programme on the grounds that it wants the company to tour the towns in which is has a major presence.

The analysis by the National Campaign for the Arts shows that few of the smaller theatres receive sponsorship of more than 1, 2 or 3 per cent. Philip Hedley's theatre —the Theatre Royal at Stratford atte Bowe—found that it could not raise enough money through sponsorship to pay the salary of the man who was looking for sponsorship. It tried to get sponsorship for a play called "Pork Pies". A local meat merchant who made pork pies and cooked meat agreed to sponsor the play until he discovered that "Pork Pies" was rhyming slang for lies and that the play was about police corruption. When he realised that, he dropped the idea of sponsorship.

In the past 12 months, we have lost this country's first Minister of the Arts—Jennie Lee. Jennie was dedicated to the development and expansion of the arts. She believed in art for everyone. She saw, too, that it was related to the expansion of human wisdom and understanding. She was also the founder of the Open university. We must see the arts as a link with civilisation and education generally. As Shelley said, the arts are

"the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

We must understand that wisdom can follow the arts and wisdom can develop from the arts. We must understand, too, that the inspiration about which we have heard so much today is sometimes a concrete shared experience, not just looking at a landscape from the top of a 900-year-old castle, even at Dudley.

9.29 pm

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): I hope that I will be forgiven if my contribution is rather specific after such a wide-ranging debate covering such things as Dudley castle and the Central line——

Mr. Tony Banks: District line.

Mr. Fishburn: Yes, District line—I will get it right at the end of the day.

Earlier we heard about the tuba-playing technique of my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), whose wisdom and good luck produced this debate this evening—for which many thanks.

I want to discuss dance and ballet. I must immediately declare an interest. I am a director of the London Festival Ballet—a position which provides no remuneration, but which gives me a small insight into this particular branch of the arts. The London Festival Ballet is soon to be renamed the English National Ballet to reflect its position not merely as the nation's second ballet company but also as a company that tours widely outside the metropolis and around the world, to the United States and Europe.

About a year ago ballet suddenly became the great darling of the arts world after being buried for nearly 30 years under the world of opera—which has for so long attracted the lion's share of funds and a large share of establishment investment in the arts in the metropolis. That transition came about because, last summer, a large number of international dance theatres descended coincidentally upon this city. The Kirov, ballet groups from Europe and great American dance companies came over to London and there was a response from people

leading to a sudden increase in audiences and an increase in the awareness of ballet and its potential as a modern art form.

Londoners also responded because they woke up to the fact that our resources for putting on dance—either our own national dance companies or visiting companies—were completely inadequate when compared with other European cities. This led to a debate on why that was and what we might do about it.

It is a pity that, in the new plans for the south bank, the bold idea of having, for the first time, a national dance theatre based in London, has not been seized. The Minister has been sympathetic to this branch of the arts and I hope that he will consider the various plans to co-ordinate, if not a dance theatre, at least a receiving house—somewhere in London where visiting companies could play in the kind of conditions that they might expect in Holland, Denmark or Stockholm. Let us not try to reach for the stars by emulating the conditions in Paris or New York.

This woeful lack of facilities now rests with the Arts Council and the Government to consider. I welcome the recent Devlin report on dance by the Arts Council. I strongly endorse that report's call for the funding of ballet and dance companies to be on a three year basis—the Minister has now encouraged most arts funding to be on that basis. As a director of a dance or opera company, one must plan the full three years ahead. If one is unsure of the level of subsidy from the Arts Council, or any other funding body one is planning in the dark.

I endorse many of the findings of the Devlin report and look forward to that report giving a shot in the arm to Britain's dance world.

Despite this attention, the future of the London Festival Ballet and of its related organisation, the English National Opera, is in doubt. The ENO is lucky in having a more senior and distinguished parliamentarian than I on its board, and if the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) were here, I am sure he would agree that our common fear is that those two organisations may not be with us in five years, unless the Government can give us some advanced assurances that their funding will continue in the years ahead.

As the Minister well knows, I am not speaking about funding from the Arts Council, which can be obtained in the usual way. I am talking about the grant which used to come from the Greater London council, which the Government quite rightly thought should be continued and which is paid, through Westminster council, to both English National Opera and the English National Ballet.

This money is now subject to a large question mark. The Minister has not yet said whether it will be forthcoming. It constitutes almost a third of the running costs of the London Festival Ballet—and I imagine about the same proportion of those of the English National Opera. If the money is not forthcoming, once the new system of community charge is introduced—there is no doubt that the city of Westminster will be unable to raise the money on its own because to do so it would have to charge an extra £20 per resident—those of us who sit on the boards of such companies will face a possible term in jail if we are not careful. When planning ahead, we might plan for a season that simply could be funded.

No groups have done more than the London Festival Ballet and the English National Opera to raise private funds. We realise that the system of raising private funds has been greatly encouraged, not least through matching grants, which we have used to the enormous advantage of our companies and of the programmes that we are able to put on. We must have some assurances that, beyond private sponsorship, we shall obtain increased or continuing sponsorship from the Government so that we can plan for the future. We shall then be able to grow the trees about which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) talked and to produce a ballet company which is not merely the second ballet company in this country but one of the better ballet companies on this continent.

9.37 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I am grateful for this opportunity to talk about the arts, and I wish to talk about the major post-war mass art form—the cinema, which, although somewhat overtaken by television networks, is still an important popular art form. Audiences have increased from 53 million in 1984 to 74·8 million in 1987. Unfortunately, the philistines in the Government are destroying the cinema from without by their tax policies, and the enterprise culture spivs are eroding it from within.

The *Financial Weekly* of August 1987 provides a good summary of the position:

"The United Kingdom Government severely curtailed subsidies when it abolished the Eady Levy and the National Film Finance Corporation. In its place came the mainly privately funded British Screen Finance Corporation with an annual budget of about £1·8 million. But producers say the BSFC's fund represents a drop in the ocean and will largely benefit small film projects rather than the blockbusters.

The French government, on the other hand, awards grants and loan guarantees as do the West Germans, the Italians and the Australians. The United Kingdom Government prides itself on having made film companies eligible under the Business Expansion Scheme but this is not considered to be anything more than a token gesture."

That is about right. The feature film figures for 1985 were 55, and in 1986 they dropped to 37. In the midst of the enterprise culture, feature film production figures are no longer collated by the Government. With the abolition of the Eady levy, and the NFFC, the stimulus has disappeared.

One example of erosion from the inside is that of Elstree studios. Incidentally, the Government have just refused to list the studios, although they acknowledge that they form an important part of the history of the British film industry. They say that that is not a good enough reason to list them. That gives the property developers freedom to exploit the site to a greater degree, which in turn places the studios under greater threat—a further erosion of the facilities in this country.

I remind the House that the studios were first sold to Cannon by Thorn EMI in 1986. Gordon Borrie wanted to refer the takeover to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, because Cannon owned other cinemas, but he was overruled by a Minister. Cannon then sold off the massive collection of 2,000 feature films and newsreels dating back to 1894, so our heritage as recorded on film was arbitrarily sold by people who wanted to asset-strip one of our major studios.

Elstree studios is the place where "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and several other Indiana Jones films were produced. The last major feature film made there was "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?". The studios were closed after the last Steven Spielberg production and sold to Tranwood Earl, which resold them to Brent Walker at an enhanced profit.

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

Because of the high price of the studios, the latter will have to sell the outside lot and probably close three sound stages, thereby reducing the facilities for people like Steven Spielberg.

It is worth reminding the Minister why Steven Spielberg comes to the United Kingdom to make feature films that cost more than £10 million each. He comes not because of the exchange rate but because—he told me this himself in this building—of the craftsmanship and skill in this country, which are far superior, incredible though it may sound, to the skills in Hollywood. That is because Hollywood has allowed its training system to fall into disuse, and that is what is happening here.

Because of a lack of Government support, in 1987 Pinewood changed from full-time staffing with proper apprenticeship schemes to maintain and develop skills, to a four-wall studio. So now we depend on freelance employment, and skills and training are being eroded. In time that means that the United Kingdom, whose abilities and skills are ahead of those of the United States, will suffer a further erosion of its film industry.

The potential to make big-budget and, more importantly, small-budget films is being eroded. Small-budget films perhaps reflect more accurately our indigenous culture and attitudes. British Screen Finance Ltd., which replaced the NFFC, receives a miserly £1·5 million a year, and that will soon end. By contrast, in 1987 Australia gave £18 million and West Germany £15·7 million to their film industries.

Now there is a threat to Channel 4 in the Government's White Paper. It has been financing low-budget theatrical productions. If we want to maintain feature film productions that represent our way of life, the Government must provide more support by direct means and through a more sympathetic tax regime.

9.43 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I join many other hon. Members in congratulating the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) not only on choosing this subject for debate but on an excellent speech. He spoke extremely well in the last debate on this subject, but I thought that he capped that tonight. It was remarkable to hear Conservative Members talking so passionately and with such knowledge about community arts and participation in the arts, and I agree with everything said about them.

The hon. Member for Battersea made a distinguished opening, and every speech since has lived up to that high standard. We have come to expect as much from the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and from my hon. Friends the Members for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks).

There have been some other very interesting contributions. I thought I was going to fall out with the hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) because of his earlier remarks, but I was delighted when he moved on to a passionate advocacy of the importance of the regions, and indeed, of people like David Bomberg, and I think he had the House with him there. I was particularly delighted with the contribution from the hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn), coming to our debate for the first time and raising with such knowledge from outside the House the whole question of dance and the Devlin report. I think he added to the quality of the debate.

It has been, I think, an excellent debate, for which, as I say, the House is in the debt of the hon. Gentleman. I am delighted that this debate has not concentrated on funding, and I certainly intend to avoid that today. We tend to have very sterile arguments about funding in these debates, and we all have our views on how to interpret the figures. I will leave it to those companies, mainly national but all over the country, which know that they will only get a 2 per cent. increase this year when inflation is 7·5 per cent. The Government must make their peace with them or bear them in mind next year, because they will suffer and the arts will suffer when they are, in relation to inflation, so poorly funded this year.

Let us not get into a debate on funding. I want to talk, in the minutes left to me, about policy and strategy, and I think we do so in an interesting and perhaps rather optimistic context, when we gather from the Downing street press office that the Prime Minister intends this year to take an interest in the arts and to become a champion of the arts. We on the Opposition Benches are always happy to welcome sinners, even at such a late hour. The record of her Administration to date on the arts has not been good, but if she is seriously going to take an interest, that offers enormous opportunities to the Minister: I hope he will grasp them.

Mr. Buchan: In view of her record in every other field of human activity, is my hon. Friend really as sanguine as all that?

Mr. Fisher: I am an optimist: if she bothers to read a debate such as this—as I am sure, if she is going to get involved in the arts, she will—perhaps there is hope. It certainly offers an opportunity, as I say, for the Minister to exploit. Whether this is a tactical move by the Prime Minister or not, there are opportunities for the Minister to make a stronger pitch for the arts.

The other interesting context of our debate today is the announcement last Friday by the distinguished novelist, A. N. Wilson, in the pages of *The Spectator*, that he will in future be voting for the Labour party. It is interesting that one of the prime reasons he gives is the very poor record of this Government on the arts, and their failure over museums and libraries; and he gives a great catalogue of the Government's failures. Whereas the Prime Minister offers the Minister opportunities, the latter should perhaps read Mr. Wilson's remarks to see that there are many creative artists in this country, who still need to be convinced about the record of this Government.

I certainly agree with the personal remarks that the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South made about the Minister. The whole arts world is aware that he fulfils his responsibilities conscientiously; he has absolutely no enemies, and many friends, wherever he goes. I will go further: some things which have happened under his aegis —the move of the Tate to the north, the relocation of Sadler's Wells and, most particularly, three-year funding —stand out as distinct achievements, which will be remembered when this Administration are dead and buried.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South in saying that three-year funding is all very well, and certainly an improvement, but it is no good unless there is the

money to fund it, and three-year funding going down below the rate of inflation is a permanent drain on most companies rather than a help.

However, in spite of those few isolated achievements, the record of this Government on the arts has been one of failure—not just failure to fund adequately, but failure to back local authorities when they are expanding arts provision and failure to widen access for the disabled, for black and Asian people and for women.

There was also a failure last year to grasp the possibilities in the John Myerscough report. The Minister was handed an economic argument which he did not pick up and run with. He should have gone straight to the Treasury and made a strong economic case. He failed to do that. There has been a failure of leadership from the Government and the Minister and a failure of imagination. The opportunities, the audiences and the creative artists are there, but over the past 10 years of this Administration we have lacked a Government with a clear policy and strategy. That failure undermines any specific good achievements or intentions—and I am sure that the Minister's intentions are good.

We all agree that the British Theatre Association is a unique national and international institution. However, at the end of this month it is in danger of closure unless the Minister accepts that he has a responsibility for that institution. Of course it may be right from the Minister's point of view and that of the Conservative party that he should try to find alternative means of support. Perhaps he can make an exciting announcement to the House tonight. I somehow fear that he will not be able to do that. The partners that he has tried to marriage-broke for the BTA library—the Victoria and Albert museum, the British library and the Central School of Speech and Drama—are all willing partners, but they all want some Government funding. The Minister should understand that he must accept a national responsibility for institutions like the BTA library which fulfil a national function.

The hon. Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) referred to the Devlin report and its relationship to the Northern Ballet Theatre. The Minister's comments in response to an Adjournment debate the other night were marginally encouraging. However, he should recognise that the report recommended closure so as to properly fund other aspects of dance. Those recommendations were based on the understanding that there should be no increase in funding.

The Minister should consider how positive investment in the very popular art form of dance has worked in France. That art form has captured the imagination of young people. Positive investment by the French Government in that art form has unleashed an enormously exciting new wave of interest in dance in France. The Minister must understand that he should have a policy of expansion towards dance and he should be backing new ideas.

The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) referred to the Victoria and Albert museum. He most responsibly, courteously and cautiously referred to very difficult areas and issues. However, I thought that he was a trifle unfair on the director. It is not a matter of personal responsibility. I do not think that the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South intended to be unfair. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South that we should consider the problem in a financial context, because next year the V and A's wage bill will be more than the total grant. In those circumstances, the new director had an almost impossible task and had to look for radical measures.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House recognise that something had to be done about the organisation of the V and A. However, we may wonder whether a five-page document which contained no financial analysis or implications for the future was the proper way to plan the future administration and the curatorial skills and scholarship in a great national museum. Many hon. Members would doubt whether that short and, I believe, inadequate document should have been given to the trustees just 15 minutes before the trustees' meeting. It is doubtful whether the trustees were aware that there would be redundancies involving nine of the most senior and respected staff including international experts like John Mallet. Many of us would question whether simply giving those nine members of staff a three-and-a-half minute interview in which they were told that their contribution to scholarship and the museum was at an end was the right way to proceed.

As the hon. Member for Kensington said, there is a general lack of morale in the V and A. The museum has been badly handled, but I do not put the bad morale down entirely to the director. I hope that the Minister will consider his role in all this. I asked that question of him the other day in respect of Professor Martin Kemp who, when he resigned as a trustee, said that he was doing so because of Government interference.

On that occasion, the Minister chose to answer that there was no interference in the museum's day-to-day administration, but that did not answer the question that I put to him. I asked whether there had been Government interference or involvement in the restructuring plan. I asked whether the Minister knew about it, whether he or his officials had seen Lord Armstrong, chairman of the trustees, and whether he was involved in the Treasury negotiations that miraculously produced at least £300,000 and possibly £1 million to fund the redundancy programme.

If tonight the Minister answers no to all those questions, I will agree with the hon. Member for Battersea that it is incredible that that most valued of institutions should not concern the Minister. If the Minister answers yes, I ask him to explain the full extent of his involvement. They are important issues that affect right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House. Is it right that the board of trustees should not include a single member who has any museum experience? As the hon. Member for Battersea said, the trustees are all distinguished and eminent in their fields, but none has any museum experience.

Other serious questions must be answered. Of course the museum must keep up to date, but is a display of the Sock Shop the epitome of British design, and the one aspect of it that the Victoria and Albert museum should be displaying? I understand that the museum's next exhibition will be about Burberry raincoats, and the one following that will be in Harrods. Right hon. and hon. Members may recall that last year, the museum exhibited Elton John's memorabilia, which served as a preview of a sale at Sotheby's. The House has a right to ask serious questions about the policy direction that the museum is taking. The Minister owes the House his views and opinions.

[Mr. Fisher]

I turn to the subject of administration. The arts world as a whole applauded the Minister when he set up a much-needed and long-awaited review of the organisation and structure of the arts and appointed his former senior civil servant, Richard Wilding, to conduct it. Mr. Wilding is widely respected and liked in the arts world. The word from the regions is that the way in which he is genuinely listening and examining the situation is much appreciated.

I hope that the Minister will reaffirm tonight that whatever happens as a result of that review, the importance of the regions and of local authorities will be paramount, and that they will not become ciphers or regional offices of the Arts Council. If developments at a local authority level are to be fostered and nurtured, there must be strong links between them and regional arts associations. I hope that Mr. Wilding will have the Minister's backing, and that the Minister will encourage Mr. Wilding along those lines in his remarks tonight.

As to strategy, there are many key issues for the Minister to grasp. Ironically, and happily for him, positive moves can be made at very low cost. Some can be made at no cost at all to the Government. There are ways in which the Minister could make his leadership of the arts count and in which he can develop and co-ordinate policy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, in London there are major developments both in respect of the Royal Opera House and its effect on the local community, and of the south bank. The Minister ought to take a line, as did his counterpart in respect of the Pompidou centre in Paris. He should be not only putting in money but taking a lead in setting standards and criteria in the way that projects will be scrutinised, so that the best results will be obtained.

The arts in London cry out for the Minister to bring people together. There is Greater London Arts, the abolition of ILEA, the London boroughs arts scheme, and the residuary body. Some of the London boroughs, because of Greater London Arts, are developing fast but in isolation from each other. There is a crying need for co-ordination. In the absence of a democratic body such as the Greater London council, there is a desperate need for someone to hold the ring, and the Minister can play a strategic role in that regard.

The right hon. Gentleman also has a strategic role to play in the widening of access, which is apparently one of the Prime Minister's interests. I shall believe that when I see it, although it is welcome that she is prepared to say so. The Minister should be responding more positively, for instance, to the "After Attenborough" report on the arts and disability, and I hope that he will send a message of extreme disapproval to the Arts Council about its application for a disabled access exemption certificate. That sends the arts world the wrong signal, and I hope that the Minister will get in touch with the new chairman of the Arts Council to say that it is not good enough.

Will the Minister look in particular at the built environment? Prince Charles has given a lead, and I am glad to say that the Minister has backed the Arts Council's "percentage for arts" initiative. He is not, however, encouraging the local authorities that are also adopting the policy, such as Swindon, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Dundee and Wakefield.

The Minister is not getting his act together with the Secretary of State for the Environment, who is sending out completely contradictory advice. His White Paper "The Future of Development Plans" says that aesthetic aid should be a key element in planning applications. Last week, only weeks of issuing that White Paper, he sent out a planning policy guidance note saying exactly the opposite: "Whatever you do to local authorities, do not take aesthetic matters into account." There is a lack of co-ordination there.

There are problems in various Departments. The poll tax will have an enormous effect on English National Opera and on local authorities' ability to fund the arts, while the DTI has problems resulting from the withdrawal of MSC funding. In education, problems arise from the national curriculum and the restriction on funding of school visits to theatres and other displays of the performing arts. In the Home Office, there is the question of the broadcasting White Paper—to which the Arts Council, to its credit, has responded positively and critically, speaking up for the arts, but on which I have heard no comment from the Minister.

The whole country faces a major problem in relation to freedom of speech. Mr. Salman Rushdie is in acute difficulties. He needs every Member on both sides of the House to support the absolute principle of freedom of speech, but the Minister has said nothing about that either. I hope that he will take this opportunity to break his silence, and will state categorically not that Mr. Rushdie's book is offensive but that, on the contrary, it is a very fine novel—a great work of the imagination—and that Mr. Rushdie is entirely free and right.

If this debate can achieve anything, it will encourage the Minister to take the initiative on some of the aspects that I have mentioned. It will cost him no money to adopt a strategic and policy-making role.

The hon. Member for Battersea described the arts as a source of great celebration in the House and throughout society. I agree, but I hope that he will accept that they are a source not only of celebration but of dissent and uncomfortable opinions. The arts must stretch us as individuals and as a society. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West referred to the beautiful image created by the words of the poet Cecily Herbert of a tree planted for the future. If that tree is to give us all hope, the arts must not just celebrate; they must also offer the opportunity for challenge and dissent. If the Minister can respond to such a wide range of strategy, the arts and the House will pay tribute to him.

10.3 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I echo the views expressed by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) about the atmosphere of the debate, which has been very positive. Without a shadow of doubt the speeches from both sides of the House have been remarkable. Where would we have been without the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), let alone many of my hon. Friends?

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on launching the debate and giving the House the opportunity to discuss the arts—a subject that is becoming increasingly important to people's lives in Britain and will continue to be so into the 1990s. My hon.

Friend made a remarkable and very moving speech about the importance of arts to individuals in Britain. I enjoyed his description of the variety of instruments that he has tried to play over the years and, as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West suggested, he can almost form his own one-man band. My only claim to fame in public is that, when my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), who, sadly, is unwell and unable to be here tonight, and my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon West (Miss Nicholson) played a duet in the Festival hall to raise funds for research into AIDs, I turned the pages. I got it right and I am very proud of that.

The hon. Member for Paisley, South mentioned the late Jennie Lee. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) made a very generous speech and was very kind about the fact that I have broken various records and described myself as the Methuselah of Arts Ministers. It is right and proper for me to mention the late Jennie Lee who, in her own way, was a remarkable Minister for the Arts. She was the first Minister for the Arts and sadly a number of us did not have the opportunity to attend an occasion when various tributes were paid to her. I am not blaming anyone for that, but it is only right that I should take the opportunity to pay tribute to a remarkable Minister for the Arts, although there have been differences in emphasis and approach between her policies and mine.

What has been remarkable about the debate is the respect shown by both sides for each other's interest in, and support for the arts, and although there are clear differences of opinion and approach, that is very important if we are to make any progress.

I shall try to answer the various points that have been raised and use the last few minutes of my speech to talk about one aspect of my strategy—reconciling artistic excellence with the right of access of people of all backgrounds in all parts of the country to the arts. But I shall begin by making one or two general points.

My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea raised a number of issues. In particular he talked about funding the arts. He is right to say that the Government believe that the taxpayer has a role to play in supporting the arts and that the highest standards of excellence cannot be maintained without a measure of support from the taxpayer. I have sought to strengthen that use of taxpayers' money by the introduction of three-year funding, which is a rolling programme. There will be a continuous policy of three-year funding. I have introduced one or two new elements such as incentive funding, in which sums of money have been set aside to reward those organisations that show their ability to increase their self-reliance.

I am very glad that the first awards are being made, ranging from the Leadmill complex in Sheffield to the Royal Shakespeare Company and the English National Opera which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea and others as it has now qualified for incentive funding. Last week I visited the excellent Tricycle theatre in London, which, despite the tragedy of being almost burnt down two years ago has shown enormous enterprise and has achieved an award, as has the 369 gallery in Edinburgh and other theatres such as the Cumbernauld theatre in Scotland. That is an important additional element of funding for arts bodies and helps to fulfil the overall strategy which hon. Members were talking about—the diversity of funding within the arts. When we are talking about funding, I believe strongly that we cannot meet with success unless we have a sensible partnership between the public and the private sectors. Of course, I include local authorities as well as central Government.

Above all else, what brings money and resources into the arts is the box office, which no one has acknowledged properly. I regard the private sector as an increasingly important source of funding. As my hon. Friends have said, the economic strength of the country helps with its success there but it is you and I, Mr. Speaker, actually attending arts events, who are the biggest extra source of funding for the arts. As I see, looking to the 1990s, increasing numbers of people enjoying the arts, the biggest extra source of funding will be support through the box office. That is not to say that sponsorship does not have a singularly important role. I thought that some of the remarks about sponsorship were sad and negative. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) and others said, sponsorship is an additional source of funding for the arts.

I was struck recently by what was said by Lord Goodman, who has not exactly agreed with everything that I have done in Government. In an article in *The Times* he wrote that over his time as chairman of the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, which was over many years from the 1970s until this year when he retired, he had not come across a case where sponsorship had interfered with the artistic performance of arts bodies. I thought that that was an impressive testimony to sponsorship's role in supporting the arts. It gets extra resources for the arts, and that is what we want. It is part of a pattern of looking to a variety of sources through self-reliance and avoiding overdependence on one source of funding—a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack)—is important.

Many other points were raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea which fit in with issues raised by other hon. Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West talked about support for the regions. He rightly acknowledged many of the changes that have taken place, including the switch of resources through regional arts associations and by other means to strengthen arts in all parts of the country. He referred to the Sadler's Wells Royal ballet moving to Birmingham. I am glad to be able to play a small part in helping finance that move. My hon. Friend also referred to the Tate of the north, as have other hon. Members. He was right to stress that there has been a switch of resources to many other parts of the country to strengthen the standards of excellence of the arts.

The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Leadbitter) is not here, but he made an impressive speech as a former teacher about the important role of schools. If I allow myself enough time, I shall return to that issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South made an impressive speech. I am grateful to him for what he said. I was struck by the way in which he expressed his views about the Victoria and Albert museum. It is a great institution. I believe that it will remain a great institution, and that the chairman of the trustees and the director have its interest very much at heart and want to do whatever they can to improve it. I have confidence in them. I do not know that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central was disagreeing with me, but I believe that it is right that there responsibility should be delegated to chairman and trustees and, of course, to the director, in the day-to-day

[Mr. Richard Luce]

management of these institutions. If, every time they made changes or ran into problems, I were immediately to intervene, that would undermine the principle of the delegation of responsibility. My overall accountability to the House, my overall responsibility, is the welfare of these institutions, of the great national museums and galleries in this country.

It goes without saying that I take a very close interest in the Victoria and Albert museum and the other institutions. I have been very closely briefed by the chairman and the director on recent developments at the V and A. I have also been heavily involved, over the last year, in discussions with the institutions about corporate strategies—five to 10-year plans—for these institutions. The V and A has been involved in that. Last year I talked to the people there about it. Over the past year, indeed, there has been intensive discussion about corporate strategy.

It is interesting that many of the remarks about the V and A indicated no quarrel with the concept of change in administration and management. However, some hon. Members argued that the way in which the matter has been handled might have been different. It is only right that I should note the views expressed in this House. Clearly, the mood of the House is that anything that can be done to improve the atmosphere should be done. The director of the Victoria and Albert is most anxious to have good relations with the staff. She is anxious that there should be high morale. I shall ensure that the views and anxieties that have been expressed are well and truly noted. I do not think that it would be helpful, at this stage, to go further than to say that I note very carefully what has been said.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West, as always, made an interesting speech. His speeches are never uninteresting. He talked with passion about the south bank. The recently announced scheme of further redevelopment there is still at a very early stage. The South Bank board is inviting the widest possible comment. It will, of course, require planning permission, as well as permission from the Arts Council as the freeholder. The Arts Council and I will be examining very carefully the artistic, financial and architectural aspects of the proposal. No contracts will be signed without my agreement. Of course, as the hon. Gentleman knows, a lot of discussion has to take place before the scheme can get to that stage, and it will be my task to watch that with interest.

I welcome the concept of a partnership between the commercial sector and the public sector in respect of this great arts centre on the south bank. I hope—indeed, I think—that the House will support the harnessing of private sector resources to public sector resources to make it a success.

The hon. Member for Paisley, South made a speech that I enjoyed. I am very proud of the link with his city—Glasgow. I refer to my decision, with the approval of the cultural Ministers of Europe, that Glasgow should be the cultural city of Europe for next year. I am full of admiration for the way in which Glasgow has taken full advantage of that status, demonstrating to the outside world that the state of the arts, both performing and heritage there is quite remarkable, and that they can bring great benefits to the city and to the country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) made a speech about the English National Opera. I acknowledge very strongly the achievements of the English National Opera and of the London Festival ballet, of which my hon. Friend is a director. Both those institutions are partly financed by the Westminster council. I note what my hon. Friend said. I hope that all the London boroughs will continue to play a part in supporting those institutions, and I shall follow progress with very close concern.

I want to respond to the remarks of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central about strategy, and to end by making a particular point about the need, as I see it, to combine the highest standards of artistic excellence in this country with the right of people, wherever they live, to enjoy it. That is very much a strategy of mine. I believe that we have an overwhelming duty to ensure that the standards of artistic performance are of the highest and that, side by side with that, we have total freedom of speech and expression. People need to have their eyes opened to the enjoyment of the arts, whatever their background, wherever they live and whatever their education. That is why I welcome the increased attendance at museums in Museums Year and the increased audiences for dance and classical ballet, at the theatre and for so many forms of art. I want to do whatever I can to encourage that further.

One example of how we can do that is through education. I have had discussions with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. There is now an opportunity in the Education Reform Act and with the other changes, because art and music are foundation subjects, to invest still further in our children and to open their eyes to what the arts can offer. Another way forward is to make an even greater and more effective link between the education units set up for performing arts on the one hand and heritage and museums on the other, and with the imagination of headmasters and teachers so that they use those facilities in such a way that their pupils can benefit. My right hon. Friend and I are discussing ways in which we can achieve that.

Various hon. Members have referred to broadcasting and I agree that it is an important area. It is noticeable that the media are playing an increasingly important role in supporting the arts through their latest programmes, for example "Signals" on Channel 4 and "The Late Show" on BBC2. Those and other programmes have shown how broadcasting can help to stimulate public interest in the arts. I have been in touch with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to discuss the ways in which broadcasting could play a more prominent role.

We want to improve accessibility to the arts and as touring is one way of achieving that, we have injected more money into the Arts Council to help to encourage it to increase touring in this country. Our treasures are now being loaned on a much bigger scale. Some injustice is often done to our national institutions. The British museum now lends approximately 2,500 objects of art around the country. The Victoria and Albert museum lends over 3,000, and the Tate gallery also lends a great number. That has helped to increase and improve accessibility to the arts. The care and accessibility of our treasures is a priority and that is why we have injected more pump-priming money into their marketing. We are also pursuing policies in both the inner cities and in rural

areas and have given pump-priming money to the Carnegie trust to help it to stimulate more schemes to improve accessibility for disabled people.

Those are just some of the examples of the ways in which I am seeking to strengthen access to the arts in this country. We have artists of the highest quality and should thank them for their contribution to our quality of life. There is a great upsurge of public interest in the arts—in our environment, in architecture and in the performing arts, and that is something that we can only welcome because it can only help us to achieve and enhance our quality of life.

Transport Safety

10.23 pm

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this Consolidated Fund debate. It is perhaps appropriate that the preceding debate was about the arts as this transport safety debate could be regarded either as a tragedy or as a farce.

There has been a disturbing increase recently in the number of transport disasters and the public are becoming increasingly concerned about such major disasters. They must be wondering whether the transport system is beginning to feel the inevitable strain of inadequate investment. Pressure on it is being increased by the number of cars on our roads and the number of passengers using a reduced number of trains. Such pressure inevitably leads to tragedies such as those that we have experienced recently.

Reductions in staff and an increasing interest in reducing costs by reducing staff will lead to further pressures. There must be public fear about the reduction of staff, and one wonders whether there is a strategy for a transport system in which profit is the main concern, and whether the increasing profit motive which bedevils the Government's transport strategy will lead to a reduction in the maintenance and safety checks necessary to maintain a high standard of safety on the railways. If such pressure is put on transport systems, incidents such as those at Clapham, Purley and Glasgow will increase. Many ferry passengers suffered in the Zeebrugge tragedy as a result of the pursuance of profit margins.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that in the past few years there has been an enormous increase in investment in public transport services? Is he suggesting that that has not occurred? Surely he is not attributing those tragic accidents solely to a lack of investment.

Mr. Buckley: The hon. Gentleman seems to be getting the message early in the debate. That is precisely the inference to be drawn from my speech.

One wonders whether safety is being compromised in the interests of profitability. I do not wish to press the point about tragedies, but evidence is mounting that the main motivation is the return on capital investment rather than safety. The risk of accident must be the highest consideration when developing new transport systems. I wonder whether that consideration of risk is part of the Government's strategy for preparing British Rail for privatisation. There is pressure on staff from management, who are determined to introduce cost-cutting exercises at the expense of safety.

For environmental reasons, it is proposed that two thirds of the link between the Channel tunnel and London will run underground. I am a supporter of environmental interests, but I wonder what will happen to this high-speed system which will be travelling underground for most of its journey. What would happen in the event of a major disaster in such a system, and has that been taken into account in the design and development of the system? What would happen if there was a catastrophe, such as the Clapham accident, on a major underground system of such length and high speed usage? What would be the major safety requirements built into such a system so that people could be reached with medical assistance if a disaster occurred? Has the enthusiasm of Conservative Members to seek a green cloak blinded them to the possible dangers of the system?

Mr Alan Meale (Mansfield): Does not my hon. Friend's experience of mining accidents in which there was difficulty getting people out of long tunnels bear out his argument?

Mr. Buckley: My hon. Friend has got the point. The tragedies caused by such a calamity——

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Buckley: I shall make this point first. The hon. Gentleman may catch your eye later, Mr. Speaker.

The tragedy at Clapham and the difficulties of medical treatment would have been multiplied a thousand times if the railway there had been underground, as is proposed for the Channel tunnel link. I support environmental schemes, but I am also aware of the tragedy of King's Cross and the difficulties caused by a fire being underground. If a high-speed train caught fire in a tunnel, what would be the safety implications for dealing with such a tragedy?

Mr. Roger King: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Buckley: No. This is a short debate and other hon. Members wish to contribute.

Pressure on our transport system will inevitably increase as the mobility of our people increases and there is an increase in traffic flow on our roads. Are the transport systems in our major cities, not least in London, able to cope with the increasing pressures that will be brought to bear on them? Will the lack of capital investment in our traffic systems lead to an upsurge in accidents?

It is anticipated that there will be an increase in traffic movements as a consequence of joining the European single market system. Is our transport system capable of coping safely with the increasing demand? High-speed trains and communications will be an inevitable consequence of the increase in traffic flow. Are our systems capable of dealing adequately with such a demand?

In the light of recent disasters, the possibility of such incidents in future must be considered. There could be an escalation of such incidents due to increasing pressure on the traffic systems, whether it be air traffic, rail traffic or motor traffic. The infrastructure has been neglected for so long that one wonders whether it can cope with the pressure that increasing demand and increasing flow will place on the systems. In the construction of new transport systems, will there be adequate investment in safety to prevent disasters such as those that we have recently experienced? The travelling public are becoming increasingly concerned about the safety of our transport systems.

The Department of Transport inevitably sets up inquiries following disasters, but if such inquiries do not result in the only proper solution being adopted, with major capital investment in safety schemes, nothing is gained from those unfortunate experiences. We do not seek to make party political issues out of tragedies, but the travelling public and the House should question whether the Department of Transport is dealing adequately with the problems.

Other hon. Members wish to speak on this important subject, so I shall not dwell on it much longer. In view of our recent experiences, it is right and proper that the House should debate it. I hope that the Minister will note the comments that are made, as the safety of the travelling public must be a major priority. There is no real benefit in an improved and more efficient system if tragedies such as those that we have experienced recently in the air, on the land and at sea continue to take place. I know that the importance of this short debate will not be lost on the travelling public.

10.36 pm

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): First, let me congratulate the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) on his success in the ballot, and on choosing such an important subject. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not follow his argument. I do not agree with him about financial investment in transport safety, so I shall not pursue that aspect of this very large subject.

Transport safety may involve making ships, aeroplanes, cars and lorries safer for those who travel in them. On the other hand, it may apply to pedestrians and others, to whom transport safety means safe roads and vehicles that do not travel too fast. Perhaps I may start with the second definition.

The safety of cars, lorries and motor bikes is best guaranteed by the availability of good roads. We are all aware that the motorway system has produced a network of three-lane highways enabling cars and heavy lorries to travel swiftly and safely across the country from north to south and from east to west. That network is being added to continuously. Its equipment is being updated according to the latest technology available. It is being supplemented by much-improved trunk roads. Bypasses take transport out of cities and town centres, which is why we in Newbury look forward eagerly to the Department of Transport decision about the future of the bypass round that town.

Better roads ease the frustration and stress which are factors in the safety with which long-distance drivers carry out their duties. Their vehicles have improved enormously. Anti-jack-knifing equipment is becoming more standard, and the tachometer has done much to regulate drivers' hours. But in my opinion one of the most badly needed improvements is really effective spray-reducing equipment. Those of us who drive on motorways know that when passing a lorry in very wet weather one experiences a moment of almost blind driving—a moment of hazard. I long for that problem to be solved, but I presume that it is much more intractable to solve than to state. I know that numerous Ministers of Transport have referred to it in the past but so far we do not seem to have produced an effective remedy.

Speed remains a serious factor, particularly for heavy lorries, which still travel too fast for rapid braking in an emergency. A recent editorial in *Commercial Motor* stated:

"Speed kills just like tiredness, complacency and bad habits when you are thundering down the M6 in bad weather with 38 tonnes of steel around you and enough kinetic energy to flatten a small block of flats."

Like my observations, that comment and an article in the current edition of *Care on the Road* make me wonder why we are hesitant about introducing legislation to install speed limiters in trucks. By the same token, why do motoring correspondents dwell on the top speed and acceleration of new cars as though they were some of the more important features of vehicles?

In west Berkshire, as no doubt in other rural areas, riding has become a popular pastime, and meeting a group of young people and children on their ponies in narrow country lanes is an everyday hazard. So far, we have been spared a car plunging into such a group, but the speed at which some motorists drive down those lanes fills me with foreboding. I always consider that there are not enough rider warning signs.

Then there are the villages which lack the requisite frontage of houses to enable them to be considered for a speed limit. I refer to villages such as Woolhampton, Chapel Row and Wickham in my constituency. I know the argument about distance from one end of a village to the other having to be a certain length if vehicles are to have time to slow down to a 30 mph speed limit for more than a minute or two, but what about installing sleeping policemen, clearly sign-posted on village entry and exit roads? Motorists do not speed over them, and no police are required to enforce them. If humps are considered to be too much of an obstacle, what thought is being given to slow-down strips across roads, giving an effect like a cattle grid or a level crossing—something that will cause a motorist voluntarily to slow down because of the discomfort which he must suffer if he drives his car too fast over them?

I hope that the Minister will say something tonight which will enable me to send a positive reply to one of my constituents, Miss Maisie Debell of Wickham, who recently wrote to me stating:

"Large, high-sided lorries, besides cars and goods vehicles, race along this road"—

that is, the B4000—

"from about 5 am until evening on weekdays. For those of us who live in houses on this road the noise is very intrusive. Crossing the road can also be a real hazard, especially for the elderly."

I have touched on road transport and some of the problems that it imposes in terms of the safety of heavy lorries on motorways driving at speed or in very wet conditions and the safety of those who use our roads as pedestrians or riders. As I said, the debate is about transport safety—a wide issue—so I hope that I may be forgiven if I switch from road vehicles to civil airlines, and refer particularly to today's report on the 1985 fire disaster in a British Airways 737 in Manchester which cost the lives of 55 people.

I saw the burnt-out fuselage of that aircraft at the air accident investigation centre at Farnborough some years ago, and it was a horrific sight. Undoubtedly, and as a result of the report, we will hear much about smoke hoods to give passengers a chance to breathe when a cabin is ablaze, as we will hear about water sprinklers to quench a cabin fire for long enough to let passengers escape. In considering the proposals, the first thing that we must remember is that, when fire breaks out in the cabin of an aircraft, the instinctive reaction of any passenger is to get out as quickly as possible.

For that reason, I doubt the value of smoke hoods. I do not believe that passengers will look for smoke hoods, either in the backs of seats or anywhere else around them. They will want to get out of the aircraft, for, quite simply, panic seizes passengers when there are fires on aircraft. People clamber over seats; they will do anything to get away from the inferno that is so quickly produced inside

[Sir Michael McNair-Wilson]

the airliner's cabin. To be effective, smoke hoods would need a measure of self-control that I believe would only be present if the fire were slow burning and therefore some warning of it could be given.

On the other hand, water sprinklers would be automatic. The water sprinklers that have been described to me in detail would weigh the equivalent of about two passengers. That is the number of passengers that an airliner the size of a 737 would have to forgo if it were to have that sprinkler system fitted. The system would require three additional water tanks and three pumps. The system could use the existing water system that currently provides the drinking water in an aircraft. That sprinkling system would cost about £250,000 for each aircraft. Its effect would be to dampen seats and upholstery to a point where flammability would be greatly reduced—at least long enough to evacuate the aircraft. We should not forget that the Civil Aviation Authority claims that the normal time needed to evacuate an airliner is 90 seconds. That is the interval in which passengers should be able to get out of an airliner's cabin.

In the Manchester disaster, time was of the essence. With hindsight, I do not think that any of us can doubt that the pilot made a serious error of judgment when he tried to take the aircraft off the runway into one of the side areas. He should not have placed his aircraft before his passengers. He should have got those people out as quickly as he could.

We know now that the emergency exits in that aircraft were impeded by rows of seats. I am glad that British Airways has now taken those rows of seats out and that the exits are therefore easy to reach. We also know that the galleys at the flight-deck end of the cabin created the situation where only one passenger at a time could go through the gap. As one of the exit doors was temporarily blocked, the result was that people were queuing up to get out of that aeroplane, which was, of course, on fire at the tail end.

The interior furnishings in that aircraft gave off the most dreadfully noxious fumes that undoubtedly contributed to the high death rate. CAA regulations have now made it obligatory for airlines to change those furnishings to ones that are much less likely either to catch fire or to give off such fumes.

As the report shows, and as is the case with all disasters, lessons have been learnt. As well as implementing the safety regulations, we need now to see whether we cannot vary the conditions laid down in the Civil Aviation (Investigation of Accident) Regulations 1983, section 11 that provides for the inquiry procedures to be followed after an accident. I believe I am right in saying that the report on Manchester was in fact completed at least a year ago, but that the procedure requires that anyone implicated in an accident report and whose reputation might be adversely affected by it should be shown a pre-publication copy and given the chance to request changes. That appears to be denying the speedy publication of documents that materially affect transport safety and the well-being of the travelling public. I suggest that that regulation is reconsidered with a view to amendment.

10.48 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) on his success in the ballot and on the subject chosen for debate.

While I recognise the national tragedies and disasters that have been referred to, there is a threat to the health and safety of our people which has never been highlighted, but that threat is apparent in my constituency.

Some hon. Members may recall that on 19 June 1984 I drew the House's attention to the problems of Knottingley, a town in my constituency, arising out of the transportation of coal from the Selby coalfield to the Drax power station. I informed the House that, in the mid-1970s, 120 merry-go-round trains a day used the level crossing at Knottingley to take coal to the Drax and Eggborough power stations.

Such trains continue to pass within 5 or 10 m of people's front and back doors. It has been estimated that the barriers at the level crossing are closed 21 per cent. of the time, and that therefore the 2,500 vehicles using that road are held up for a corresponding period. Given that heavy lorries will wait at the crossing in cold weather with their engines running, one can appreciate the environmental danger that that poses—we all know about carbon dioxide and greenhouse effect—and the effect that such engine fumes can have on health.

Before I first drew attention to the problem, two major developments had already affected it. In March 1976 planning permission was granted to develop the Selby coalfield and in July 1977 the decision was taken to develop the Drax B coal-fired power station. At that time it was expected that the number of MGR trains moving through Knottingley would increase by 33 per cent. One can appreciate that such an increase would add to the difficulties at the level crossing and the problems faced by the residents near that crossing. Those were the self-same people who already had to put up with the problems associated with the Selby development.

Now 180 MGR trains a day pass within 5 to 10 m of people's homes. I have sat in people's homes when those trains have shunted by; their houses have shaken and their televisions have not worked. One can smell the fumes in the bedrooms.

The problems faced by the people of Knottingley are the more regrettable because there is an alternative. The Selby coalfield has an expected life of 60 years, but the total cost of transporting the coal could be halved because another route could be used that is half the distance of the present one and hardly passes through residential areas. It is hardly efficient that British Coal or the CEGB should pay increased costs over the next 60 years just because someone will not agree to capital investment for the shorter line.

Many meetings have been held over the years to try to safeguard my constituents' health and safety, but with little result. We talk about safety on British Rail and other forms of transport; it is crazy to transport coal twice the necessary distance, with all the consequential fuel consumption and damage to the environment.

Recently, the situation has become much worse. I have received a letter from the deputy director of administration in the north Yorkshire area of British Coal, following my lobbying of the corporation to put the matter right. He suggested that the cost would fall on the CEGB, not on

British Coal. Whoever pays—and the financial aspect must surely be considered—the health and safety of my constituents are at stake.

The length of the line could be halved by introducing what is known locally as the Barlow link. That could be done without much capital expenditure. The money is a small price to pay for the health and safety of my constituents. Recently, £800 million has been found by British Rail or the Government to protect the environment for the people of Kent—and, some would say, of Dulwich—during and after construction of the Channel tunnel. That colossal sum was found almost overnight.

The health of my constituents has been deteriorating over the years. Some of them are becoming elderly, and we already have chest disease problems in our mining community. This problem will make those diseases worse. I hope that the Minister will seriously consider what he can do to alleviate our problem. Financial efficiency alone would suggest that colossal savings could be made over the next 60 years. Electricity generation and transport costs between Selby and Drax B power station would be lower. I hope that the Minister will help us.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It might be helpful to the three hon. Members who are rising if I say that the Front Bench spokesmen will seek to rise at 11.23 pm. That leaves nearly half an hour for the hon. Members who want to speak.

10.58 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I tried to intervene during the speech of the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) who initiated the debate. I congratulate him on doing so, but I was a little confused about some of the points he was trying to make.

Principally, I am persuaded, certainly by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), that the underground rail link to the Channel tunnel, which will consist of very high-speed trains, is a safe concept, but I am a little concerned that the proposed Channel link extension, if it is underground, according to what the hon. Gentleman said, may not be safe. The problems and the possible hazards which the under-Channel link might face were very well debated in Committee and on the Floor of this House, and I should have thought that we had probably overcome some of the fears that we might have had initially that such a system of underground transportation was open to certain dangers which could not be foreseen. I hope that, when the Channel link is constructed, as I am sure it will be, and if it is underground, it will be to the same high standard that we are currently ensuring and insisting upon in the Channel link which is now being built.

I congratulate British Rail on its safety record. It may seem strange to say so after three recent accidents, but it is probably one of the most densely used systems in the world, if not the most. Certainly, Network SouthEast trains travel along tracks with no more than a minute or so between each unit. It is a heavily trafficked system; it is also a high-speed system on some of our main arterial routes north of London. High speeds are reached, and at peak periods the separation between trains can be no more than three or possibly four minutes. That speaks volumes for the advanced technology which British Rail has employed on these routes in terms of signalling and of the construction and use of the trains themselves.

After all, we have had a great deal of experience in building safe railways, having invented them, so it is not surprising that we have built up a highly efficient and highly safe rail system. It is an extra-special tragedy that the Clapham disaster occurred indirectly as a result of investment. It would not have happened had the old system been left in situ.

One of the great problems for the railways is that, when a new system is being modernised and installed at the weekend or during the night, it must be ready for use the following morning or the following Monday morning, because the public demand their trains and demand that that service is provided. That puts ever more responsibility upon the engineers working on the line and upon British Rail to see that the investment takes place safely. We must await the outcome of the inquiry to see what suggestions can be made in this respect.

Motorways are an area where we have to redouble our efforts on transport safety. Tragically, history tells us that we only learn by our mistakes. However much we might try to foresee them, mistakes occur and it is only when they occur that we can try to introduce systems which prevent them from happening again.

Last week, on the M6, four people were killed in a tragic pile-up involving heavy goods lorries and cars and a large number were injured—more, unfortunately, than were killed in the train accident in Glasgow. Yet such an accident on our motorways does not warrant a public inquiry and, as far as I know, there seems to be very little public effort to gain knowledge from these very bad accidents. The railways have a history of public inquiries after accidents. We should invite similar inquiries into bad motorway or road accidents to see what lessons we can learn.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) that lorries should be fitted with speed limiters. The lighting systems on our heavy goods vehicles are very poor. Our continental cousins seem to light their vehicles like Christmas trees, and they can be seen from a considerable distance. Perhaps they overdo it but our system of lighting is very poor, even when it is all working, which it often is not. We need to redouble our efforts to ensure that our heavy goods vehicles, when travelling in darkness, are well and truly lit up.

We should also look at a system for limiting traffic flows on our motorways. An experimental system of traffic lights has been installed on a motorway slip road in the west midlands in an attempt to reduce the amount of commuter traffic piling onto an overloaded motorway system. I look forward to the Department of Transport introducing such a system on a wider scale. Motorways are for national transportation and not really for commuter traffic. If we can discourage some of the commuter traffic safety will be increased.

Safety is of paramount importance to the airline industry. We know that that industry has a very good record for ensuring safe travel for its passengers. However, there has been an increase in scheduled and charter services. Given the likely growth, there will be difficulty in obtaining new aircraft to meet that growth. There is a five or six-year waiting list for some new aircraft and that delay places greater importance on the maintenance of existing aircraft. Over the past few months, we have questioned the

[Mr. Roger King]

practicalities of flying elderly jets, some up to 20 years old. We have questioned whether those elderly jets are strong enough and meet our present high standards of safety.

I do not doubt that our elderly jets are maintained properly. However, the user—the passenger—is entitled to know the type of aircraft that he is flying on and its age. Is it not possible for aircraft to have hull certificates which can be renewed every five years or every year as the aircraft gets older? Is it not possible for the passenger to see as he gets on the aircraft a kind of MOT certificate which shows that the aircraft has received a close inspection, bearing in mind the aircraft's age? That would do much to calm passengers' fears about aircraft. After all, we often do not know the age of the aircraft that we are about to fly in. The passenger is entitled to that information.

In the not too distant future, I hope that there will be a certificate showing a breakdown of an aircraft's maintenance and inspection history. That certificate should be obvious to the user. In the remainder of this debate, I am sure that we will hear many other suggestions about transport safety and I will listen avidly to them. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister has taken on board some of the points that I have made.

11.7 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) for raising this topic tonight. I respond immediately to the invitation from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), who referred to investment in the railways. It is true that there has been some investment in figure terms, but there has not been much human investment.

People do not realise that a railway will not run at all, let alone safely, without the good will of the operatives, teamwork, discipline, long experience and understanding of the details of the job and confidence in management. All those factors together provide morale and satisfaction. It is common knowledge that all those factors have sadly been in decline over the past few years no matter what investment has been made.

I want to raise several matters relating to London Underground, and I am glad that the Minister for Public Transport is present. He represents the northern end of the Piccadilly line and I represent part of the eastern section of the District line. We are therefore representatives of the millions of people who travel in London who rely on the London Underground.

By chance I sent a letter today to the Secretary of State for Transport raising these matters. After the Clapham rail disaster, I asked the Secretary of State whether he would consider London Underground's signal organisation. I received a letter dated 25 January from the Minister for Public Transport. I understand that there has been a change in organisation in the customer-contractor system in the signal department of London Underground. I take objection to that change.

The Minister's reply states:

"You will have seen from my Answer to your recent question (copy attached) that this is not a matter in which we are involved. I understand nevertheless that the control of signalling equipment procedures remains as strict as ever under the new arrangements and that safety standards are in no way compromised."

I disagree with the Minister and hope that he will reconsider that reply.

My understanding is that the customer-contractor relationship that now applies throughout London Transport, including the signal section, was specifically required by the Secretary of State for Transport. I ask the Minister, as I asked his right hon. Friend, to reconsider his letter and to invite the railway inspectorate to review the new customer-contractor system in respect of London Underground, to take evidence, to report, and to publish the results.

The second matter I want to raise is of even greater importance. It concerns the extension on London Underground of one-person operation, or OPO, to deep tubes other than the Victoria line, which was from the beginning engineered and built on a different electrical system, whereby the driver takes on the guard's responsibilities. Elsewhere, the driver takes on the guard's responsibilities while still driving. That is an important distinction.

When, in the summer of 1987, London Transport wanted to introduce OPO on the tunnel section of the Piccadilly line—part of which runs through the Minister's constituency—I expressed my objections to London Transport's chairman at that time, Sir Keith Bright. I did so particularly in respect of the safety procedure known as leapfrogging. Because of the limitations on time, I shall not describe it in detail, but it involves a complex operation that is used when a train, often fully loaded and crowded, stops in the middle of a tunnel because the driver is unable to operate it for some reason. It involves a complicated system for dealing with the trains that are following behind, for a train being left in charge of a nominated passenger, and so on. I believe that that practice is inherently dangerous and wrong.

Accordingly, in August 1987 I wrote to Sir Keith Bright suggesting that that practice was dangerous. When I first heard of the King's Cross disaster, I feared that it had something to do with that obnoxious system. It was not —but it was due to something even worse. In any event, on 20 May 1988, I asked the Secretary of State for Transport for details of the statutory rules relating to those operations. The then Minister of State for Public Transport, the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), replied:

"Section 2 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984 makes London Regional Transport statutorily responsible for the safe running of its railways. There are no statutory rules relating specifically to one-person-operation. However, the criteria adopted for one-person-operation were drawn up by London Underground Limited in consultation with the Railway Inspectorate."—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1988; Vol. 133, c. *614-615*.]

I emphasise the words

"in consultation with the Railway Inspectorate"—

not with its permission. I find that very worrying. Anybody who knows anything about railway operations, particularly in tunnels, will not—I tell the hon. Member for Northfield—be satisfied.

After the Clapham rail disaster, I wrote to London Underground Ltd.'s current managing director, Mr. Denis Tunnicliffe, asking whether he is satisfied with the OPO system and with leap frogging in particular. He replied:

"We are satisfied that one-person operation of deep-level tube lines does not give rise to safety hazards and 'leap-frogging' is an effective and safe procedure with the facilities provided."

I disagree. Mr. Tunnicliffe adds, fairly:

"if a manifestly better method of dealing with operator failure was to be indentified, we would certainly adopt it."

I believe that there is—having a guard on the train.

On 22 November 1988, a letter appeared in *The Guardian* from a tube train driver who would not give his name because he was summarily told by a London Transport official that if he—the driver—was unhappy with the system, that official would be pleased to accept his resignation. The driver wrote:

"On August 11, 1983, a fire between Wood Green and Bounds Green on the Piccadilly Line trapped 750 passengers for 30 minutes. No lives were lost. If this had happened after One Person Operation had been introduced, I fear it would have been a different matter. Any passengers behind the fire would have been left to their own devices. My main worry is not if a disaster happens on an OPO train but when it happens, as happen it surely will."

Well, it might; I do not say that it definitely will. However, I say to the Minister—who, happily, is the Member of Parliament of many who travel on the Piccadilly line—that we must not risk it.

I also ask the Minister to request the railways inspectorate to examine the OPO system on non-Victoria line deep-level tubes, to take evidence from the men on the job and others who have been concerned, and to report. I do not think that the system should continue without being given a clean slate by the inspectorate, and I should be very surprised if the inspectorate could give it.

We cannot put the travelling public of London at risk by putting one man on a deep-level tube train. I do not think that that is right, and I hope that the House agrees with me.

11.15 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) on initiating the debate. On the day of publication of the report on the Manchester international airport disaster, it has been left to my hon. Friend to provide any opportunity for hon. Members to debate the report. Is it not a disgrace that on the day of publication—three and a half years after the tragedy—the Minister has failed to provide an opportunity for adequate discussion?

As honorary parliamentary adviser to Greater Manchester fire authority and a former member of the authority, I recognised—as did others involved in the process of recommendations to the coroner, the CAA and the accident investigation branch—the harrowing and humbling experience brought about by the disaster, in which 54 people perished and the injuries of another led to death. The public attitude at first was one of admiration for the emergency services, thankfulness for the survival of those who lived and concern for grieving relatives. During the ensuing months and years, however, the feeling changed to anger about the delay in consideration of what had caused the accident, who was responsible and what should be done to ensure that it would never happen again.

If such an appalling tragedy happened now, the loss of life would be as great as it was on 22 August 1985. Despite the reports from the coroner and Greater Manchester fire chief, Tony Parry, the major recommendations have not yet been implemented. Ministers have had the report on their desks for at least 12 months, but it has not been published—not just because of the necessity for those who are named to have an opportunity to consider the report, to which the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) referred.

I know, from my experience on the fire authority, about the intransigent response of the industry and the CAA to some of the proposals in the authority's and the coroner's reports. In private discussions, those bodies attempted to ensure that many of the proposals in the report published today would not be implemented. It is an outrage and a scandal that the initial criterion should be finance rather than the lessons to be learned from the report and the action that should now be taken.

There were two main factors in the Manchester airport deaths: the rapid and severe involvement of the passenger cabin compartment in the fire, and restricted means of escape from the aircraft. Since the fire, two minimal measures have been introduced. The first was the removal of one seat next to the over-wing exit, after persistent pressure from Mr. Parry and others. The CAA and the industry did not make such a concession willingly. Only following report after report and letter after letter did it respond to the requirement. The second measure was the provision of emergency lighting at floor level.

On 27 January 1987, Mr. Parry reported to the authority that in his view recommendations for overall fire safety should include fire exits and routes to them, smoke hoods and water-spray systems.

The report continued:

"With regard to means of escape, there are two ways of tackling this. Firstly, provide additional exists and unobstructed routes to them, so that people can leave the aircraft before they are subject to hazardous conditions. Alternatively, provide a system of protection for the passengers which will extend their survivability. Smoke hoods have received much publicity as far as the latter option goes, but they are a theoretical solution to a very real problem and do not take account of the many factors of human behaviour involved in incidents like Manchester. Death from toxic fumes generally comes before death from burns or heat, but in fire like Manchester, one is not very far behind the other and if escape routes for people wearing smoke hoods are not significantly improved, you will just be replacing one way of dying by another."

That is what Tony Parry said on 27 January. It was a follow-up to various reports to appropriate authorities.

In lay person's language, the fire chief was saying that smoke hoods would not have saved a single life in the Manchester airport disaster for three main reasons—the internal construction of the passenger cabins, the displacement of the exits and the access of flames to the fuselage.

According to Mr. Parry's report of 27 January:

"Water spray systems have been demonstrated to extend the time that people can safely stay on the aircraft and, if it is impractical to improve exits from the aircraft, this is the best solution. It is independent of passenger activity and is unaffected by human behaviour."—

a point made graphically by the hon. Member for Newbury—

"It contains fire development on the aircraft and prevents smoke and flames from a fire outside the aircraft entering the fuselage."

The evidence in that report was available and submitted to the coroner's investigations. The coroner gave it total support, and in the past three and a half years there has been a sustained campaign by Mr. Parry as a professional fire officer, and fire services throughout the United Kingdom responsible for fire safety at airports, to put pressure on the Civil Aviation Authority to ensure that those recommendations are implemented in the forseeable future. Even the report published today, which supports the theories put forward by Mr. Parry, states that investigations have to continue.

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

The technology has been developed and can be implemented, but the problem lies in the will of the passenger carriers in the civil aviation industry to implement it. They want to spend less money on overall safety at the expense of passengers. The report could have been implemented more than 12 months ago in national and international passenger fleets.

It is important that the issue is not brushed under the carpet and the report put on the shelf. We owe it to the families of the 55 people who perished and the millions of people who use the aircraft industry each year.

I hope that the Minister apologises to the House for the sneaky way in which the report was published today, and for neglecting to provide appropriate time for a debate in the House. I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshaw (Mr Morris) will raise the matter in an Adjournment debate on Thursday but that alone is inadequate because of the nature and the ferocity of the disaster at Manchester airport on 22 August 1985. We require the Minister to provide appropriate time to debate the report and to ensure that it is implemented as quickly as possible.

11.23 pm

Mr John Prescott (Kinston upon Hull, East): I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) for raising a very important issue which concerns the House and the country at large. In the past two years there have been a unprecedented number of transport tragedies in shipping, in rail, in aviation and on the roads, and tnere is considerable concern about standards of safety and the role of the Department of Transport. The Department has an unenviable record of being obsessed with privatisation, competition, the market system, economy and efficiency, all of which have played a part in reducing the level of safety and have contributed to some of the tragedies the past two years. I shall develop those points further in the course of my speech.

The debate has been highlighted by two incidents unconnected with it. One was the petition presented by 25,000 people complaining bitterly about the rundown of the coastguard services, and hon. Members have met the coastguards today to receive the petition. The petition demands that the Department reverse the decision about cuts in coastguard stations and coastguards. For an island nation to do without its coastguard service is totally unacceptable. The Government wish to reduce the service solely for economic reasons. That petition was presented on a day when three ships sank around our coasts. They were Panamanian-registered ships. We have lost 1,000 ships from the British Merchant Navy. They have been replaced by Panamanian vessels which are lost at four times the rate of vessels belonging to traditional maritime nations. It is cheaper to employ Panamanian vessels, but the cost is actually greater in terms of the loss of vessels and lives. That is a familiar theme.

Today, as other hon. Members have mentioned, the report has been published on the terrible accident at Manchester airport on 22 August 1985. It is deplorable that it has taken three and a half years to produce that report. As hon. Members have pointed out, it is a reflection on the Civil Aviation Authority and on the Department, which has been responsible for its own investigation, that we have not heard why the report was delayed. The petition about the coastguard service and the delay in publishing the report on the Manchester airport crash are two examples of the problems at the heart of transport safety.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) made a powerful case about feelings in Manchester about the delay in publishing the air crash report. Is the Minister aware that a carbon copy fire took place in a plane at Prestwick in 1977, and that the report produced in 1979 predicted that the same would happen again unless some of its recommendations were implemented? Those recommendations were not implemented and there was a further tragedy at Manchester. Is the Minister aware of the earlier report, and will he learn any lessons from the Manchester report? The three-year delay reflects the powerful interests behind the scenes—the commercial interests of operators and manufacturers concerned to ensure that whatever criticisms are made do not reflect upon them.

One criticism of the present inquiry system is that all inquiries should be open and public so that there can be proper examination. The Government have done that after the recent rail tragedies. Secret inquiries are not acceptable. One can see the conflict of economic interests and safety. For example, because there were more seats on the aeroplane, the exits from the plane were blocked. That was a clear indication of economic factors taking priority over safety. That is unacceptable, as is the conflict over smoke hoods and the buck-passing between the CAA and the Department of Transport. *[Interruption.]* That is one of the interesting conflicts. The fire brigade people are talking about the difficulties—*[Interruption.]* If the Minister for Public Transport would listen to what is being said instead of rabbiting on, he might learn a thing or two. There is concern about the conflict and the legitimate arguments of both sides about the use of smoke hoods. When, after three years of inquiry, the chief fire officer at Manchester airport complains bitterly that he has not been adequately consulted, that is a matter of concern.

The rail crashes at Clapham, Purley and Glasgow highlight the problem of lack of resources to deal with safety. We have also had the plane tragedies at Lockerbie and the M1, the problems about airport security, as well as the pile-up on the M6. These remind us that confidence in safety in all areas of transport has been very much undermined. Then there was King's Cross and Zeebrugge. In a short period there has been unprecedented loss of life in shipping, aviation and railways. Moreover, as the inquiries show, a common theme runs through all the disasters.

The Sheen inquiry into the loss of the vessel at Zeebrugge clearly showed that there was sloppy management and that financial considerations resulted in ships running fuller and going for a faster turn-round. We have seen some of the problems arising from that attitude. The Department received complaints about lights on the bridge and about the run down in the number of marine inspectors. All these things are signs of the climate of reduced concern for safety. The Minister himself, in reply to a parliamentary question, admitted that even after the Herald of Free Enterprise disaster the number of ferry fires has increased four fold in the past year. That is alarming, and it justifies the concern of the people on strike in Dover. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) is

not in the House to raise some of the points that are worrying his constituents, but no doubt his mind is exercised on other areas.

As to the loss of the Derbyshire, it was six years before the Department conducted an inquiry, and the report which was produced recently has given satisfaction to nobody. Under the new inquiry rules that are being introduced, the Department is not prepared to ensure that all reports are made public, but it is prepared to select the people who are to give evidence. That is causing great concern in the shipping industry.

As for the air crash at Lockerbie, the Secretary of State has admitted that he received information about the bomb inquiry but decided not to alert the British Airports Authority about the threat to the aircraft and the need to increase security. The Secretary of State has an awful lot to answer for. It is not sufficient for him to go on television and say that if the question had been put to him in the debate in this House he would have told hon. Members that he had that information. It was cardinal information about which he misled the House.

There is a lot to be explained. The relatives are demanding an explanation from the Secretary of State, who has so far failed to give a full account of the circumstances. As the Select Committee report on aviation security pointed out, the break-up of the police control and the airport fund to finance security shows that the Department played a major part in reducing safety, and all for economic reasons. Economy and efficiency have been allowed to override safety considerations.

On the subject of heavy lorries, the Minister knows of the complaints that his Department's inspectors have been denied the resources to institute prosecutions against lorry owners who overload their vehicle. That, too, has been reported in the press. According to his own examiners, because the Department refused to co-operate in pursuing cases in the courts, the cases were handed to the Yorkshire police, who did prosecute. Drivers were fined, and directors were given prison sentences. If the matter had been left to the Department, nothing would have been done because saving money took priority over safety.

A recent report on the bus industry shows that the traffic commissioners are extremely concerned that, owing to privatisation and deregulation in the industry, we are beginning to see more prosecutions arising from the operation of unsafe buses. It is a matter of concern that, after just one year of operation, the Department's own inspectors should be so worried.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) mentioned British Rail's safety record. It is still a very good record, as I constantly state, but the statistics now admitted by the Government show that the number of accident deaths on the railways has increased by about 30 per cent. since 1982, while the number of collisions and derailments has gone up by nearly 20 per cent. Those are alarming increases—and the figures were given by the railway inspectors themselves—and a matter for great concern. There was an improvement every year up to 1982, but that situation has been reversed. It is right that we should seek an explanation for that.

The reason for the reversal is beginning to come out in some of the inquiry reports. In the case of Clapham we hear of signal failure. In that regard, why was the automatic system for stopping trains not installed? Mr. Stanley Hall, who was in charge of signals investment over this period, says that the reason for the failure to install that system was that the Government were tight-fisted with their money—I refer not to capital investment but to the revenue needed to employ people for installation and operation—and Mr. Hall should know, because he was doing the job. That probably explains why drivers are increasingly being blamed for going through red lights and causing accidents.

Human error undoubtedly contributes, but in considering the diamond crossing at the Glasgow incident, I am led to ask whether the Minister is aware that a carbon copy collision of two freight trains, in exactly the same circumstances, occurred a few years ago? Did his inspectors read that report and then say to British Rail, "You must not take a leg out of the diamond crossing system because it may lead to a collision on the line" because that is precisely what happened at Glasgow? If the crossings had remained the same, the accident could not have happened, so why was that leg of the diamond crossing taken out? The answer is that it would save time and manpower on maintenance. That is putting economic considerations above safety priorities and it has been brought about by the financial climate engendered by the Government in seeking to reduce public support for the industry so that our railways are run on a shoestring compared with those of most other countries.

The influence of that financial climate can also be seen in the Underground, where the police were reduced and the Guardian Angels offered to provide security. Station staff have not been available and that, too, has decreased the security for passengers. Those problems were pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

The Fennell report reveals that the financial climate led to managers not bringing forward the removal of wooden cladding on the escalators, thus leading to the King's Cross disaster. I could give the Minister any number of quotations to that effect. Yet the Government keep coming to the House and suggesting that they can find no connection between the lack of resources and falling standards of safety. Desmond Fennell refused to receive evidence on the point, saying that it would be ultra vires, but I hope that the Minister will tell us that there will eventually be a debate on the King's Cross Underground fire because the relatives are demanding it. It is a long time since the report was produced and the financial climate, affecting safety is now critical.

Recently I met the firemen who have been looking at the Underground system and who have seen many fires since that tragedy. They have told me that there is great resistance to the use of fire certification on our Underground system. Fennell recommended fire practices so that we could find out the problems and get used to giving a greater priority to fire prevention, but despite the Fennell recommendation that there should be one such practice every six months firemen are still being denied the facilities to conduct those exercises because London Underground says that it would be inconvenient for passengers. Such practices happen all the time on the Paris Metro, but here passenger convenience is apparently put before safety as a priority.

That is precisely what has come out at the Clapham inquiry. Although Sir Robert Reid challenges me about it, he admits, possibly with hindsight, that passenger convenience was put before the safety priority. That is unacceptable, but it is a proposition that we hear constantly from the chairmen of such industries.

[Mr John Prescott]

Having mentioned Sir Robert Reid I should add that I find it deplorable that British Rail has rushed to see drivers who are injured and in shock, only to blame them for human error. What about management error? What about management greed and cuts in resources? What about the management allowing safety standards to deteriorate on the pretext of passenger convenience, or whatever other reason? Such attitudes and practices are unacceptable.

One shining example that we must mention and commend has been the outstanding work of the emergency services. When one compares that with the record of the Department of Transport, one realises that the Government have presided over a history of massive tragedies in our transport industry and have pursued a policy which has contributed to those tragedies. The Government's obsession with privatisation, profit and cost-cutting while seeking to maintain economy and efficiency has been at the direct expense of safety. The public are prepared to pay more for higher safety standards. They do not accept the Government's priorities and they believe that the Government no longer give proper priority to safety. The public will be giving their own answers on that soon enough.

11.38 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) on securing the opportunity to debate this subject.

We today received a letter from the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and we shall consider carefully what he says about one-person operation, leapfrogging, customer-contractor relations and signalling. The railways inspectorate is reviewing Underground safety and will report shortly to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It is not dissatisfied with one-person operation, but I shall review the points made by the hon. Gentleman and get in touch with him.

In the space of three months, the country has witnessed five tragic accidents involving our railways and aircraft, at Clapham, Lockerbie, Kegworth, Purley and Bellgrove. Mercifully, serious accidents such as these are rare, which makes them all the more shocking when they occur. In each case, people want to know what went wrong. We are taking appropriate steps to secure the answers to those questions. The formal arrangements have been explained to the House. It is important that the inquiries should be completed as swiftly as possible. To underline the importance of that, my right hon. Friend has decided today that the Bellgrove accident should be investigated by the chief inspecting officer of railways. He will undertake the inquiry instead of Major King, who must give priority over the next few weeks to action arising from the Fennell report.

The progress of the investigations has been reported to the House to the extent that it has been possible to do so without prejudging the final outcome, so I shall not rehearse those points this evening. My main concern will be whether this run of five serious accidents is symptomatic of a more deep-seated problem with the transport system, which has been the theme of a number of speeches this evening.

Rail is the safest form of transport after air—a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King). In terms of fatal accidents there is little to choose between travel by rail and air. In each case, there has been one fatal accident for every 300 billion passenger kilometres travelled. Rail has a far better safety record than any form of road transport, and that cannot be stressed too often or too firmly. It would be a pity if passengers were misled into thinking that it would be safer to travel by car than by train; it certainly would not. Historically, fatalities per passenger mile are about 20 times worse for travel by car than by rail or air.

The hon. Member for Hemsworth was worried about the safety of the Channel tunnel link. Many Opposition Members badly want the link and have been pressing for it to be in a tunnel. The railways inspectorate has given its view, and it wants cross tunnels, walkways, fire doors and other safety precautions.

The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) has my sympathy for a problem that he has pursued doggedly for many years in the House in the interests of his constituents. The safety of transport by road would be worse that by rail, but if investment by British Rail is necessary it can be made without ministerial approval. I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of British Rail.

As fatal accidents caused by crashes are so rare, it is difficult to establish a short-term trend, but the long-term trend is clear—rail travel is becoming safer. Improvements between the 1950s and 1980s is marked. Between 1969 and 1988, significant collisions decreased by about a quarter in the latest five-year period compared with the first. The number of significant derailments is down from over 1,500 between 1969 and 1973 to 684 between 1984-88. The improvement is not smooth and regular, and figures vary erratically from year to year.

I sincerely trust that the accidents at Clapham, Purley and Bellgrove will prove to be a bad patch from which the railways will quickly recover. Such incidents have occurred before; 1957, 1967 and 1975 were years of exceptionally high numbers of deaths on the railways, but they did not mark a deterioration in railway safety, which continued to improve after those unusual years, as it had before.

It is wrong and irresponsible to suggest that a run of three serious rail accidents must mean that the underlying trend has changed abruptly, although it is right and proper to consider the circumstances of each accident to see whether there is a common thread. I do not want to prejudge the outcome of the inquiries into these crashes, but at this stage it is difficult to see any common thread. As the immediate causes of the crashes differ, attention has inevitably focused on the possibility that there is something more fundamentally wrong with British Rail.

Let me dispose of the wholly specious argument, which we have heard again this evening, that there is a decline in safety standards within British Rail caused by underinvestment. Under the last Labour Government, the peak of investment by British Rail—the hon. Member for Hemsworth mentioned this point—was £474 million at today's prices. Last year, British Rail invested £517 million, and this year it has budgeted for £560 million. The level of investment in the coming years will be higher still. Nobody is preventing British Rail from investing in anything, least of all safety. There has been confusion with the public service obligation grant, which is a subsidy reflecting the losses made by the railways. The years of the

highest public service obligation grant have often coincided with the lowest investment years, and vice versa. It is absurd to believe that only loss-making industries invest.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has recently spoken about working expenses on the railways. They have been at broadly the same level —between £3 billion and £3·5 billion in real terms—every year since 1975. On Network SouthEast in recent years, there has been a marked upward trend. It has also been alleged that British Rail has neglected safety in favour of other priorities. British Rail has many other issues to engage its attention, such as improving the quality of service, increasing productivity and coping with the growth in demand for rail transport, especially on Network SouthEast but it has never lost sight of the fact that running a safe railway system is its first priority. For the avoidance of doubt, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State reinforced that point to the British Rail board in the light of the Fennell report on the causes of the King's Cross fire.

Mr. Prescott: By letter?

Mr. Portillo: In person.

It is suggested that congestion causes accidents. Obviously, an accident involving a train carrying many passengers may result in higher casualties than an accident involving a train which is half empty, but there is no evidence to suggest that overcrowding causes accidents. The railways inspectorate has made it clear that it does not see a link. That leaves the possibility that overcrowding on a train may aggravate the injuries sustained by individual passengers. That is a point into which Mr. Hidden and his assessors will look further if they judge it to be relevant to their inquiries.

As far as we can judge, air transport is becoming safer year by year. There are far too few accidents in United Kingdom air space to allow us to establish a meaningful trend. However, the number of air accidents worldwide shows a clear downward trend. Within the United Kingdom, there has been a reduction in the number of air-misses over the past 10 years. The number of risk-bearing airmisses has declined more sharply, from 40 in 1978 to 13 in 1987. That improvement is all the more impressive as it has taken place against the background of a 70 per cent. increase in the amount of air travel undertaken. The improvement is largely attributable to technological advances and is a tribute to those who design, build and maintain aircraft and to those who provide air traffic control services. In sum, we are as confident as we can be that air transport is safe and becoming safer.

The tragedies at Lockerbie and Kegworth, appalling though they were, do not change those underlying facts. There is no doubt in my mind that those two accidents are not symptomatic of a general deterioration in air transport safety and I do not see any link between the causes of those two tragedies. Any lessons to be learned from the Lockerbie disaster will be in the area of airport and airline security. My right hon. Friend has taken steps to improve domestic and international security and the Select Committee on Transport will have a chance to question him on such matters when he gives evidence to it next week.

I cannot say much now about the lessons to be learned about Kegworth because the air accident investigation branch has yet to issue its interim bulletin on the crash. I note the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) about the time taken to issue the report on the Manchester air disaster. I must point out that the causes of the accident were complex and it was important to learn all the right lessons. The length of time taken was untypical of air accident investigation branch reports.

I must also stress that the Civil Aviation Authority has already taken action on many of the recommendations of the air accident investigation branch and it has not been delayed by the passing of the report to those people affected. There is no question of having delayed the taking of remedial measures. The Civil Aviation Authority has initiated a comprehensive research programme to investigate the introduction on civil aircraft of cabin water-spray systems. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) and the hon. Member for Makerfield are concerned about that point.

Mr. McCartney: The Department knew what had caused the deaths after the coroner's inquiry report. The Department knew then what needed to be done, yet it has taken the Department until today to issue its response. That is outrageous. There was no reason for the delay, other than that the CAA has been trying to bring pressure to bear behind the scenes to prevent an adequate report being presented to the House.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. In the weeks and months following the accident, changes were made to the maintenance procedures for the Pratt and Whitney JT8D engines fitted to the aircraft, and to the methods of assessing the effect of repair schemes based on operators' fleet experiences with the engine. That is just one example of how we were getting on with things.

Understandably, much of our debate has been devoted to transport by rail and air, but some of my hon. Friends also have stressed the importance of road safety. There is good news to report to the House on road safety. The number of road deaths in 1987—5,125—was the lowest since 1954; it was down 5 per cent. compared with 1986. The total casualties are down 3 per cent. to 311,473. Pedestrian deaths are also down and in the first nine months of 1988 the number of deaths was down again by 3 per cent. The peak year for casualties was 1965 when there were 400,000 casualties and 8,000 deaths.

Although the number of vehicles has more than doubled and the total distance travelled has more than trebled since then, the number of deaths and injuries has fallen steadily, giving Britain one of the best road safety records in the world. But we still hope for considerable further improvement and that is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set the target of reducing casualties by one third—from 300,000 to 200,000 a year —by the year 2000.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury asked about reducing spray from lorries. In 1984, regulations were made to require spray suppression equipment conforming to a British standard to be fitted to new motor lorries over 12 tonnes gross weight, to new trailers over 3·5 tonnes gross weight and to existing trailers in service over 16 tonnes gross weight. All these should now be fitted.

[Mr. Portillo]

Regulations were made in 1988 to include a check of the equipment in the annual roadworthiness test. I hope that that will be of comfort to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury.

My hon. Friend also asked whether speed limiting devices should be fitted to lorries. As he will know, they are being fitted to coaches under regulations made in 1988, and we shall consider whether they should be fitted to lorries if the present improvement in the behaviour of lorry drivers does not continue in future years.

All these road safety developments show that there is a need for publicity initiatives to change people's attitudes to key safety issues and to call for a new approach to road safety education. We need research into accident prevention measures, investment in safer road layouts, improvements in the design of vehicles and changes in our road traffic law. I have given a brief summary of developments in road safety partly to show how much is being done but also to show that we need to advance on many different fronts if we are to secure an improvement in road safety.

I suspect that precisely the same applies to rail, sea and air safety. The more closely one examines the problem, the clearer it becomes that sweeping generalisations and broad-brush solutions are irrelevant. I hope that that will be borne in mind in all our discussions of road safety in the weeks ahead, not least by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East.

Anti-Social Tenants

11.53 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): When hon. Members speak of, or seek to legislate for, where and how people live, we talk of housing. We refer to houses and flats, sometimes to dwellings, and sometimes to units of accommodation. That is where we go wrong. For the people in them, they are their homes. For them, whether or not they own them, they are, or should be, precious to them—something worth caring about. But, for accommodation to be a home and not just a unit of accommodation, the occupier should have the right to peaceful occupation. A home that is affected by the anti-social behaviour of neighbours is not a home. Effectively, it is destroyed as such, and sometimes it is barely deserving of the title "a unit of accommodation".

Anti-social behaviour is a cancer in our housing estates, and in our tower blocks in particular. The problem is known to too many in our urban areas, and we have ducked and fudged the issue for years.

In 1981, we were rightly proud of our right-to-buy legislation. There has been no greater or beneficial move in good homemaking. We sought to be fair to those who either could not or did not want to buy. For the first time, we granted tenants real security of tenure. That, too, was a right and proper move, and, in normal circumstances, none would want to see that right diminished. But, in giving security of tenure to good tenants, we gave it to the troublemakers as well. Of course we can take them to court —that is, if there is the political will at local level so to do. I do not need to remind hon. Members just how difficult and how long-winded that process normally is.

Even when troublemakers are taken to court, they know, and the council knows that they know, that the council will rehouse them. Troublemakers raise the proverbial Harvey Smith, and the process starts all over again in some other part of town. No one should have the right to abuse security of tenure in that way and so conduct themselves as to deny their neighbours the right of peaceful occupation.

The problem is largely for local authorities, but it has a clear read-across to the generality of law and order. I urge the appropriate ministerial group to have a good hard look at the issue. Even if a complete answer cannot be found, let us at least do what we can.

Over half the tower blocks in Nottingham are in my constituency. In the Radford area, Buckland and Bladon courts have recently been in the local news. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently written to me on the subject. One family feels that they would be better off homeless back in Newcastle, where they came from, than to continue the nightmare that they currently suffer. According to a recent article in our local paper, the young wife said:

> "It starts about midnight"—

that is, the noise and the music——

> "and goes on until 7 or 8 am most nights of the week.
>
> We can't sleep at night. And you can't even hear the television . . . I've been reduced to tears."

According to that article, the police have said that they do not have a soft policy to what we call blues parties—

> "They were treated in the same way as other noise complaints"—

but they admitted that there was a problem. That is a masterpiece of understatement.

There is a group of five other towers in the Lenton area of my constituency. All are structurally sound—excellent flats. But, through the activities of a few, four of those tower blocks are hell. The fifth is being protected by security and no doubt will be the envy of the other four until they too can be protected by a concierge and video system. That cannot be done too soon. Such protection should be a priority ahead of the present Labour city council's new build plan. The 50 new homes in that plan will serve housing needs much less than would immediate investment in security measures.

Those problems are certainly not confined to tower blocks. The problem pepper-pots all over our estates—low-rise flats, semis and detached property.

Two weeks ago my advice session was besieged by a dozen or more people at the end of their tether with worry and aggravation. I have been told that local officials are unable to get across to the culprits the strength of feeling of their neighbours and the distress that is being caused. As much as I sympathise with the officials, that simply will not do.

In June of 1985, I met city officers and we spoke of segregating the elderly from the under 40s. That policy has been applied and in some complexes it works very well. We spoke, too, at that meeting of action against certain tenants who lawfully take in lodgers, who, however, are often nothing more than a succession of boy friends. Action must be taken against the registered tenant even when it is the boy friend who is known to be the culprit, and that complicates and prevents an early solution.

The concierge and security approach is said to be expensive, but at least it works. In the long run I suspect that it will cost little more—or perhaps no more—and it will certainly cost less in human distress. There would certainly be less destruction of the flats, the common parts and the main doors to the tower blocks. A tenant's front door will not be kicked in each time that the difficult tenant forgets his key or, if a tenant has not bothered to tell his friend where the party will be, everyone will not be woken up at some unearthly hour until the right flat has been found.

I spoke earlier of political will. Councils do not, for example, enforce their own tenancy agreements. It is argued that when they try and the cases come to court, they find it difficult to get residents to appear as witnesses. I am not surprised, because I know of some of the threats that some of my constituents have had to suffer in those situations.

At the same 1985 meeting, officers of the city said that sanctions other than eviction should be available, but often I believe that that is the only sanction that some of those troublemakers understand.

What angers the honest law-abiding tenant most is the comment, "We can't do anything. Why don't you take them to court yourself?" I have enormous respect for our city's chief environmental health officer. I understand the difficult task he has, and I know that he meant well when in June 1985 he set out how tenants could take action under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, section 59. He wrote at that time:

"The majority of such complaints relate to the playing of loud, amplified music at unsociable hours as well as associated noise from groups of people varying in size from 3 or 4 to several hundred congregating on one domestic premises."

He put it down to

"differing life styles, unemployment and in some cases . . . commercial interests".

He was referring to blues parties. He said that those factors added to the

"annoyance, discomfort, loss of sleep, intimidation and social pressures"

on other tenants.

He went on:

"The noise may be intermittent, irregular and as a result sometimes difficult to monitor to obtain evidence to take legal action under Section 58. In such cases it may be more appropriate for the complainants to take their own action by utilising the provisions of Section 59".

Should we really be expecting our residents to do that sort of work themselves? I believe that that is quite absurd and I share their view that they are entitled to the full protection of the law.

In March last year, the then Under-Secretary of State for the Environment my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) responded to my pleas on this topic——

Mr. McCartney: They sacked her.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My hon. Friend was not sacked for this letter. In a letter to me, she said:

"We specifically gave Councils the power therefore to go to court to seek their removal."

She was referring to those anti-social tenants. She said:

"The relevant provision is now Ground 2 of Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985. Where a 'tenant or a person residing in a dwelling-house has been guilty of conduct which is a nuisance or annoyance to neighbours'."

My hon. Friend went on to outline that on those particular grounds

"The Court does not have to satisfy itself . . . that in addition suitable alternative accommodation is available for the displaced tenant."

In those circumstances the court would accept that the tenant had made himself intentionally homeless and the local authority would

"not be obliged to rehouse him."

Hence my reference to political will. I recognise that few councils, if any, will, on first conviction, seek not to rehouse. If the court thought that that might be the outcome it might not grant the eviction order, hence the lack of use of the special "ground 2" contained in the 1985 Act.

In 1987 my Conservative colleagues in Nottingham won control of the council and held it for but a brief 18 months. At least they had a stab at the problem when they set up the new housing management panel. That set out to deal with persistent anti-social behaviour and included under that heading, noise nuisance, dogs, vandalism, harassment and the illegal use of premises. It tried to offer the offender the chance to explain and/or to correct his or her conduct. At the end of the day, however, it is still down to political will to put the interests of the majority of our tenants before the conduct of the minority and to take that group to court.

Just three weeks ago I was grateful to Superintendent Edwards of the Nottinghamshire constabulary for organising a meeting in the Lenton area of my constituency to listen to tenants' complaints. He acknowledged the problems of late night parties—I do not mean one-offs. Such parties are not always formally blues parties, but they go on and on. He gave an undertaking that those who refuse

"to accept the effect of their actions will have proceedings taken against them."

I know that Superintendent Edwards meant it when he gave that undertaking, but what will be the outcome? Has

[Mr. Brandon-Bravo]

the House given the courts the powers or even the understanding that they need to deal with the problem? Perhaps we should have special housing courts to deal with such matters.

One additional sanction should be given to local authorities, and the sooner the better—security of tenure should be forfeit. If a council feels morally bound to rehouse I do not seek to take that right away, but it should not be compelled to grant a further secure tenancy.

The knowledge that the council no longer has to take tenants to court to obtain eviction may—I stress may—curb the excesses of most of the troublemakers. If they still do not want to know after their second chance to live like other people, neither do I. I would have no qualms in declaring such people intentionally homeless and sending them on their way. If that happened a couple of times in Nottingham it would be a salutary lesson. It might not cure all the anti-social families, but it sure might cure a few.

12.8 am

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The problem of homeless families has been with us for many years and during that time it has grown because so many associated problems have had to be dealt with.

The dilemma facing local authorities—the problem mainly affects such authorities—is, what do they do if they turn families out? An authority may be faced with a nuisance family that has three, four or five children. If the local authority turns that family out, it must decide what will happen to the children. Here, finance comes into the matter again, because the local authority may decide that it is cheaper to deal with the problem by moving the family into another area rather than take the children into care. Taking children into care creates another problem, because the children may be well cared for and well loved. One problem will be dealt with, therefore, but another will be created.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) said that Nottingham should move these people on; if it does, they will turn up somewhere else. They cannot continue to be vagrants. We must decide where they should move to. If they move to another city or town, they will have to be dealt with as homeless families, and local authorities will be obliged to rehouse them.

Families who are removed from their accommodation and rehoused are usually resettled in less desirable localities. If all such people are moved into such localities, the problem is moved into one large area that tends to spread outwards. The problem is not easy to deal with.

We have caused a lot of this problem by building tower blocks and low-rise accommodation. My local authority faces the same problems as those that the hon. Gentleman described. Hi-fi sets pound out high decibel noise that penetrates to two or three adjacent houses. I discovered in one of the estates in my constituency that the local authority has not spent enough on sound-proofing. We also made the mistake of thinking that old and young people can live together.

Not because it wanted to but because the Government instructed it to increase the density of accommodation, the council built—it had never done this before—terrace-type houses. Until that point, the council had built only semi-detached houses. We needed old people's accommodation, and built it as four-bedroomed maisonettes. That just did not work. Old people do not want to be bothered with children, and younger people create a disturbance with their hi-fi sets. So people complained to me at my surgeries, and to the local authority. But noise is not enough reason to turn a family out; the problem needs careful handling.

I am grateful to the Minister for giving my local authority a good deal of money with which to deal with the problem in another way—making terrace-type housing into semi-detached houses and maisonettes into three-bedroomed houses by taking the roofs away. In partnership with the local authority, we are creating a more environmentally desirable area, thereby dealing with the problem in another way. It works. There will still be the occasional problem family, but there will be fewer problems.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, South described what he called "a succession" of boy friends. That is one of the easiest problems to deal with—provided, as the hon. Gentleman said, the local authority has the will. In the case of single persons, notice to quit is given to the person to whom the home belongs, who must get rid of the problem himself. By and large, notice to quit to the tenant does have the desired effect.

The hon. Gentleman is surprised. My authority has dealt with the problem by creating estate housing agents, who are continually in the area, know the area, know the tenants, know the problems, and after a short period know how to deal with them. So notice to quit and persistent visiting deal with the problem.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Does the hon. Gentleman in his city have the problem that he referred to of the single tenant? The rent is paid—either directly or indirectly, but it is paid—and that single person hands the key to all sorts of different people, is often away for weeks or months on end, and there is no mechanism giving the local authority the power to remove the secure tenancy from that person because the rent is being paid, which means that house or flat is being used for all sorts of purposes and it is a nightmare to try to unscramble it. Does he not have that problem?

Mr. McKay: In fact, although the rent is being paid, the property is not being looked after, and it is part of the tenancy agreement that the property be available for inspection at all times and be looked after. Therefore, if the tenancy agreement is broken, notice to quit is given. So there are ways and means available within tenancy agreements. All our tenants have tenancy agreements as a matter of fact and of right at the beginning of their tenancy, not only giving them their rights, but explaining the rights of the local authority and its intention to carry them out.

I am not saying that it is an easy problem, which can be dealt with by simply turning people out. Some problems can be dealt with that way, but not all. The idea is to find out the cause of the problem. As I said, most of the time it is the environment in which people live, and we can deal with that problem. Also, in large areas there is a great deal of unemployment, which in itself leads to bad neighbourliness. We can get rid of problems by looking at the way we design houses in the future.

We will still have problems, because, I am afraid, in this world there are problem families and there always will be; they will not just disappear. However, the problem is not dealt with by simply turning people out, turning families on to the street, because someone else has to pick up that problem at a later date or in another area. People do not just disappear. We can deal with the problems of single people where there is a severe problem through social services, but we cannot deal with the family problem by turning the family out.

We have found, by a combination of good housing management, good estate management and the involvement of both police and social services, that we can deal with many of the problems and only be left with the minority, but it is the minority that will cause the trouble. I confess that we have some problems we do not know how to deal with. It is certainly not by turning people out. There must be a way of dealing with the problem, and it is a case of finding out how and when to do it effectively.

12.19 am

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): May I have the leave of the House to speak again?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Gentleman has the leave of the House.

Mr. McCartney: As somebody very much interested in housing matters, I welcome the opportunity given by the hon. Member for debating this issue. Irrespective of party political background, if one has been involved in local community politics either as a councillor or as someone involved professionally, there is no local authority in Britain, whether Conservative, Labour or the alliance has overall control, that does not have either a minority problem or a serious problem in relation to anti-social behaviour by groups of tenants.

There is no single easy answer to those problems. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) said, those of us who are aware of the problems know that a variety of steps must be taken about complaints to lead to an understanding of how best to deal with them.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) referred to complaints at his surgeries. The problems that I have to deal with at my advice centres fall into two main categories. I receive complaints about repairs—either about their adequacy or about the time taken to effect them—and about disputes between neighbours. Sometimes those disputes are resolved amicably between the two parties after two or three days without speaking. However, sometimes the problems are intractable, like those referred to by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South.

There are several different types of problem. For example, there are problems with noise. As a result of structural defects in houses constructed in the 1950s and 1960s and an elderly population mingling with younger people, with their different social values, there are severe problems with noise in some buildings. Problems are also caused by drunkenness and drugs. Those problems are growing in certain inner cities and on some estates. They are not a major problem in my area, thank God, but where they do exist they cause severe problems for tenants who must cope with living next to people with alcohol and drug-related problems.

Crime also causes social stress in some communities. Tragically, neighbours often steal from neighbours. I have heard of several cases over the years, in my capacity as a councillor and as a Member of Parliament, of neighbours returning home to find their house ransacked by a neighbour living immediately beside them, above them or below them. That can cause serious problems on estates in terms of attitudes towards certain tenants.

Unfortunately, in some areas, racial and sexual violence or harassment is increasing. There is also the age-old problem with dogs, which has been exacerbated by a failure to tackle problems of lawlessness and criminal activity. Despite the fact that all local authorities have strict rules about keeping pets and animals in certain types of housing, some authorities are driven in practical circumstances to allow single people and elderly people living alone to maintain an animal in the property. Often there are problems with those people failing to maintain the animals and problems have arisen with dogs roaming in packs in Nottingham and in parts of my constituency. Those animals cause serious health and environmental problems on estates.

Estates also suffer from design and structural problems, many of which were referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone. We must tackle the problems associated with poor environment which breed anti-social behaviour, a lack of community spirit and an inability for neighbours to communicate. In many of the flats and maisonettes in my constituency, neighbours sometimes do not know who is living next door. They do not know when neighbours move out or if there is an illness next door. The old family and community traditions are lost in the system-built housing erected in the 1960s. That causes disenchantment in the community and leads to many anti-social problems in the community among a minority of tenants.

There is a growing problem of mental illness and mental stress in the community. That is not simply caused by the failure of the programme to introduce people with mental problems, quite rightly, back into the community. Living in a modern society in a socially deprived area with few resources has a great effect on mental stress. In those circumstances, tenants are aggravated by people who, because of mental illness cannot ameliorate their personal habits and behaviour towards their neighbours.

A myriad of difficulties face local authority housing departments. The sample solution of throwing tenants onto the streets by taking action over the tenancy through the courts only raises the problem of where they go after that and who takes responsibility for them.

Most local authorities, and particularly my own, adopt a broader attitude. They try to maintain security for the majority of their tenants, taking action to ensure that their lives are not disrupted and totally destroyed. At the same time, they grapple with many of the problems that are at the seat of anti-social behaviour.

Local authorities are prepared to take action—rightly so—against disruptive tenants. I am dealing now with cases in which, in my view, the local authority should withdraw the tenancies of the individuals concerned, because they have not kept their promises either to that authority or to other tenants. In that minority of cases, court action should be taken—and as a Member of Parliament representing the interests of my constituents, I am prepared to say so.

[Mr. McCartney]

In other cases, such action is not the way of resolving many of the problems that my hon. Friends have described. Since the Minister's appointment to the Department of the Environment, he and I have been involved in overseeing a number of schemes that my local authority introduced for coping with anti-social behaviour. They involve upgrading the community and the social environment with the creation of a sense of community spirit.

They also involve tenants in challenging anti-social behaviour. By that, I do not mean freelance vigilante groups touring the estates and knocking people over the head, but the involvement of tenants' associations and the local authority in reviewing the management of the estate, changes in investment policy to bring about an improved environment, and the authority's day-to-day role in overcoming anti-social behaviour.

My local authority has taken a number of important steps—with national Government assistance in others. It has introduced to three major estates door security systems, whose introduction has, almost overnight, substantially cut both criminal activity and anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of the flats and maisonettes concerned.

On one particular estate, door security systems have in the past 12 months reduced the number of burglaries to almost nothing. Tenants are also given much greater choice as to whether they wish to remain on an estate or move elsewhere. Warden control systems provide for the elderly to be visited daily by the estate's management, who can deal with specific instances of anti-social behaviour by others.

Other management changes involve the tenants in estate policies concerning anti-social behaviour by the minority. Tenants are asked for their views on council policy in regard to moving problem families on to estates in large or small clusters. I am pleased to report that, because of the positive attitudes being adopted by tenants, the nature of some estates is rapidly changing.

Such measures cannot banish anti-social behaviour altogether, because no complete solution exists, but positive action and local authority and tenant involvement can create the climate in which changes can happen over a period. When tenants see those changes occurring, their attitude changes dramatically, and they become further involved in the development of policies affecting them.

Refurbishment of estates is essential to challenging tenants' attitudes to their environment. There is nothing worse than trying to involve tenants in such improvements when no capital has been invested in the estate and when crime is high, lighting is poor, footpaths between houses are not adequate and there are no facilities for shopping or for tenants—particularly the elderly—to meet, and when local authority services are sited miles from the seat of the problems.

Here again, our local authority has made dramatic changes in its management of difficult estates. Neighbourhood service offices have been set up on the estates, and new types of tenure have been introduced involving housing associations and the private sector in their redevelopment. All tenants have been given the opportunity to become involved in changing their environment, and to respond positively to their own attitudes and to those of the minority who are still not prepared to co-operate in the community.

Much can be done. None the less, I still feel frustrated, in sympathy with the tenants who bring me their problems. They may have to live 24 hours a day with another tenant who is consistently drunk, violent and verbally abusive, and they may feel that nothing can be done. When a local authority has taken all possible steps to help such a person —involving, if necessary, other agencies such as the social services department and the health authority—and the offending tenant continues to make someone's life a misery, the landlord should be responsible for representing his interests.

There can be no ifs or buts. None of us who represent people in such circumstances can do other than ask ourselves, "What would I do?", and the answer must be: "Protect the individual from unprovoked attacks"— whether they are physical or verbal, or indeed take the form of another kind of harassment.

There is no risk that Opposition Members will sit on the sidelines and hope that no action is taken. We are all involved in local authority housing; we understand the problems and are looking for positive responses. A sometimes complex array of policies may be necessary, and those policies must be co-ordinated. In the case of mental illness, for example, much more co-operation is needed between health authorities, social services and housing departments. We cannot simply turn people on to the streets and hope that that will resolve the problem, for anti-social behaviour takes place in the street as well as in the home. Housing departments sometimes end up with the problems that other departments, including Government Departments, fail to tackle early. Health and social problems, for instance, usually manifest themselves there in the end.

Another problem is racial and sexual harassment. Numerous amendments to the Housing Bill were tabled by Opposition Members to strengthen the legislation relating to the private sector, but they were all rebuffed by the Minister of the time—who, as was said earlier, was eventually sacked. At that stage we argued strongly that the rights of private-sector tenants should be protected as much as those of public-sector tenants, and that it should not be left to them to understand whether they could go to the county court to complain of harassment.

We were disappointed that the Department of the Environment did not accept our amendments to strengthen the rights of tenants in the private sector who, unfortunately, suffer similar physical and verbal violence as those in the public sector.

Opposition Members are unanimous about what should be done to solve the problem. I hope that the Minister will respond positively and outline schemes being carried out by his Department and other local initiatives to deal with a complicated and difficult problem which cannot be resolved by simplistic solutions.

12.34 am

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) deserves congratulations on winning an early place in the ballot to introduce a debate of his choice. He selected the subject of anti-social tenants, and we wondered what matters he would raise. He rightly referred to the way of life on estates

and the anti-social behaviour of certain council tenants. But anti-social behaviour is not confined to council tenants. Certain tenants in private dwellings and housing association property have anti-social habits and create problems, so the subject creates wider concern.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, South expressed the concerns of his constituents and gave examples which applied to Nottingham. I am sure that that anti-social behaviour occurs wherever young people are offered tenancies in high-rise blocks.

The hon. Gentleman referred to noise and rubbish, which I consider the main problems of anti-social behaviour on council estates and on private estates where people have purchased their homes. Car parking and traffic can be another anti-social problem. However, without a doubt tower blocks create anti-social problems themselves. That should be drawn to the attention of the Minister and his colleague, the Minister responsible for planning, as some anti-social planning is taking place. The way that some areas are being developed creates problems. The planning of tower blocks should have been more in keeping with social behaviour and planners are responsible for some of the problems that we are discussing tonight.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: It has been suggested that simplistic solutions will not solve the real problem, but the hon. Gentleman appears to be guilty of falling into that trap. It is much too simplistic to dismiss tower blocks as anti-social in themselves. I referred specifically to five tower blocks in my constituency. If the flats had security and video control they would be superb. They are beautiful flats and 98 per cent. of the people living in them love them and do not want to move. We are discussing the 1 per cent. or 2 per cent. of people who ruin it for everyone else. Let us be quite clear that tower blocks are not the specific source of anti-social behaviour. They are not. That problem is harder to deal with, but many people like living in those flats. We should not forget that.

Mr. O'Brien: I will not deny what the hon. Gentleman has said about people being satisfied with living in tower blocks. If they had the choice, in many instances they would prefer a house with a garden and no neighbours living above or below them. My experience of people who live in flats is that they would prefer to be housed in semi-detached houses or accommodation where they would have more freedom and a better outlook and environment. I accept that some people will warm to a flat when they have lived there for a while. I will not argue with the hon. Gentleman on that point.

The hon. Gentleman referred to dogs, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). Only today I received a letter from a constituent who is petitioning about a neighbour who keeps dogs. However, the complaint is not about a tenant but about someone who owns a house. The people are petitioning because that person has created anti-social conditions.

The problem raised by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South is broad. I cannot comment on the points he made about what is happening in Nottingham, but I can talk about the general position. It is not just tenants of council houses or of other types of rented accommodation but even owner-occupiers who cause anti-social problems. In many instances the reason for the trouble is the way in which planners have developed the area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) talked about homelessness and how it led to problem families. Obviously, children are a concern. My hon. Friend also referred to the lack of sound-proofing, with noise being one of the main sources of anti-social behaviour. In the main, sound-proofing is left to local authorities but they do not always have the resources to provide it.

Some landlords are responsible for anti-social behaviour because of the poor living conditions and the bad environment that they provide. One of the worst landlords in our area in the past was the National Coal Board. Because of poor maintenance, its houses became semi-slums or even slums in some cases. The only people who were attracted to those areas were people who were less desirable as tenants in the more acceptable housing estates.

Clearly, there are problems that can be laid at the door of landlords. Even the people who bought estates from British Coal are not doing anything to improve the environment there. Tenants are not the only people who are guilty of anti-social behaviour; landlords, including some local authorities also bear some responsibility.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) referred to the need to refurbish estates and to the fact that there should be provision for estate management. In my opinion, some of the problems in Nottingham that we have heard about come down to the lack of proper estate management. Local authorities should have sufficient trained officers to manage estates and to ensure that the tenants who create problems are identified.

I agree with those hon. Members who have said that there is no excuse for people who deliberately create problems for their neighbours. That kind of behaviour cannot be tolerated in any way. But such people should be given an opportunity to accept reality and become good tenants. However, that requires properly trained housing managers.

In this regard, I refer to the private sector and to housing associations, as well as to the public sector. As I said earlier, there are problems in private housing estates. These can be tackled only through pollution legislation; action is a matter for the local authority and the environmental health departments.

Because of bad landlords and bad living conditions, some tenants, including caravan dwellers, are caught in a trap. Caravan dwellers can be anti-social neighbours. This is another matter that is causing great concern. The Government have not tackled the problem, but have left it to the local authorities, and there is some argument as to whether the county council or the district council is responsible for taking action.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone referred to the question of homelessness. I am sure that other hon. Members, like me, know of people who, because of the high mortgage rates, are finding it difficult to make their repayments and are having their homes repossessed. That adds to the problem of homelessness, and the splitting up of families creates other social problems.

There should be a better means—through housing managers—of advising people what to do in circumstances such as those mentioned by the hon. Member for Nottingham, South. If the necessary resources were available, counselling on the question of bad neighbours

[Mr. O'Brien]

could be introduced. I consider that the community watch schemes have helped to stimulate good neighbourly behaviour. In many instances such schemes have brought neighbours together socially and thus created a better environment in the community. Although, I do not know whether that could happen in high-rise blocks because the need for community watch schemes is not the same in such areas as on housing estates, such facilities could be considered if we are looking for ways to try to resolve the problems caused by anti-social tenants.

This subject could develop into a lengthy debate. Education could be a means of trying to prevent anti-social behaviour in tenants, owner-occupiers or caravan dwellers. Although we give serious thought to all these issues, there is no easy way out of the problem. It involves many of the departments of local authorities, such as environmental health, housing and planning. Social housing is a further relevant issue that the Minister and I have addressed on more than one occasion. I repeat that there is no easy way out of this problem.

I advise the hon. Member for Nottingham, South that we are concerned about the anti-social behaviour of some people on estates and that we would support any scheme that tried to resolve the problem. We will not be party to supporting people who make life intolerable for those around them.

12.51 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): We have had a useful, constructive and interesting debate. Although I am grateful to all hon. Members who have spoken, I am sure that Opposition Members would wish me to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) on instigating it. Although I shall address several of the points raised by the hon. Members for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay), for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), I hope that they will forgive me if I initially address my remarks specifically to the problems addressed in my hon. Friend's opening speech.

I take this opportunity of welcoming the fact that, while my hon. Friend addressed the House, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) was sitting beside me on the Government Front Bench. That is significant because, although, as the hon. Member for Normanton said, there needs to be close liaison between local government departments, I readily acknowledge that there also needs to be close liaison between Government Departments, not least between my own, the Department of the Environment and the Home Office, and not least on this issue.

Before I forget, I repeat the offer that I have made in the past to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South: it might be useful if we had a meeting between Ministers in the Department of the Environment and those in the Home Office to address the problem that he has brought to the notice of the House this evening.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South has become something of an expert in this subject over the years and that he has had close touch with the housing authorities in Nottingham. I am grateful to him and other hon. Members for focusing attention on a problem which, in the past, seems to have been intractable, although with a bit of co-operation we could make much progress.

As my speech unfolds, I shall try to develop a number of the themes initiated by the hon. Member for Makerfield. However, initially I must stress the harm that was done in the 1960s and 1970s by the utopian designers who put up housing that we now know to be the most vulnerable in terms of anti-social behaviour. It was fashionable at the time, but the gospel truth is that all the major political parties were to blame. Whoever held central power is irrelevant, because at that time local authorities were controlled by Conservatives, Socialists and, for all I know, Liberals, and we were all guilty.

Open-plan estates, with their lack of enclosed private areas, pointless open spaces and criss-cross footpaths, were bad enough, but tower blocks were the worst culprits, as the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone said. Features such as easy access, anonymity, lack of supervision, uncared-for public spaces and many others have been catalogued. All those problems can be ameliorated and often cured if tenants, management and designers work together.

Nottingham's blocks went up—at the same time as everyone else's—to accommodate people from its massive clearance programmes. Most cities did the same. Some of the worst complexes, such as Balloon Woods, Basford and Hyson Green flats, have come down again, and I believe that Denman and Connaught gardens are to follow. No one could complain at the disappearance of such monstrosities. Many other blocks in Nottingham have the potential to provide good housing in a civilised environment, and I am glad to say that many are well on the way to doing so.

I was much impressed by my visit to the Victoria centre complex at Nottingham. Some 450 flats built over the shopping centre had become difficult to let because criminal elements could gain access to the residential floors by a dozen unguarded routes. Robberies were mounting, and violent crimes had been reported. My Department's Estate Action scheme enabled a system to be installed whereby access is only by the personal card of residents or reference to a central control point. Video surveillance covers not only entrance ways but lifts. In addition, each flat has its own link to the control. The system has been installed only for a year, but already I understand that residents' morale has been transformed. I saw a number of examples of that while I was there and met a number of tenants.

There are less elaborate systems in 10 other blocks, several of which are aided by estate action, and three more are soon to be included in the programme. Not all the systems have proved successful. A door entry system controlled by tenants and supervised by a concierge seems to work well enough in a single block, of which Southchurch court, Clifton, is a good example. Video surveillance of unmanned blocks is not satisfactory, however, and where such systems have been installed, the city must think again. I am arranging for a discussion between my Department's Estate Action team and the city council to consider what is to be done with the unsatisfactory systems and how to proceed in the blocks that have not yet been dealt with.

It is for the city council, however, to decide the priority that is to be given to this work. Nottingham has one of the

biggest housing investment programmes for its size in the country. With rather wiser stewardship of its resources, it could soon find the funds to put in whatever systems are most suitable. The council has once again started building houses to rent, instead of part-funding housing associations, which can obtain some of the cost from the private sector. It prefers three rented houses of which it can claim to be the landlord to four in the hands of another responsible body. Again, the council has abandoned the highly popular "Mini Mod" approach of its Conservative predecessor for a much more expensive council house refurbishment programme.

My Department stands ready to help Nottingham through Estate Action and through the housing investment programme system to meet the most pressing needs it faces. However, we need to be convinced that the council is doing all it can to help itself—minimising public sector costs, bringing in private funding wherever possible and choosing its priorities wisely.

It is not only capital investment that matters. In some cases, sensible allocation policies can make a big difference. The Woodthorpe-Winchester blocks at Nottingham, for instance, are being turned over gradually to elderly people. Another approach is to try to provide places where those who enjoy making a noise late at night can do so without upsetting anyone. Here is an obvious opportunity for the public and private sectors to put their heads together and come up with positive proposals.

The report undertaken for my Department by the university of Glasgow on the nature and effectiveness of housing management concludes that decentralised housing management is generally more effective than centralised. Nottingham has made moves towards fully delegated local management, but much still remains to be done. Regular contact between residents and a local office will only build up if that office is involved with all aspects of housing and has power to take effective action. Here again, the Estate Action group will shortly be discussing with the council what can be done to strengthen on-the-spot management so that that in turn gives tenants the confidence to organise and act in their own best interests. That point was drawn out well by the hon. Member for Normanton. Close contact is particularly important in a transitional situation like that at Connaught gardens, where flats are being emptied in phases. Morale drops, vandalism goes unchecked and tenants feel abandoned unless they have close contact with effective management in such situations.

The hon. Member for Makerfield is well versed in Estate Action schemes, priority estate projects and the use of the community programmes. He was kind enough to invite me to his constituency not long ago, where I saw a first-class example of Estate Action working and involving the local community. He made the point well in his speech tonight. I go one further: it should be an extension of the priority estates project that we should try to develop what we in the Department of the Environment call estate management. We have about eight schemes running in England under which we are encouraging local authorities to pass down some of their responsibilities from the town hall to give some power to the tenants who are operating in the estates.

I visited Burnley recently and was impressed by what I saw. Tenants there had had a recent election and they had elected their own group of people which was rather similar to a tenants committee, but had the responsibility of appointing the local government officer who would operate from the local estate office, which would not be in the town hall, but on the estate. That point was made well by the hon. Member for Makerfield. I should like to see the example to which I have referred replicated throughout the country. The more responsibility and training in controlling costs, in accounts and in how to balance the budget of the housing revenue account that is given to such people, the more they can be helped. As the hon. Member for Normanton said, if they have such a presence, they may be in a much stronger position to deal with the problem of anti-social tenants.

We have the technology and we know a great deal more about the management problems than we did before. The recent report by Professor Maclennan has helped us in that regard. In a secure environment, with supportive management, the tenants will find it worthwhile to play their part. Associations can be formed and those ready to protest about anti-social behaviour, for example, will be supported. At this stage, the law can play a part.

To try to bring the House up to date with what is permissible, I shall quickly catalogue what is allowable. One regular problem which can be a bone of contention with anti-social tenants who have no regard for their neighbours is excessive and persistent noise. The specific statutory remedies here are that, under section 58 of The Control of Pollution Act 1974, once a local authority is satisfied that a noise amounting to a statutory nuisance exists or is likely to occur or recur, it may serve on the person responsible a notice, which is enforceable in the magistrates court, requiring the abatement of the noise or prohibiting or restricting its occurrence or recurrence.

Under section 59 of the control of Pollution Act, it is also open to an individual who is bothered by noise affecting his home to complain direct to the magistrates court, which has powers to make and enforce an order with similar effect to that of a local authority notice once it is satisfied that noise amounting to a statutory nuisance exists or is likely to recur.

There is a further legislative weapon. The Housing Act 1980 gave council tenants security of tenure so that a council cannot move a secure tenant without a court order for possession. The Act prescribed 13 grounds—there are now 16—on which a council can seek possession from a secure tenant. One of those grounds—now ground 2 of schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985—is that the conduct of a tenant or anyone living with him annoys or is a nuisance to neighbours. A court will grant the order for possession if satisfied that it is reasonable to do so; it does not have to be satisfied—as it does with some other grounds—that suitable alternative accommodation is available for the dispossessed tenant. This ground has been successfully used, and I understand that several local authorities, of all political persuasions, are considering using it to combat tenants' anti-social behaviour towards their neighbours. Anti-social behaviour, of course, goes much wider than noise.

In addition, anti-social behaviour can be a breach of the tenancy agreement, and a local authority may then have grounds for possession under ground 1 of schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985—"breach of obligation of the tenancy".

I might add that, when nuisance or annoyance is in issue, evidence of some kind is required, and some authorities, I am told, find it difficult to persuade tenants to attend court to give evidence. I understand that. However, the county court rules expressly give a court discretion to admit hearsay statements in evidence

[Mr. David Trippier]

"if it thinks it just to do so"

and I understand that some authorities have been able to recover possession using ground 2 on the basis of evidence given by their council officers.

The power to change someone's behaviour by persuasion or punitive measures will vary, I accept, from person to person but some things may be more open to change. We can act to improve the environment and the appearance of council estates. We can devolve the management of estates down to estate level, with estate management offices, and that will certainly help. We can install security measures and reduce opportunities for crime through the relatively new estate action programme. We can encourage efficient housing management, better responsiveness to tenants' wishes and a greater involvement on the part of tenants. All such measures have their part to play in reducing the problems to which hon. Members have referred.

Mr. Allen McKay: I was interested to hear the Minister refer to his contact with the Home Office. The community constable at home in Barnsley shares the semi-detached house that we use to house estate management. It is proving a very effective system to have them together in one unit. Will the Minister talk to his Home Office colleagues about the need to increase the number of community constables on the beat to make the system more efficient?

Mr. Trippier: I have much sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's point. Let me tell him the most impressive thing that I saw in Burnley. I opened an estates management office formed by tenants who had previously been members of a tenants' association. The local constable had an office in the same building. I entirely accept that he was not manning the office all the time—neither the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone nor I would want him to do so because that would prevent him from being out on the beat and aware of what was going on—but the community spirit to which the hon. Member for Normanton referred was very much in evidence. That was in stark contrast to what I have seen on some of the difficult estates in other parts of the country.

I have much sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman said. With the development of Estate Action, the priority estates programme and estate management, we must involve the local constabulary wherever possible. Security plays a significant part in getting it right. We should not be so arrogant as to assume that we know all the answers—far from it.

Mr. McCartney: An extension of that point could also be the involvement of the probation service. We in Wigan, along with the Home Office, are already well on the road to a study of the effectiveness of the probation service being involved in estate management projects. We hope that, by the end of next year, a report will come forward. Despite the lack of resources that we all complain about, there has been a positive reaction from the authority, the tenants' association and the probation service.

Mr. Trippier: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's contribution, too. All such organisations have their part to play in reducing the problems to which my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South referred. My Department is playing an active part in the allocation of resources and guidance.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Trippier: I shall give way for the last time. I am desperately trying to reply to the debate.

Mr. O'Brien: I am interested in what the Minister is saying. He is making the case for placing authority for housing at the local level. In view of the changes in housing legislation, is the Minister saying that the same principle will apply to private and municipal housing estates?

Mr. Trippier: I can hardly see how it can. If one were to suggest that people on a private housing estate should band together other than through neighbourhood watch, which I support, there would be deep resentment among those who think that they are better able to manage their own affairs. When they have come across difficulties with anti-social behaviour, whether it be burglary or other degrees of crime, and they have opted for a neighbourhood watch scheme, which I agree would probably help the community spirit, that is all well and good. They can volunteer to do that.

We are talking about trying to get housing management in local authorities and in housing associations down to the local level, where it can be of greatest possible benefit. If we do the things that I have suggested and some of the things that the hon. Gentleman has suggested, we will get a much better community spirit. We will certainly get more effective housing management.

As I said, this has been an interesting and constructive debate. I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I thank him for raising this important subject. I hope that the record of the debate will be widely read.

Tropical Rain Forests

1.11 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Quite simply, I am more concerned, more alarmed and more frightened by my visit in the last few days of February 1989 to Altamira and the Xingu river rain forest than by any other issue or event in my public life and 27 years' membership of the House of Commons.

Allow me a word to my constituents. We live between Edinburgh and Glasgow, which is the same latitude as the north coast of Labrador. If the destruction in eastern Amazonia proceeds at the exponential pace of felling, clearing and burning of the 1987 and 1988 seasons, we in Linlithgow, along with about 250 million other northern Europeans—not to mention the little matter of the eastern seaboard of the United States—could have the climate of northern Labrador. There really could be flip in world weather patterns.

I know that neither the Foreign Office Ministers nor the Minister for Overseas Development, who are well-informed and deeply concerned about this matter, dismiss me as alarmist. But should anyone suggest that on this matter I am simply a politician in search of a headline, I am entitled to point out that for 22 years now successive editors of the *New Scientist* have seen fit to give me a weekly column in their informed and responsible journal. They would not have tolerated me had I not been extremely careful with fact.

At Altamira I had two long sessions with the Brazilian-German chemist from Rio Grande del Sul, Jose Lutzenberger. In simplistic terms the argument is that for tens of thousands, probably millions of years, winds from the east have brought the Atlantic rains to north-eastern Brazil, to the province of Para and the Amazon delta. On account of the vast rain forest eco-system, there were massive low cloud formations. Some 75 per cent. of the rains falling to ground and the forest is returned to the atmosphere through the due processes of evapotranspovation. Some 25 per cent. of the Atlantic rains would flow to the ocean through the Amazon and its tributaries, incidentally carrying one fifth of the world's fresh water flow. The Amazon carries a greater volume of water than the Mississippi, the Zambesi, the Congo, the Orinoco, the Nile, the Ob, the Lena and the St. Lawrence combined.

However, suppose that the rain forest of eastern Amazonia is decimated. What is likely to occur? Will there be the same cloud formations that we have taken for granted? Well, not on the experience of sub-Saharan Africa, which my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), whom I thank for being on the Front-Bench, knows so weil. Nor will there be in the light of the recent history of north-eastern Brazil—dry hot air rises; clouds do not form; blue skies: classic desertification.

In Brazil I was told that there was evidence that to an alarming extent thermal currents were being generated upwards where rain forest had been devastated, preventing incoming moist air masses. In truncated form, I am saying that the cutting down of eastern Amazonia and the Para rain forest will create a blocking system—a sort of fire-break situation in terms of rain, where the rains do not get through to central Amazonia. That spells planetary trouble.

If the "hop-scotch" effect—it would be presumptuous of me to give a lesson in climatological physics—of moisture going up down, up down, up down, up down, up down as it crosses the central and western Amazon is broken, if the chain is severed in eastern Amazonia, a number of consequences surely follow.

First, the dry season may be longer, which will give more opportunity for more logging and felling, clearing and burning. The savannah will be extended.

Secondly, there will be more and larger forest fires. At a conservative estimate in 1987-88 an area the size of France was destroyed by fire. Satellite NASA information indicates that it is worse. Ministers should ask NASA for a copy of its data.

Thirdly, I was told in Altamira by Jorge Terena, an English-speaking Amerindian, that, if the central Amazon forest was denied rains for three or four weeks in the rainy season, the entire forest eco-system could die. Does anyone know what percentage of forest can be destroyed without the entire forest eco-system ceasing to be viable? It is a fragile house of cards. My distinct impression was that with thousands of years of accumulated experience, the Xingu Indians knew more about the rain forest than anyone else.

I have a specific request of Ministers. I thought it proper to offer the Minister a full copy of my notes before making this speech. Will Ministers ask a most distinguished botanist, the new director of Kew gardens, Dr. Ghillean Prance—whom on purpose I have not yet contacted—to the Foreign Office and ask him for his considered professional opinion? Will they then make that opinion available in the Library of the House? Before being deputy director of the New York botanical garden, Dr. Prance worked in Manaos and has great experience. I do not know what Dr. Prance will say, but hon. Members have the right to know. I ask, too, that the embassy in Brasilia contact Dr. Lutzenberger for a detailed report.

In an excellent and formidable "Panorama" programme, it was asserted that if last year's burning season was repeated, the rain forest would be gone in 20 years. It talked of the loss of an acre a second and claimed that 700 acres a day were lost to freelance gangs producing charcoal. On Channel 4 the dire warnings of the brilliantly powerful "Fragile Earth" series have begun to alert the British electorate. Friends of the Earth has done a magnificent job in alerting us all to the issues.

Let us be clear about those issues—we are confronted with the prospect, here and now, of an irreversible and terribly final biological and botanical holocaust. Gone for ever will be the jaguars and black panthers, most of the parrot family and a host of other animals, birds and insects.

Botanically, I am told that 1 per cent. of Amazon plants have been examined for their medicinal qualities. Labelled jungle medicine, there is an enormous potential for low-level technology in medicine. Elaine Elisabetsky, for example, told me something of her work in Belem on plants to cure epilepsy, specifically on cissus cisyoides vifaceo.

Other unexamined or not fully examined possibilities include veronica types to cure anaemia, avocado leaf to cure inflammation, erva cadreira for insomnia, cinnamon for blood diseases and nausea, mamora for bowel complaints, piao blanco for intestinal trouble, orija for kidney problems, capira santo for pain and diarrhoea, amor cresido for colics, guarana for heart problems. Sucuba has anti-carcinogenic qualities, andiroba could

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

help to cure coughs, murure could help muscular pain and rheumatism, alecrin help with puberty problems and piri-piri could help with contraceptive problems.

A species of alexa tree at the western end of Maraca —I commend successive Governments for the help that has been given in Maraca—discovered by Gwilym Lewis contains the plant alkaloid castanospermine, which is also found in Madagascar. Tests at St. Mary's hospital—I do not want to raise hopes—may provide treatment for some forms of AIDS.

It is not only the plant and animal kingdom that could be devastated, but human kind. I ask the Foreign Office to get the Meteorological Office and all the expert advice available to the Government to scrutinise the work of Professor Salati Piracicaba of the university of Brazil and indeed the work of that pioneer of climatological studies, James Lovelock of Cornwall.

The argument is that if the rain forest were to vanish the moist air currents that pound against the Andes would no longer do so. If they cease to do that the high air currents, which in loose terms rebound off the Andes, would simply not be formed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Dalyell: I note that the Minister is nodding and I believe that he is aware of the argument.

It is those air currents, warm and humid, which return across the South American continent, parallel the Gulf stream and then split to cover the eastern seaboard of the United States and to cover northern Europe.

Our excellent physicist ambassador in Brasilia, Michael Newington, gently said to me, "Tam, you can't prove all this!" Certainly I cannot. But the trouble is that I am not convinced that anyone else can prove it wrong. All I can reflect is that I was lectured to by O. R. Frisch and Paul Dirac, that Harold Wilson made me work to Pat Blackett for two years and I worked on public issues with Neville Mott. I would never ask Ministers to undertake expensive research in physics if it was ill-considered or frivolous. The stakes are stupendous—little less than a neo-ice age for industrial Europe. That is an issue about which humankind, as Michael Stewart used to say, cannot afford to be wrong. Being wrong could lead to catastrophe.

The last ice age came incredibly quickly—that is proven geologically—and we are talking about actual time, not geological time. The mammoth is not a tundra-eating animal. Vegetation was found in the stomachs of mammoths. If the ice age had given them warning, would they not have fled south? How were those animals suddenly encapsulated in ice? May not that tell us something about the suddenness of climatological change?

It is one thing to state such a problem; it is another to suggest how to set about attempting to resolve it. It is enormously complex. However, there is hope. I say to my hon. Friends that, in my opinion, the Minister answering tonight and the Minister for Overseas Development are as concerned as any first-class Labour Minister would be in the circumstances.

Secondly, the briefing I had before going to Altamira, from Charles de Chassiron, head of the South America department of the Foreign Office, was exceedingly well-informed and of the highest quality. I do not doubt that officials in the Foreign Office are fully seized of the gravity of the situation.

Thirdly, Britain has an outstanding embassy in Brasilia. I have long thought—and said publicly—that the Foreign Office and the diplomatic service do a first-class job abroad for Britain. I received much personal kindness, not least from Tim Ewing and his wife Claudine, with whom I stayed for three nights in Brasilia, and my objective observation was how deeply they cared about Brazil and understanding Brazilians.

Fourthly, as when I led the parliamentary delegation to Brazil in 1975, I thought that the senior officials and Ministers whom I met last week in Brasilia were very serious-minded and high-quality people. They were certainly charming.

There is only one thing that I think Ministers and officials may not have fully grasped—certainly I had not done so before setting foot in Altamira—and that is the sheer, gargantuan, awesome scale of the recent devastation up the Xingu river. Kilometre after kilometre we travelled to the site of the proposed dam, and on both sides of the track, as far as the eye could see, were the scorched, gaunt, Brazil nut trees, useless because their eco-system had been burned to make way for a few bone-protruding oxen, and swamps, useful only to mosquitoes. For not grasping this, British Ministers and officials can be forgiven, because I do not think that the delightful Professor David Vieria, professor of history at the university of Brasilia, and reporting to President Sarney on the Altamira gathering, had realised the scale of the devastation either.

I have lived with gold dredgers in the Ashanti forest in Ghana, and have been in Sarawak, and my friend, Simon Counsell, of Friends of the Earth, has considerable experience in South America, and we agreed that what we saw in Xingu was spectacularly the worst sight of its kind we had ever seen.

I hope that when Mr. Speaker goes on an official visit to Brazil this summer, which I greatly welcome, he will ask to see for himself some of the stricken areas. Mr. Speaker, who knows east Asia, will be heartbroken by the spectacle of jagged fire-blackened stumps and weak soils, cracked in the heat, or washed into the eroded gulleys by the tropical rains. Let us be clear that this is the debris of a battlefield. The appalling fact is that in every hectare of forest cleared by fire, hundreds of mammals and countless thousands of insects and soil invertebrates have been burned alive.

I do not want to quibble, but my original title for the debate was "International action to help Brazil conserve the Brazilian Amazonian rain forest". I say that not to complain about Mr. Speaker, who wanted—understandably—to include other hon. Members who had tabled similar subjects for debate, but to make the point that it is counter-productive to lecture the Brazilian Government. Anyhow, none of us is in a position to claim the moral high ground since, as I said in my opening statement at each meeting in Brasilia, I come from Scotland, where we have cut down most of the ancient Caledonian forest.

However, a number of suggestions emerged from these meetings. In the meeting I had along with Simon Counsel of Friends of the Earth with Fernando Cesar Mesquita, he suggested fire-fighting equipment and planes for combating forest fires. I was particularly glad and grateful that Philip Morrice, Minister Counsellor at the embassy, was able to come with us to the meeting, as he will surely make available to the Minister his interpretation of what was

said. I have given notice to the Minister of a number of constructive suggestions on which he may care to comment or reflect.

First, I ask Ministers to check the note which Philip Morrice made of the meeting in relation to the provision of fire-fighting equipment and planes. The current negotiations are going on with the Canadians, but it was thought that we might be able to help, as the RAF has aircraft interests in Brazil, and that we might be able to help with the telecommunications equipment and special boats Fernando Mesquita said that he needed.

I believe the west should offer to work with Mr. Mesquita, and refrain from making criticism such as that levelled at him at Altamira. He is a member of a Government with the urgent problem of teeming millions in the cities of Brazil, and comes from the poverty-stricken north-east of the country. A follow-up of the meeting should take place and Government Ministers should at least tell Parliament what practical help Mr. Mesquita has asked for from Britain. This may be expensive for the aid budget, but it is not as expensive as the consequences of climatalogical flip and northern Europe developing Labrador conditions.

My heart went out to Mr. Mesquita when he sighed and said gently to us that there were only five people in the state of Bahia working against deforestation by burning. What does one of the world's most vast states do when freebooters open air strips over which there is little practical control? This was one of the questions which ambassador Araujo Castro, head of the International Organisations Department at Itamaraty, put to me. The answer is that Britain should continue its embassy dialogue with ambassador Castro. Only the Government of Brazil can make decisions as to how the task of dealing with illegal air strips can be met.

Additional praise should be given to the Brazilian Government for their response to international concern. I note the establishment of "Our Nature" programme and urge the Government to support the programme, in particular restrictions on and control of forest exploitation and new conservation legislation. I believe that Colonel Alcantara of Punei and his colleagues are striving with sincerity and ability to exercise such control. I approve strongly of the attitude of Dr. John Hemming, secretary and director of the Royal Geographical Society. He said:

> "We saw the invitation to survey Maraca's flora and fauna as a chance to help save the rain forests. Brazilians are becoming weary of international protest about the destruction of the Amazon forest. We wanted to do something positive to reverse that catastrophic and usually futile devastation. Instead of adding to the outcry, we decided to learn more about the way the forest system functions so that it can be brought to life again after being felled and abandoned."

The problem of the Amazon forest is inextricably bound up with power supplies and dams, which in turn are bound up with the debt alleviation problem. The Government should talk to Kit McMahon, that exceedingly able Bank of England official, whom Harold Wilson sent me to see when I was on the Budget Committee of the European Parliament, and whom I met again in Brasilia when he was out there as chairman of the Midland bank. A policy statement should be made on the Government's attitude to "debt-for-nature" swaps. I have studied the speech made by President Sarney on 12 October 1988 about the launching of the Brazilian programme for the protection of the Amazonian eco-system complex in which he seemed to pour cold water on debt for nature. Since then, President Sarney is reported as having discussed the issue with President Bush at Hirohito's funeral. I am entitled to ask what is the Government's latest thinking on debt for nature?

I have spoken to Kit McMahon and the Midland group risk manager, Edward Gager, and other Midland bank decision-makers such as Nicholas Reade, and I have no doubt that they are deeply concerned in their personal and public capacities about the rain forest. My impression is that the great banking institutions of Europe would like to offer constructive help to try to save Amazonia. Are the Government going to hold discussions with the clearing banks about Amazonia?

I take to heart the solemn warning that Sergio Amaral, a key Brazilian Treasury Minister, gave to me and Edward Gager over the ambassador's lunch table about what could happen in Brasil if a more enlightened attitude to debt was not displayed. Since Michael Aron, our extremely competent commercial counsellor participated in the discussions, Ministers will be able to corroborate what was said. I just observe that time may not be on the side of enlightened good sense.

There are also basic questions about the ethics of the debt. The representatives of the bishops, Father Cristobal Alvarez, a Jesuit priest, and Father George Doran representing the bishops, went through the annual figures of recent years. Certainly the problem took off under President Kubitschek. However, if there is blame, the United States and European banks must bear some of it in exacting so much interest. Are we sure that it is in the interests of human kind to continue to demand wood, and to demand soya to feed European cattle to put meat into intervention to pay a debt which could lead to a climatic flip?

We are all in a dangerous mess. Thirty five years ago I used to go three mornings a week at 9 am to listen to Dom David Knowles in a packed Mill lane lecture room and I heard all about St. Thomas Aquinas, usury and the just price. I do not doubt that with his intellectual qualifications and his Roman Catholic convictions the Minister for Overseas Development is even better informed about these matters.

An American business man friend of mine, John Bryan, who accompanied me to Altamira, tells me:

> "Brazil is selling natural resources below market value to finance the national debt. In addition, pressure to reduce prices on export products has forced the use of pesticides and chemicals barred in other developing nations to reduce costs. Therefore, the programme of debt reduction recently announced by President Bush should be supported by the British."

Are the British playing a part in the Bush programme and in particular are we discussing with the Americans the banning of certain chemicals such as mercury? I confess that that is easier said than done.

Should help be given foundation to foundation? Excellent work has been done by the Gaia Foundation under the directorship of Ed Posey. I wonder if that might not be one of the best ways to achieve small-scale, practical results. The House will be aware that I tabled a series of questions about the policy of the World bank and the instructions to its British director. I quote with approval the work of Survival International and a host of other

[Mr. Dalyell]

human rights and environmental organisations world-wide which have been appealing to the World bank and to the national Governments who fund it not to approve the loan.

Robin Hanbury-Tenison, the president of Survival International, said:

"If the Bank approves this loan it will become an accomplice in the destruction of Amazon Indian tribes. Previous experience makes all too clear that the Brazilian Government lacks both the political will and the institutional capacity to respect the Indians' rights and protect them from the devastating consequences of such accelerated development."

I gained the impression from George Papadopoulos, the World bank's resident representative in Brasilia, that the bank did not have the resources to monitor the ecological effects of the power sector loan. I ask the Minister to check that with Minister Counsellor Philip Morrice, who attended the meeting, and to correct me if I am wrong. If I am right, what instructions will be given to the World Bank's British director to improve ecological monitoring?

On nuclear power, I part company with many of my right hon. and hon. Friends and wth Friends of the Earth, on whose initiative I went to Altamira and for whose careful, responsible work I have the highest regard. For the purposes of the Register of Members' Interests, I ought to say that I paid my own fare to Altamira using bucket shop flights, and that I am not beholden to anybody.

My personal opinion is that it is unforgivable and embarassingly shameful that Westinghouse has palmed off on Brazil a nuclear power plant that does not work properly. We should all offer help in making sure that both Angra I and Siemens' Angra II and III work, sited as they are between Sao Paolo and Rio. We are on delicate ground, but it is indefensible that developed countries and high technology societies should have done such a thing. Our consul-general in Rio, Roger Hart, and his first-rate colleagues could be asked for advice. If the power stations are made to work properly, that would make a tremendous difference to the perceived need to build others and dams, and to flood Amazonia.

In Brasilia, we were welcomed by Edmundo Antonio Taveira of Electronorte. The World bank should tactfully ask Electronorte whether it is sure about the technical feasibility of its transmission proposals. Electronorte said vaguely that the Russians have succeeded in transmitting power over 2000 kms without unacceptable loss, but Altamira to Sao Paulo-Rio is a good deal further—and I am told that efficient transmissions under those circumstances is not within the present state of the art. Why create dams in the Amazon if there are to be Balbina-type disasters? The World bank should equally tactfully establish a conference of hydrologists so that Tucvrui will not be repeated.

Neither the Russians nor anyone in the West has come anywhere near implementing the transmission of power over 2000 kms without unacceptable loss. That calls into question the economic viability of any large-scale dam project in Amazonia. In friendship, the Brazilians should be asked whether they think that they know something about superconductivity that is not known to the British, Americans, Russians, Germans and French.

The expertise of British companies is sought in overcoming some of the hydrological problems arising out of the Tucvrui and Balbina projects. Can that expertise be encouraged to prevent such disasters occurring in the first place? Can information be given, possibly by letter, about the work being done at Wallingford by the hydrological research station?

Can we help over biomass techniques? In Brazil, the secretary-general for technical co-operation at the Ministry of Energy indicated to Simon Counsell and myself that his Ministry was interested in using spoiled land for quick-growing eucalyptus trees for energy. I thought that he seemed anxious about the transmission problem but that he did not want to be disloyal to Electrobras and Electronorte.

What can be done about educational co-operation? I welcome ambassador Michael Newington's involvement in the creation of four scholarships for Brazilians at the university of Aberdeen, and perhaps the Minister can say when that development will be finalised. I welcome also the work of Mike Potter and his colleagues at the British Council in Rio. I hope that Philip Jenkins and his friends receive the support that they deserve for the Margaret Mee Foundation. As I told Margaret Mee's artist widower, Greville, her book on the flowers of the Amazon has been an enormous plus in alerting public opinion in Britain.

I was invited to the home of our defence attaché, Colonel Anthony Witheridge, and his wife Anne—who spoke fluent Portuguese—for a most interesting dinner with the Brazilian military. It is no use pretending that at first the Defence Minister, the formidable and powerful General Leonidas, was not annoyed with me—in fact, jolly angry—for participating in Altamira. Was I trying to tell him about the Amazon? For all his wrath, however, I took an instant liking to him. I remembered that, like the king of Spain, he had taken a major step to save democracy when the chips were down.

When Tancro Neves died prematurely, it was General Leonidas who told the army that Brazil was not going back to military rule. That was an act of courage and wisdom. In my view, the general is the only man who can do much about the burning this season. He is the only man who can control the gold searchers and who has the power to stop landless people and rich ranchers from ravaging the forest. I think that he should be seen as being at the highest level. I am not our Prime Minister's most uncritical admirer in many respects, but if General Leonidas comes to Europe the red carpet should be laid out for him in Downing street. He is the only guy who can do much in the short term, here and now; and it is the short term that matters.

I am glad that at least both Michael Newington and Philip Morrice heard at first hand the general's scorching views being aimed at me exactly a fortnight ago, and I hope that Ministers ask for their judgment on what Britain could usefully do for the Brazilian army to help it to protect the forest.

I was alarmed by some of the Americans at Altamira. Alexander King, from Tempe, Arizona, said:

"In 10 years, life support systems will be destabilised".

Displaying a real knowledge of climatology, he went on to suggest that events in Amazonia, combined with the destruction of Mesquite forest in Colorado, were responsible for the hottest summer in Arizona for at least 150 years; for 85 per cent. of the giant Saquaro cactus dying; for the Arizona desert turning from a living to a dying desert; for unprecedented drought in the grain bowls of Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas; and for dust bowls in

Manitoba. Is any serious, sustained research being done, in conjunction with the Americans, on the validity or otherwise of such concerns about Amazon deforestation?

I recognise the participation of Her Majesty's Government in various international schemes, including the International Tropical Timber Organisation and the tropical forest action plan. Much of the extra burden of participation in those schemes has fallen on the Overseas Development Ministry. Has its strength of commitment and expertise been supported by additional funding and resources? Is our role as one of the developed world's leading consumers of timber really being reflected in our level of funding for special projects for forest conservation initiated by the ITTO?

The European Parliament has taken steps to act on the devastation of rain forests and the threat to tribal people in parts of the world other than Amazonia, most notably Malaysia. Are Her Majesty's Government supporting the implementation of the European Parliament's proposals through the Council of Ministers?

Finally, I want to say something personal and very heartfelt. Politicians can easily become emotional. After long experience I am a relatively unemotional man, but I was extremely emotional when I reflected on those conversations with Xingu tribespeople. They said, very simply, "We are of the earth; we are the best guardians of the forest." In a sense that is deeply true. It will not help them greatly for us to lecture the Brazilian Government too much, but I hope that we will pay attention to the considerable benefits provided by their thousands of years' experience.

Some of the tribes were discovered—if that is the right word—only in 1948, and that was their first contact with white men. Others have suffered terribly from disease. We would all be wise to care about the Xingu communities. I am mainly concerned with the climatological consequences, but it would be a very unfeeling Member of the British House of Commons who did not conclude by expressing deep feelings about those unique people—the Xingu tribespeople.

1.49 am

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): My purpose in remaining here tonight was not so much to speak, but to listen to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and to the reply which I hope he will have elicited from the Minister. Having listened intently to my hon. Friend's extremely good exposition of the problems, I shall not repeat what he said, but will speak as a non-expert in the matter and say a few words on behalf of an awakening electorate.

My hon. Friend mentioned that the British electorate is becoming increasingly concerned. It is not an easy matter in which to awaken interest, but I have received thoughtful and anxious letters, and today I decided to try a little experiment. At lunchtime I visited a school in my area and spoke to youngsters aged between 11 and 16 about tonight's debate. I half expected them to think that we were quite crazy to be planning to discuss tropical rainforests in the early hours of the morning. I expected a dismissive response, but I was wrong. They were not deeply knowledgeable, but they were aware of the problem. I told the taxi driver who drove me to the station about this debate. I expected him to ask why I was not talking about Preston and to tell me that the problem was a long way away. Far from it—he started telling me about the seriousness of the problem. I agree with my hon. Friend that people are being awakened to the issue by the recent television coverage which has given people knowledge in a way which is getting through to them and deeply disturbing them. As a non-expert who is deeply concerned about the planet, I wish to reflect the concern which is percolating through the population.

My hon. Friend described something quite awesome in its implications. I am concerned about all aspects of the environment and how we treat our soil and our plants, but some of the environmental issues that we usually discuss are small when compared with this one, which is so huge that it is vital that, regardless of political party—I do not often say that—we manage to grope towards some way of preventing the devastation that is taking place. It is not only destruction, but truly the devastation of our planet. Human beings do not have the right to devastate and destroy the planet.

I shall not attempt to repeat my hon. Friend's arguments or marshal any more, because my hon. Friend has covered the ground so admirably. I hope that we will have an equal expression of concern and answers from the Government Front Bench. In so far as this is tied up with debt repayments, it is ludicrous that so much could be endangered for all of us for something as artificial as the way the world economy is conducted.

I helped to get the debate because I wanted the House to discuss the matter. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow for his exposition.

1.55 am

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I shall not delay the House more than a couple of minutes. I know that the Minister wants to make quite a long statement, and we agreed on this earlier. I want to make two quick points. We are all indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for raising the matter and for the informative and knowledgeable presentation that he made. Those who are not here can read it in *Hansard*. It will enhance their knowledge and provide a basis for argument and discussion over the months and years ahead when the subject will command a great deal more attention, as my hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) has said.

Those of us who have been hon. Members for some time—apart from a break when I was resting, I have been here for a considerable time—will recall that when matters involving aid and development used to be raised there was not much interest. It took the Brandt report and things like that to inject a feeling of urgency into hon. Members on both sides of the House about what was happening in many Third world countries.

Reference has been made to the part played by the media, by the Friends of the Earth and by others in alerting people to what is happening to the environment and to the destruction that is taking place in many parts of the world. More and more people are becoming interested. As my hon. Friend the Member for Preston has said, it is not a minor problem. We are talking about the end of the planet as we know it and about the sort of world that we will hand on to our children and our grandchildren—or not hand on, as the case may be.

I could not hope to match anything that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow has said, but I have read a great deal of material from many organisations,

[Miss Joan Lestor]

including Friends of the Earth. I just want to point out that on Friday we will have an opportunity to debate all questions involving aid, development, co-operation and the environment. I hope that some of my hon. Friends and other hon. Members will take the opportunity to extend the discussion that we have started.

1.57 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Timothy Eggar): I add my thanks and congratulations to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for raising this crucially important topic. I also join the hon. Members for Preston (Mrs. Wise) and for Eccles (Miss Lestor) in welcoming the way in which the House decided to raise the subject. The hon. Member for Preston rightly drew attention to the considerable importance that is being attached to the issue by youngsters and by people who, probably a matter of weeks or months ago, would have thought that someone had a screw loose if he started talking about the threat to the rain forests.

There is an increasing, perhaps unfortunately rather belated, understanding of the threat that is posed to all of us by the danger of environmental change on a rapid scale, as the hon. Member for Linlithgow outlined. If I may say so, without wishing to be in any way condescending, it is critical that at a time when public interest has been awakened, the House tackles the issue in a bipartisan way as far as possible, and in a way which does not over-simplify the solutions to an immensely complex subject, as the hon. Gentleman said. In other words, we must not draw the environment into our domestic yah-boo politics. The international community has not done that.

One of the most heartening features of last year's activity at the United Nations, particularly at the General Assembly, was the way in which all countries, from whatever geographical region, and whether from the Third world or the first world, concentrated on the threat posed by changes in the environment. It was a major—probably the major—theme of last year's General Assembly session. What took place there was a complex and serious discussion of a major threat. That, I believe, is how this subject should be tackled in our domestic debates, and we should do everything we can to ensure that the discussion continues in the same way internationally. I welcome in particular the hon. Gentleman's very astute assessment of the problems and opportunities that the international community faces as it discusses this complex issue with the Brazilian Government.

As I have said, the topic of this debate is extremely important, not just for the tens of millions of people living in the tropical rain forest, but also for us in northern Europe. The Government share the widespread public concern about the destruction of the rain forest. The present scale of that destruction is truly alarming. The latest internationally comparable figures that we have relate to 1980. As the hon. Gentleman said, there are more recent figures, which are subject to debate. For the purposes of illustration, however, let me use the 1980 figures.

They suggest that the annul loss of tropical forest of all kinds was 11 million hectares—an area the size of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland put together. About 6 million hectares—slightly more than half of that — was rain forest in the broad sense. Preliminary figures for 1988 suggest that in Brazil alone an area greater than the whole of the United Kingdom was burned. By no means all of the burned area was previously rain forest, but it must be remembered that Brazil is not the only country affected. Rain forest is disappearing throughout the tropics—in the other countries of the Amazon basin, as I saw for myself in Peru; in central America, as I saw for myself; in west Africa; in Zaire, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Deforestation affects other types of forests also. Ethiopia has lost no less than 90 per cent. of its tree cover since 1900.

It has to be said that converting forest to agricultural land is not always bad. In Europe and North America, which are fortunate in having deep, fertile soils, it was possible to clear forests and to use the land for sustainable agriculture. The countries of the Amazon basin are not so fortunate. The soils below the lush vegetation of Amazonia are fragile and poor. When the forest is cut down and burned, the ash gives a once-and-for-all boost to the soils, but the minerals are soon leached out, and the organic matter destroyed. As a result, more often than not —indeed, almost always—agriculture is simply not sustainable.

The failure of the farmers' dreams is tragic but, as the hon. Gentleman said, in the process a resource of global environmental importance is being destroyed.

Forests can play a major part in checking the gradual warming of the earth's atmosphere. Mankind releases carbon dioxide into the air from power stations, transport systems, factories and homes. The forests naturally counteract that, partly by absorbing carbon dioxide, but as long as the forests are being cut down and burned at their present rates, that itself is contributing between 10 per cent. and 20 per cent. to net global carbon dioxide emissions.

Of course, the burning of fossil fuels, mostly in the power stations of the developed world, contributes about 80 per cent. of net carbon dioxide emissions. So we, in the rich countries, must show that we are doing all that we can to solve the problems to which we are contributing. Nevertheless, the world cannot afford to ignore tropical deforestation in our studies of possible climate change.

We still have a lot to learn about long-term climate change. The hon. Member for Linlithgow mentioned the hopscotch effect and the dangers of a flip. However, I stress that the present general circulation models on climate do not allow us to predict regional change with any certainty, although it is true that there is now some evidence, for example, from west Africa, that the loss of rain forests affects local rainfall.

Britain is playing an active role in the intergovernmental panel on climate change in an effort to reduce the range of uncertainties. Her Majesty's Government will contribute about £750,000 to its work, which may well help to clarify the questions about the climatic consequences of deforestation in eastern Amazonia which have been raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow.

Forests are also important for their genetic diversity. It is not just the huge number of species in the forests that is important. Many of those species are highly adapted to their ecological niche and have valuable properties. It is no accident that 40 per cent. of all the drugs prescribed in the United States are based on chemicals derived from rain forest species.

I raised British concerns about the rate of forest loss when I visited Brazil late last year. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I had extensive discussions on environmental issues, including rain forests specifically, with the visiting secretary general to the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Itermaraty, when he visited London last week. My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development learnt first-hand about the Amo-Indian perspective when he received a call from Chief Paiakan of the Kayapo.

As the hon. Member for Linlithgow said, the Brazilian Government face a difficult dilemma in Amazonia. As President Sarnay told me last November, there is a need in Brazil to move away from the historical equation equating forest destruction with economic development, which has been the preception in Brazil for many years. However, we must understand that Brazil has a large and growing population and an understandable wish to achieve economic progress.

The difficulty that Brazil faces, like so many other countries, is how to square sensible development with environmental sensitivity and thus ensure the long-term viability of that development. When we in the United Kingdom went through our own industrial revolution, we took virtually no notice of the environmental implications; so I understand it when the Brazilians and other developing countries sometimes say, "Why can't we do exactly what you did a number of years ago?" The answer must be, "Whether you like it or not, since that time circumstances have changed." We must, however, understand the Brazilians' point of view. If we are to tackle the problems that they now acknowledge exist, it is right that we should work towards a sensible and co-operative approach and not a confrontation. If in the past Brazilian Government policies have contributed to rain forest destruction, pointing a finger at those policies will not do anybody much good. We must co-operate to introduce sensible future policies.

Recent moves in Brazil, such as the suspension of development grants for ranching operations in the Amazon region and the announcement that the Government would forcibly remove illegal gold diggers from Indian reserves, are hopeful signs. We must welcome those signs and encourage their effective implementation while continuing at the same time to monitor the situation extremely carefully.

There is no question of not respecting the sovereignty of Brazil or other countries facing similar dilemmas. I am sure that the hon. Member for Linlithgow was right to underline this point during his recent visit to Brazil. Within the resources available, and our overall forestry sector aid strategy, the United Kingdom has a responsibility to provide practical support. I know from my discussions in Brasilia and those held last week that the Brazilian Government regard the Overseas Development Administration research project on Maraca island as a shining example of the positive international co-operation that Brazil will welcome to save the rain forests.

In very recent discussions, the Brazilian Government asked for further technical co-operation—possibly specifically to understand the genetic potential of the Amazon. This may well involve links between Brazilian and British institutions such as the royal botanic gardens in Kew, which were mentioned by the hon. Member for Linlithgow. We are considering this matter urgently.

Our technical assistance must and always will be modest when compared with the region's demands. No country has the manpower or financial resources to take on the Amazon single handed.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow asked, among other things—I shall write to the hon. Gentleman if I am unable to answer his questions in my speech—whether we could provide firefighting equipment. Having seen some of the extensive burning in Rondonia and Mato Grosso, I doubt whether the provision of firefighting equipment is the answer because of the scale on which that equipment would have to be provided. We must concentrate on preventing the burning occuring, but I undertake that we shall carefully consider Philip Morrice's report when we receive it.

Mr. Dalyell: Will particular attention be given to the climatological problem of what will happen when eastern Amazonia and Para are further destroyed? We must urgently discover what Dr. Lutzenberger and others who have argued the case have to say and ask the authorities to conduct specific research about this immediate point.

Mr. Eggar: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a clear answer this morning on that. There are a number of reasons, not least being that any research carried out would have to be either bilaterally with the Brazilian Government, at their request, or multinationally, in an international body.

Mr. Dalyell: That is fair enough.

Mr. Eggar: Before the hon. Gentleman intervened, I was moving on to talk about our worldwide aid programme relating to rain forest destruction. Our forestry assistance course extends beyond the rain forests. We are helping those in arid areas who struggle against deforestation and its consequences—fuel wood shortages and soil erosion. Our bilateral aid concentrates on the poorest countries and on members of the Commonwealth. Those are not always the countries with extensive rain forest, so our forestry assistance worldwide covers the spectrum of research, reafforestation, conservation and training and is aimed at all types of forestry.

The ODA has committed about £80 million to bilateral forestry projects of all types, which are currently under way. They include support for 45 projects spread over 25 countries, funding for 16 research projects, assistance to at least 18 projects under the joint funding scheme, support for more than 70 British experts and 36 volunteers working as foresters and training awards for about 120 people from developing countries studying forestry in Britain. Details of those projects are given in a forestry supplement to the December 1988 issue of *British Overseas Development;* a copy of that is in the Library.

The record to date is impressive, but we want to do more. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister pledged to the House:

> "We will direct more of our aid to encourage the wise and sustainable use of forest resources."—[*Official Report,* 24 October 1988; Vol. 139, c. 14.]

That pledge has resulted in a forestry initiative which is now under way. The forestry initiative has four components. First, we shall encourage recipient countries to direct more of the aid resources we provide to forestry. Obviously, we must respect countries' own priorities, so it would not be appropriate to set global expenditure targets for forestry aid. Nevertheless, ODA is just completing an

[Mr. Eggar]

exercise to identify those countries where we feel that, as a country, we have a comparative advantage in offering forestry assistance. We shall discuss those possibilities with Governments with a view to identifying forestry projects with which we might be able to assist.

Secondly, we shall make an extra £500,000 a year available for international collaborative research. Trees are hundreds of years behind agricultural crops in selective breeding. The wealth of variation between and among species in the natural forests can be the basis for increases in future productivity comparable to the change from the gathering of wild grasses to the harvesting of modern rice and wheat crops. The exploration and conservation of the genetic resources of tropical forests have high priority in our forestry aid programme, as I saw for myself only two weeks ago when I visited an impressive project in Honduras.

Thirdly, we shall encourage British charities to put forward more forestry projects under the joint funding scheme. My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development recently announced a block grant to the World Wide Fund for Nature of £1 million in 1989-90, the financial year. Both ODA and the World Wide Fund for Nature agree that more than 70 per cent. of that money should go on forestry conservation projects.

The fourth component in the new initiative is training and institution strengthening. In addition to our bilateral effort, we play a role through international agencies and we contribute 16 per cent. to the European development fund, whose support for forestry includes the approval of £32 million worth of forestry projects in Africa since 1986. On top of that, the Community in 1988 allocated £5 million for reafforestation in central America. That is very badly needed, as I saw for myself on my recent visit to the Honduras and Guatemala. We have also contributed through the World bank, and in 1988 IBRD loans and IDA credits to the value of $168 million were approved for the forestry sector.

Mrs. Wise: May I ask the Minister a question before he leaves the subject of central America? I noted what he said. Will he bear in mind the destruction of trees in Nicaragua, which was exacerbated by the hurricane? I note that he did not mention Nicaragua in his list. Will he consider whether we should be making a contribution there?

Will he also bear in mind that, although the sums that he has mentioned will no doubt have been put to good use, they are very small in relation to the size of the problem? Tomorrow we shall hear of much larger sums going to much less useful purposes. May I suggest that our good intentions should be accompanied by the devotion of rather more money?

Mr. Eggar: I take the hon. Lady's point. I did not mention Nicaragua because I did not visit it. I know that the hon. Lady is aware that we gave substantial assistance to Nicaragua following the hurricane.

During my visit, I visited a regional forestry school set up in the centre of the Honduras as part of the help to Central America as a whole. That was a school that we helped, particularly on the forestry side, which is now entirely run by the Hondurans. Both there and at a similar school or college in Costa Rica, I was struck by the lack of attendance by citizens of other central American states. We have already said that that needs to be pursued by the central Americans. We need to try to persuade them to make more use of the existing regional institutions.

I take the point made by the hon. Member for Preston about the level of assistance, and I am sure that we shall have a chance to discuss the overall level of assistance on Friday. I am trying to show that we are placing considerable additional resources in the forestry sector as a direct result of the widespread concern and of the increased willingness of developing countries to ask for assistance in this sector. There is still some way to go, however.

As I said, donors are supporting the tropical forestry action plan, which is now active in more than 60 countries. We are directly involved in 20 of those countries.

It may help if I say something about what is known as "green conditionality". The Government do not support the kind of green conditionality that would mean our attempting to improve developing countries' environmental performance by threatening to withhold aid from them if they failed to reach certain standards. The hon. Member for Eccles knows our attitude to conditionality in general. We aim to promote in those countries sustainable economic and social development, so helping to relieve poverty, which often causes people to clear forests. We seek to improve those countries' institutional capacity to deal with environmental matters and to agree with them appropriate environmenal safeguards and individual projects.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow referred to "debt-for-nature" swaps. Where such swaps are entered into voluntarily and genuinely release additional resources, they can be useful. I was told about such a scheme —one of the first of its kind—when I visited Bolivia. The hon. Member mentioned Sir Kit McMahon of the Midland bank. He might like to know that the Midland bank donated its entire Sudanese exposure of just $1 million to finance the health, water and reafforestation in the Kordofan region of Sudan. That is another example of a debt-for-nature swap. I should not want to overstate the scale of the potential contribution proposed by those debt-for-nature swaps.

Hon. Members are concerned about a possible World bank loan which some fear will destroy vast areas of the Amazon. I refer to the second power sector loan in Brazil. My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has publicly said that, although it seems that the proposed loan will not directly finance the construction of dams in the Amazon, we are acutely conscious of the need for appropriate safeguards for the environment and for Indian rights.

The loan—there is now some uncertainty about exactly what its status is—is unlikely to go before the World bank's executive board until May, and its precise terms are not yet known. My hon. Friend has undertaken to keep in close touch with concerned non-governmental organisations about it. We shall certainly consider extremely carefully the environmental and social aspects if and when a loan is put to the board. The latest information appears to be that there is a rethinking of the matter. We have not had clear information on that.

Environmental issues are being given much greater attention in the World bank, in part due to the efforts of the United Kingdom and several other members. The reorganisation of the World bank in 1987 strengthened its capacity to ensure that environmental costs and benefits

are systematically addressed in project appraisal. It is clear that the bank is aware of the sensitivities surrounding the proposal, but I repeat that we will need to look at the precise terms of any proposal.

Mr. Dalyell: I and some of my colleagues get the impression that the Americans are far more open about their directions to their director of the World bank than we are to the British director. Could there be a reflection within Government on why Parliament should not be told what instructions are being given to the British director of the World bank?

Mr. Eggar: There is possibly a difference in approach between us and the Americans on this matter. It relates to our reluctance to use our voting in the World bank as any kind of political lever or pressure—a reluctance which the Americans certainly do not go along with to the extent that we do.

That is illustrated by the fact that we have not voted on political grounds on loans to Nicaragua or to Chile. We have always voted specifically on technical grounds. That is the right approach. It leads us to a reluctance to be drawn into political assessments and statements about what instructions are given to our executive director. We prefer to concentrate much more on technical reasons. Obviously, because of the sensitivity of information, that is not normally disclosed, as discussions are behind closed doors.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that, to avoid the threat from new dams, the United Kingdom should give support to help get Brazil's nuclear power stations working effectively. As he himself acknowledges, that was a controversial statement when he made it in Brazil. The OECD sector agreement on nuclear power prohibits the use of tied bilateral aid for such projects.

Aid is by no means the only international activity with an effect on the rain forest. Trade is at least as important. It was for that reason that we were one of the first signatories to the agreement under which the International Tropical Timber Organisation was established. The agreement's objectives balance trade expansion and diversification with an ecologically sustainable approach to tropical forest management. The ITTO's members account for most of the trade in tropical timber.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade has responsibility for this matter, and he recently had a meeting with the executive director of the ITTO. We believe that action through the ITTO on a global basis offers a promising line of approach to achieve sustainable management of commercial tropical forestry.

Some believe such management to be impossible and have argued for a ban on tropical timber imports from non-sustainable sources. Any such proposal would be restrictive and need careful consideration, not least in the EEC context. I know that my hon. Friend wishes to keep all possibilities under review.

The DTI is also considering the implications of the Anglo-Dutch timber trade's proposal for a levy on tropical timber imports to be channelled through the ITTO.

We would all agree that we have had an important and interesting debate, even if it is at an unreasonably anti-social hour. I hope that I have reassured Opposition Members that the Government share their concern about the global effects of rain forest destruction. Aid, trade and international dialogue all have an important role to play in this extremely complex problem. The Government are actively pursuing all three. As the problem becomes ever more widely recognised, I am confident that we shall be able to achieve more, but whatever we do must be in partnership with the countries that are the homes to the rain forests. Without their co-operation, we shall not be able to succeed.

Electronic Surveillance Devices

2.30 am

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): I am pleased to have been able to secure a debate on an important subject that I consider is much misunderstood in this country and, indeed, has been the subject of enormous exaggeration. It relates to the growing availability in this country of electronic surveillance equipment that essentially can be bought by anyone, whether that individual be law-abiding or not. It is a matter of concern to me—I believe, too, that it is of some concern to a growing number of other people—that there are an increasing number of advertisements appearing in all sorts of newspapers and magazines for such equipment. The last advertisement to catch my attention was in *The Daily Telegraph*. It said:

"Discreet listening, recording and counter-surveillance equipment".

Whoever was interested simply had to contact a company called Lorraine Electronics Surveillance that is based in London. I stress that this is only one advertisement of many and simply gives the flavour. The words that offend me in that advertisement are "discreet listening", which could be the subject of all sorts of abuse.

My concerns are evidenced by the fact that I have written to the Home Secretary on more than one occasion, the last occasion being on 10 February of this year. I have also tabled a number of questions to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. All of these questions, of course, have been transferred to other Departments. In other words, I have not yet been able to get the Home Department to answer a question on the subject. It is not that the Home Department is evading answering the questions, but that the entire area of electronic surveillance is policed not by the Home Department, but by other Departments.

I am pursuing this question, because I believe that the use of such devices could—I emphasise "could"—constitute an invasion of privacy that I am bound to say I consider to be offensive.

Little information is available on such equipment, which is evidenced by the amount of people who have telephoned me and have asked, "Are you speaking about ID tagging for prisoners?" I will not mention names, but many people have asked that question. I believe that that proves how little is known about the matter. Moreover, there is little case law on the subject either. The last case I was able to discover was the Woolworth and Dixons case that I believe highlighted how ineffective and confused the law is. The industry has informed me that this ineffective and essentially confused law has resulted in a much increased demand for the equipment. That is borne out by the managing director of Lorraine Electronics Surveillance, who in the magazine *Your Business* in June 1988 said:

"Press reports of bugging"—

as he chose to call it—

"represent the tip of the iceberg."

That is his judgment and I take that statement for what it is worth. The article went on:

"Lorraine's 1987 turnover was reported to be 50 per cent. up on 1986, which in turn was 100 per cent. up on 1985."

The company expected the increase in business to continue in the foreseeable future.

I am perfectly willing to concede that such devices, which I shall consider in detail later, can be bought and sold for quite legitimate purposes. I am entitled to say, however, that it may not always be the case. This is illustrated by the words of the managing director of Lorraine Electronics Surveillance who said in *Your Business:*

"I never sit in judgement or moralise about why a company or individual should be buying surveillance equipment."

That is an interesting statement. Some of us may wonder why he and his colleagues do not ask questions about why some equipment is bought. Such an obligation is placed on the sellers of a considerable amount of merchandise in Britain. Why, therefore, is a similar obligation not imposed on the sellers of surveillance equipment?

One can only make a judgment about such equipment if one has studied it, as I have, in detail. It is clear that the great technological advances that have occurred have resulted in the development of many miniaturised devices for the market. They can be hidden in everyday household and office equipment. Such devices are normally extremely powerful and can pick up conversations without the knowledge of those conversing. That is offensive and I profoundly disagree with that practice.

National security considerations may justify the use of such equipment and it might be used to crack drug rings and other extreme criminal activity. No case can be made, however, for ordinary people going into such establishments in high streets to buy this equipment for relatively modest sums.

The brochures claim that some equipment is sold for export only—apparently if it was sold on the home market it would contravene a number of our laws. No check, however, is made to verify whether such equipment has been exported or whether it is used here. A number of us believe that some of this equipment is being used here in contravention of our laws and of the claims made in the brochures. The description of the available devices demonstrate that the business is obnoxious.

To establish the facts, I obtained brochures and information from a number of companies chosen at random. There are many such companies, but I chose these: Glideglen Electronics, of St. Osyth in Essex; Sirius Security, of Hull; Cumberworth Security, of Hull; Ruby Electronics Ltd, of Leyton in London; Lorraine Electronics Surveillance, also of Leyton; and the Surveillance and Security Centre, in London. I repeat that companies in this line of business are mushrooming as a result of the outcome of the case that I mentioned.

The first brochure I examined came from Glideglen Electronics. I propose to flit through one or two of the products that are on offer. The Envelope Transmitter is

"the ultimate in covert transmitting bugs, and with its super sensitive input stage and stable output stage, it can be hidden anywhere . . . Its size allows it to be inserted into a 9 × 4 envelope or smaller. It could then be dropped into a waste paper basket in the target room"—

I stress the word "target"—

"or pinned to a notice board, or simply left on a desk."

The words speak for themselves.

One can also buy a Concrete Microphone:

"The CM1 is a complete listening device, which will penetrate walls up to a foot thick."

One is entitled to wonder why anyone would want to listen to a conversation in a room with such walls for legitimate purposes.

Next, there is the Contact Window Transmitter:

"This intriguing little device is a transmitter fitted with a special contact transducer. It sticks to a window or door etc. and picks up the sounds inside, and transmits to a suitable receiver. It has a range of up to 1,000 yards".

Then there is the Micro 7 Transmitter:

"A specially developed transmitter for monitoring conversations taking place within a vehicle, with a range of up to 3 miles".

Why would anyone legitimately want to listen to a conversation in a car that far away if it was not for improper purposes?

One can also buy what is called a Mains Transmitter, which is

"a tiny transmitter built in a standard 13amp multi plug adaptor, and in no way does it affect its appearance or working. It is powered by the mains supply, so no batteries are needed. You just plug in and tune in!"

The last sentence is revealing. It means that someone can plug in to someone else's business. That is a gross invasion of privacy.

A Pen Transmitter is also available:

"The PT1 is a tiny powerful transmitter, built inside a standard Schafer Ball Point Pen, complete with batteries and a micro miniature mic (and it still writes!) This is a major breakthrough in personal surveillance equipment, its tiny mic has the capability of picking up speech from 25 feet away, with crystal clarity."

The Calculator Transmitter is the same as the Pen Transmitter. There is also a wonderful device known as the Infinity Transmitter:

"For transmission via the public telephone system. This device will allow you to monitor sounds or conversations within the area of the target telephone"—

that is an interesting use of the word "target"——

"from any telephone anywhere in the world."

Madam Deputy Seaker, it seems to me, as I have already said, that any of this equipment could be used for proper purposes, but under present circumstances it is at least equally possible to say that that equipment could be used for improper purposes.

That seems to me also to be illustrated by something sold by a company called Sirius Security of Hull, called a Covert Interview Recorder. I quote from the brochure:

"The interview recorder system has been designed to facilitate the recording of interviews and conversations, whether they take place in the office or in the street, with the recording system totally hidden about one's person."

There is a marvellous drawing showing how all this stuff can be hidden behind lapels or in pockets. The brochure goes on:

"The seed microphone is ideally hidden under the lapel of a jacket or down the sleeve, where it will pick up sounds in a radius of the user from whatever angle the conversation takes place. The system can be activated and de-activated covertly"—

one again wonders why, but it can indeed be—

"without suspicion as and when required during a conversation by an apparently innocent movement."

One is bound to ask why equipment such as this is available in the United Kingdom, in the sort of society I and other hon. Members of the House belong to. I simply fail to understand why anybody would have this recorder hidden on his person to record conversations except for dubious reasons.

The last of these interesting devices which I bring to the House's attention and which I would ask you to consider buying, Madam Deputy Speaker, is something called "the remarkable recording briefcase." What does the brochure say here?

"To all intents and purposes, both inside and out, it simply looks like a high-quality executive leather case."

Indeed, if one looks at this wonderful picture, that is precisely what it is.

"Even close scrutiny does not reveal the microphone and concealed electronics that enable one to record conversations in a most discreet manner."

Again, what sort of conversations have to be recorded in this discreet manner if one is simply talking, as ordinary people talk, in a law-abiding and legitimate way? The brochure goes on to say:

"Open or closed, even locked and unattended, the Recording Briefcase will monitor conversation with exceptional clarity."

"With exceptional clarity"—is that not marvellous to know, Madam Deputy Speaker? Nothing less will do. It goes on to say:

"Briefing notes easily verified and as for those copious Board Meeting notes—a thing of the past!"

How comforting that must be for all boards of directors in this country and how uncomfortable it must be for all company secretaries who will be done out of a job. Perhaps members of the Cabinet may now be able to turn up at Cabinet meetings with recording briefcases and we will therefore not require the services of the Cabinet Secretary. How interesting.

The point is, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this would be funny were it not also so very serious, because, as I have said before, it is fairly clear that all of these devices, whilst they may be used for legitimate purposes, could be used for improper purposes to invade the privacy of the people of this country. That is quite disgraceful.

Another factor which illustrates why this situation may get out of hand is, of course, the growth in sales of counter-surveillance equipment. The equipment is only necessary if surveillance equipment is used improperly. The growth of the counter-surveillance industry shows that the possibility exists that surveillance equipment devices are getting into the wrong hands or are being sold without questions being asked.

We should remember that the managing director of Lorraine Electronics Surveillance said that he did not look too closely at the morality of people buying such equipment. If that is so, it is no surprise to me that some of the equipment is sold to the wrong people without any questions being asked.

If you will forgive me, Madam Deputy Speaker, I must refer to the brochures again. Madam Deputy Speaker, you could buy the RFD and the RFD-X counter surveillance equipment which, according to the brochure, has

"been designed to provide the individual"—

note the word "individual"—

"with a simple and effective means of detecting and locating radio frequency surveillance devices. Radio signals are present in all areas and the function of both detectors is to isolate and help identify transmissions that could represent a threat."

Again we must wonder about the nature of the threat. However, a threat could occur. I remember when I was the west midlands director of the Confederation of British Industry that a company that was being taken over discovered an electronic surveillance device under the boardroom table. The suspicion was that someone was listening in to conversations for nefarious purposes which might have led to a profit.

In addition to the counter-surveillance devices to which I have referred, you could, Madam Deputy Speaker, buy what is called the "Body-Worn Detector". According to the brochure, that is a

[Mr. James Cran]

"Pocket-sized device that silently vibrates, thus alerting the user of a possible transmission threat."

There is also a "Telephone and Wiring Analyser" and even a "Hand-Held Detector". According to the brochure, the "Hand-Held Detector" is a

"Simple and easy to use"—

how wonderful to know that this equipment is so easy to use—

"instrument devised to offer immediate and portable protection from electronic invasion."

In view of that galaxy of obnoxious equipment, what protection is offered by the law? Having gone into that question in considerable detail, it seems that the law does not offer a great deal of protection. I would be delighted to be overruled by my hon. Friend the Minister of State if I am wrong, but I understand that a "bug" may be placed in the customised briefcase to which I drew the attention of the House earlier, or the pen or calculator, and that is not an illegal act.

I am advised, and again I would be delighted to be contradicted, that using this equipment to record conversations is also not illegal. It is illegal if any of the devices transmits an unauthorised radio signal, and then it will breach the wireless and telegraphy legislation. That betrays at least one of the reasons why my questions to the Home Office are transferred to other Departments and in that case to the Department of Trade and Industry, because it oversees the wireless and telegraphy legislation.

Illegality can also occur when the equipment is used in conjunction with telephone instruments or lines. Again, that could, depending on the circumstances, contravene the relevant Telecommunications Act.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary understands the situation perfectly well, as do most people who have investigated the subject. In his letter to me dated 4 August 1988, he recognised the severe limitation of the Acts, commenting:

"However, radio surveillance devices are unlikely to cause interference to other radio users simply because if they did their use would quickly be detected and their purpose defeated."

My point is that the devices I have described are being sold but their use is "controlled" by only two Acts that are fairly ineffective—as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has himself admitted.

Against that background, one must again ask whether such devices are in the public interest. I make no bones about my belief that the answer is a resounding no. The only question that remains is how should the law be changed to reflect what ordinary individuals expect. In my right hon. Friend's letter to me of 4 August last, he recognises the difficulties, saying:

"I understand your concern about the availability and use of these devices, though at present I do not believe a case has been made out for controls over their sale and use."

I have written again to my right hon. Friend with copies of all the material from which I have quoted, saying that I believe a case for controls has been made. If he believes otherwise, I invite him to explain his reasons, so that those of us who believe that there is a problem can mobilise an argument to which my right hon. Friend will be prepared to listen.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is in favour of some action being taken, and I believe that that emanates from a Law Commission report entitled "The Law on the Breach of Confidence", proposing that those who obtain information by improper means should be subject to the obligation not to use or disclose that information thereby gained. My right hon. Friend says that if such disclosure took place, that could trigger a civil action for breach of confidence. He adds:

"I should like to reflect on whether this is an idea which we should take forward."

If my right hon. Friend decides on that course of action, that will be an advance, but I still think that it would be inadequate and have made that view known to my right hon. Friend. The problem is that his suggestion would not prevent invasion of privacy, but would only restrict the use to which the knowledge gained by the use of surveillance devices could be put. Even then, the question arises as to whether one can prove that privacy has been invaded in the first place.

I have tried to demonstrate, by describing the grubby selection of devices that can be bought in this country, that people's privacy can be invaded and that they may never know about it. Few people would go to the lengths of buying counter-surveillance equipment to combat the electronic surveillance equipment used to invade their privacy. I argue that privacy may be invaded, and profit made from the information thereby gained, but that the individual or the company concerned could never know. To illustrate the point, industrial espionage in this country and in America is a growing phenomenon—secrecy is of the essence.

I have been dragged kicking and screaming to the conclusion that regulation is necessary. I say that because like most Conservative Members I am in favour of deregulation, not regulation. In this instance, however, I feel that the ideal solution is for such devices to be illegal unless explicitly licensed. I appreciate that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and others would have reservations, and if it is impossible to achieve that end perhaps the next best solution is the one that my right hon. Friend has cited—but not in isolation. Civil action for breach of confidence is not enough on its own, and it makes it very difficult for the individual to go to law—in this country, civil law.

I feel, therefore, that we also need a code of practice among retailers and manufacturers. There are plenty of precedents: individuals have got together in the past to "regulate" their own industry. There should also be a register of people who are buying the equipment—and, indeed, selling it—so that those of us who are worried about where it is going can check up after the event, under the aegis of the Home Office or the police.

Let me repeat that all too little is known about this topic. Many people put the blind eye to the telescope and say that the industry need not be investigated, because the equipment being sold is not used for illegal purposes. I am not prepared to come to that conclusion. I think that this is a nasty little industry, which is mushrooming and which capitalises on the fact that it is unregulated. All sorts of practices are beginning to develop, and I should like to hear the Minister say that he is prepared to clean them up —because this industry does indeed need cleaning up.

3.2 am

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I congratulate the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) on introducing such an interesting topic, albeit so early in the morning. We should be grateful for any opportunity of hearing about it. The hon. Gentleman spoke of the difficulty of pinpointing

the Department responsible. The Minister, whom I saw just before the debate, insisted that the DTI Minister would be at the Dispatch Box, and it gives some indication of the confusion that the Minister of State, Home Office is there instead.

This is a serious matter, and it is linked with others. Only this weekend I was discussing with a number of people the growing practice of large companies of recording every telephone call made or received by their employees. I understand that the practice is now widespread, and that employees have no right to know whether their conversations are being recorded. Most people consider telephone conversations to be private affairs: a kind of right of privacy is involved.

I am told by a reliable source, however, that increasing numbers of large companies—banks, stock exchange firms and so on—automatically record all conversations. They do not tell their employees or members of the public who telephone the company. That is another aspect suggesting that we are becoming an Orwellian state. It is easy to go too far and to regard such practices as a great danger and to make everyone paranoid. Individual rights of privacy have to be based on the facts of the late 20th century and not the rights that Thomas Paine and other great philosophers of the 18th century discussed. We associate the 18th century with the Bill of Rights and the establishment of the rights of the individual, but those rights were drawn up in the 18th century and were appropriate to the demands and problems that the 18th century imposed on the thoughts of those individuals.

The hon. Member for Beverley was absolutely right to draw our attention to the fact that individual rights of privacy have to take account of very disturbing trends, including electronic bugging. He covered the problem of industrial espionage extremely well. We all know that a large number of people in Britain are interested in information about patents and hard-won scientific knowledge. It would be grossly unfair if it were easy for one company to steal patented rights and secrets, or scientific or technical information from another company before patents had been obtained. It is not simply a question of one domestic company pursuing the secrets of another; it is big international business. The hon. Gentleman did not mention the problems of checking the importation of equipment, because if it is not available in Britain, it is certainly available abroad.

The private security industry has grown tremendously in the past 10 or 20 years and perhaps longer. Only recently the Association of Chief Police Officers expressed concern about 650 private security firms which were unlicensed and many of which could be described as cowboy firms. The Government are reluctant to do anything about the unregulated private security industry. I received a reply from the Minister only last week about the private security industry, stating that the Government intend to do nothing except encourage self-regulation. If one combines that with the growth of electronic surveillance techniques, the problem reaches worrying proportions.

As the hon. Gentleman said, of course there are legitimate purposes for electronic surveillance equipment, but they must occupy a very small percentage of the market. Control of the market would run counter to the Government's market philosophy, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman that some regulation is necessary.

To introduce a note of controversy, an example of the way in which modern technology can influence human rights is the appalling suggestion from the Government of electronic tagging, which the Opposition believe would be a great infringement on the rights of individuals, be they convicted criminals or on remand. We should investigate and ponder the matter thoroughly before taking any steps in that direction.

I do not want to keep the House any longer than necessary but in modern technology terms there is also a parallel with the Government's reluctance to change the law on the practice of hacking, or tapping into the computers of firms, Government institutions and so on, where again we have been lagging behind other countries in recognising the dangers that can be posed to individuals, to corporations and to state security. I know that there are moves afoot to do something.

We should not consider the issue piecemeal by saying, "There is a problem with electronic devices," or "There is a problem with hacking." We should examine the whole subject of the relationship of individual rights and the right to privacy in relation to changes in modern technology. It would be better to consider it all in the round. It is such a complex and interesting area for future development that I hope the Minister can give us signs that he has an open mind on the way in which we should go, and that he does not say that nothing can be done or that he is reluctant to do anything.

I remember shortly after becoming a Member listening to a debate that I thought belonged to cloud-cuckoo-land. Lord Wilson, as he now is, introduced a debate on modern systems of television communication. He talked about satellite beaming and various television channels. Most hon. Members thought that the illustrious gentleman had gone a bit far and that his imagination was taking over. At that time most of us believed that we were talking about science fiction. That was only 10 years ago. Of course, satellite television is with us now.

Electronic surveillance is a minor problem at the moment. The hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to what is increasingly becoming a problem for individuals. Whichever political side we are on in the House, we have a problem with part of the press. The irony is that, while we have probably the best serious press in the world, we also have perhaps the worst popular press. It makes me shudder to think of the use that the tabloid press, and certain proprietors, could make or perhaps are making —we do not know—of electronic surveillance techniques to penetrate the homes, offices and secret parts of people's lives.

People have a right to privacy and a right to know that what they say within four walls is confidential to them, their business associates and their family. What would happen if electronic surveillance equipment was in the hands of unscrupulous people? I believe that certain elements of the tabloid press are totally unscrupulous. One has only to think of the tragic consequences of the behaviour of the tabloid press in recent weeks. I am thinking of a ghastly suicide that was directly caused by the *News of the World* in the last few months. It was dramatically illustrated on BBC radio last week. If one thinks about such irresponsibility being linked to electronic surveillance equipment, it makes the case very strong for urgent Government action and regulation.

3.13 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I am not sure whether I should congratulate or commiserate with my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) on his success in securing the opportunity to raise at this unseemly hour the subject of electronic surveillance devices. I am sorry if the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) got out of bed unnecessarily, thinking that this debate was to be answered by a Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry. I should point out that the next debate too is to be answered by a Home Office Minister. This shows the great devotion to duty, of Ministers and officials alike, in the Home Department.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the persistence that he has shown in pursuing this subject and for the detailed and very interesting way in which he made his case tonight. His concern about the availability and use of these devices and about their implications for personal privacy is well known. I think he was slightly inaccurate in saying that every one of his parliamentary questions on this subject had been transferred to the Department of Trade and Industry. According to my records, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department did answer one of his questions on the subject on 2 March. It is possible that the Under-Secretary would be answering this debate tonight if he were not unfortunately indisposed.

I share my hon. Friend's concern about the possible misuse of some of the very sophisticated equipment that is on the market. He gave us a riveting and worrying account of what is currently available, although I must say that the recording briefcase to which he referred had a touch of humour about it—almost a touch of the conjuror. Hon. Members might use it as a means of stretching their secretarial allowances.

What my hon. Friend said about the distastefulness of the practices of monitoring and surveillance that he described is entirely correct. However, I have to say to him and to the hon. Member for Huddersfield that, when we come to consider the possibility of effectively controlling such devices, there are a number of very real difficulties. It would not generally be practicable or desirable to contemplate prohibiting the sale or use of particular devices—for two reasons. First, it would be difficult to define "devices" in any meaningful way that would not soon be obsolete and ineffective, bearing in mind the rapid pace of technological development. Secondly, it is unlikely that there would be any device that could not be represented as having some legitimate use.

The Younger report on privacy, to which I shall refer at one or two points in my remarks, contains a long and detailed section on technical surveillance devices, and devotes several pages to a discussion of the various legitimate uses to which such equipment may be put—for example, by those concerned with the acquisition and dissemination of news, including material for investigative and documentary journalism, and by those engaged in detective work.

There is also a problem about trying to identify the circumstances in which the use of these devices might be controlled. As our debate a few weeks ago on the Protection of Privacy Bill, which was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne), demonstrated, it is extremely difficult to frame an acceptable definition of "privacy".

As Younger noted, the privacy of any situation will depend entirely on the circumstances:

> "While there may be situations such as the home, the office, and the hotel bedroom, which might be said, prima facie, to be private, circumstances willed or unwilled can render them obviously not private; and there are many other situations which reasonable people would agree were private, but which occur in public places."

The hon. Member for Huddersfield was quite right in saying that the right to privacy has to be watched very carefully at a time when companies are making a habit of recording the telephone conversations of their employees. The fact remains that this definition of "privacy" still lies at the heart of the problems that we explored in the long debate on the private Member's Bill the other day.

The Younger committee saw merit in the creation of a criminal offence of surreptitious surveillance by means of a technical device. The ingredients of such an offence would be the use of a device in circumstances where, were it not for that use, the person who was the object of that surveillance would be justified in believing that he had protected himself or his possessions from such surveillance.

The committee recognised that the major problem of controlling surreptitious surveillance by devices was that, of its very nature, it is difficult to detect. A large number of elements would need to be present, for example, a technical device—I have just mentioned the difficulty of definition in that context—then surreptitious use, the person under surveillance, a set of circumstances where the person under surveillance believed himself to be protected, an intention by the user to overcome that protection, and absence of consent by the victim.

Enforcement of new legislation to control that type of activity would therefore be more than usually difficult. It is that consideration which has led successive Governments to take the view that, on balance, it would not be useful to legislate as Younger proposed. For this reason too, successive Governments have not been attracted to Younger's suggestion that advertising of such devices, with reference to their aptness for surreptitious surveillance, was an incitement to commit an offence.

As my hon. Friend knows, the Younger committee rejected proposals that there should be any more general remedy for the protection of privacy, but it drew attention to the availability of the existing action for breach of confidence, which it considered was potentially capable of affording greater protection to privacy than had hitherto been realised. However, since the committee found the action for breach of confidence to be somewhat uncertain in its scope, it recommended that the matter be referred to the Law Commission.

The commission presented its report on this subject in 1981. It noted Younger's recommendation for a criminal offence of surreptitious surveillance and, while emphasising that it was concerned with the civil and not the criminal law, it made it clear that the acquisition of information by the sort of technical devices which Younger had in mind had implications in its view for the civil law of confidence. It accordingly recommended that there should be an obligation of confidence in respect of information obtained by the use of any surveillance device, provided that such information would not have been acquired without the use of that device. Those who acquired the

information would, in other words, be subject to a legal obligation not to use or disclose it; and if they did so they would be liable to be sued in the civil courts in an action for breach of confidence.

This approach, suggested by the Law Commission, seems to have the advantage of concentrating on the real mischief, which is the use to which information obtained by surveillance is put, and it provides the victim with a direct means of redress.

Mr. Cran: I understand what the Law Commission recommended, but the problem with the proposal, as I made clear, is that it presupposes that the individual who has been listened in to knows what has happened. The problem is that he may not know that he has been listened in to; the company may not know, for example, that its patent information had been stolen from it. Therefore, they would not be in a position, for some considerable time, to take action. Thus, profits could be made and a coach and horses could be driven through the proposal that my hon. Friend the Minister of State has just outlined.

Mr. Renton: I appreciate that that point lies at the heart of the difference of opinion between my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on this issue. I repeat that my right hon. Friend has stated that he finds this a sensible way forward in a difficult area and is therefore attracted to the Law Commission's approach. Legislation on the report would be a matter for my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor, who has a number of other legislative preoccupations at present. I understand, therefore, that he is unable to regard implementation of the report as a matter to which high priority should be given.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beverley drew the House's attention to what he regards as possible deficiencies in the Law Commission's proposals, but he acknowledged that to legislate as it proposes would be an improvement on the present position. My hon. Friend made the perfectly fair point that this would not prevent the invasion of privacy but only restrict the use to which the knowledge might be put, assuming the individual realised that his privacy had been invaded.

The difficulty, as I have already suggested, is to define a satisfactory concept of personal privacy, and to establish in what circumstances the individual can legitimately claim a right to privacy. One of the early chapters of the Younger report is entitled "What is privacy?" One does not have to read far into that chapter to discover that the majority of the committee took the view that the concept of privacy cannot be satisfactorily defined. Attempts to do so either went wide, equating the rights to privacy with what Judge Cooley last century termed "the right to be let alone", or boiled down to a catalogue of assorted values to which the adjectives "private" or "personal" could reasonably, but not exclusively, be attached.

In addition to the definitional problems, there is the fact that privacy cannot be an absolute right. As Younger remarked:

> "A man's right to privacy has to be balanced against the rights of others; any additional protection which the law may afford to privacy may be found to impinge upon such other rights, in particular the right of free communication of the truth and comment upon it, which are generally accepted as of great importance in a democratic society."

Mr. Cran: I do not wish to prolong discussion, and I understand that privacy is not an absolute concept. I referred to a company that is the subject of a takeover finding a bug under its boardroom table. Does my hon. Friend agree that that company has a right to privacy when determining its takeover policy? The concept of privacy in such a case would be absolute. My hon. Friend cannot possibly be saying that somebody has a right to listen to those private conversations.

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend's comment that the right to privacy would be absolute is interesting and would lead one down a philosophical path at this late hour.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): Go on.

Mr. Renton: I am tempted by my hon. Friend.

I asked earlier to what use such information would be put. I agree that in normal circumstances one would regard such behaviour as eavesdropping, but to what use would the information be put? Would it be used in insider dealing on the stock exchange? If so, one returns to my earlier point—which was the substance of what Younger and the Law Commission considered—that it is important to know to what use the information, whether it was acquired by invasion of privacy or bugging, was put.

Much of the interesting debate on the Protection of Privacy Bill centred on the question, if privacy was invaded, to what disadvantage would that put the individual or company concerned? That leads on to the view that the law on the right to privacy is intertwined with the law of defamation and confidentiality.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend not agree that the great distinction between the two propositions is that the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) relates to an invasion of privacy occasioned by a newspaper? In such a case everybody, including the individual concerned, knows who is being got at. The problem of the cases that I have outlined is that, because of the sophistication of the devices, one may never know.

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend is right. The debate about the Bill promoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester fastens round the right to privacy in newspapers. But the Younger committee and the Law Commission widened the issue, and it is impossible to consider enshrining the right to privacy from newspaper intrusions without also going into the wider sphere. One immediately comes to the difficult queston of the definition of privacy. One man's idea of privacy is not necessarily another man's. One man's idea of privacy on a holiday might be another man's idea of boredom, as we know well. That is why it is difficult to be so exclusive about the idea of privacy in relation to newspapers only and I am sure that my hon. Friend takes that point on board.

I hope that my hon. Friend will understand why it seems to us, in view of those real problems, to be preferable to adopt the more limited approach proposed by the Law Commission rather than to contemplate a more general right to privacy. Those are matters that the House may have the opportunity to debate again, as the Protection of Privacy Bill has obtained its Second Reading.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beverley asked specifically whether a licensing system is in place for surveillance devices. There are no controls on the scale and use of such equipment, although such devices may be subject to other, technical considerations. However, we should not overlook the legislation we introduced in 1985

[Mr. Renton]

dealing with the interception of the public telecommunications system and the post. If the use of electronic surveillance equipment involves such interception, the criminal offences and penalties set out in the Interception of Communications Act 1985 could come into play.

The Government are not persuaded that it is practicable or necessary to extend the criminal law to cover electronic or other surveillance or eavesdropping, objectionable though such activities can undoubtedly be. A criminal offence must be clearly defined, well understood and capable of effective enforcement. It would be difficult to define an offence in this area without making it so narrow that it was easily evaded or soon overtaken by new technology, or so wide that it was unreasonable and unenforceable in practice.

We are not attracted to a scheme of licensing particular devices which would inevitably involve complex and bureaucratic procedures, requiring invidious judgments to be exercised about whether individuals had established a legitimate use for the device in question, without providing any confidence that those who wanted to acquire and use such equipment would be deterred from doing so in practice. However, we see merit in the more limited proposal made by the Law Commission and have undertaken to introduce new legislation along those lines. Such legislation must take its due place in the order of our legislative priorities.

I am sorry that I cannot promise my hon. Friend all that he would like, but I can assure him that we take his points seriously. I shall see that they are made known to my ministerial colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry, and I am grateful to him for giving us the opportunity to debate these serious matters tonight.

Religious Cults (Government Funding)

3.34 am

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Over a three-year period, the Government have funded the organisation INFORM from the Home Office funds to the tune of at least £120,000 a year. I am told that the organisations's initials stand for "Information Network Focus on Religious Movements". I am reliably informed that it has never inspired any confidence among those working in the field to help combat the effects that people suffer as a result of their involvement in religious cults. There is no evidence of the organisation helping—by advice or counselling—the parents or loved ones of those unlucky enough to be caught up in the web of deceit. It has done nothing to help those who seek to help relatives or advise them on the facts and methods available in their time of need.

In fact, this Government-funded organisation seems to serve the opposite purpose, especially in dealing with requests for information or advice on religious cults—notably that requested on the pseudo-religious organisation, the Unification Church, which I shall refer to by its more common title, "the Moonies". Why was a leading member—a director—of INFORM, Mrs. Irene Barker, described recently by the Moonies' information unit, based at 44 Lancaster Gate, London, as their consultant with outside bodies on their activities if no sympathy existed between the two organisations? Why would that same organisation, which is widely distrusted by everyone connected with religion in the United Kingdom, welcome the establishment of INFORM—a body which, shortly after its formation, changed the description of "cults" in its literature to "new religious movements" to match its own title?

The Moonies' recognition of INFORM is one of the major reasons why I feel that Government funding of the organisation should immediately cease. It has to be reiterated that groups such as the Moonies cannot be treated in a casual manner by any Government-funded or supported agency. Incidences of the Moonies activities are many; indeed they are too numerous to list as they would probably fill the pages of *Hansard*.

Nevertheless, I want to give the Minister a good idea of the Moonies' size and activities, so I ask him to note my list of organisational fronts. I shall set out at least some of the Moonies' conglomerate multinational operations. There are at least 33 Moonie recruiting fronts, ranging from the World Family Movement to the Hope academy based in California in the United States. Moonie religious fronts number about 24, of which the Unification Church and the Sun Myung institution in Korea are but two. There are at least 21 Moonie political fronts—the "Captive Nations" group and "Project of Unity" among them. Moonie media fronts include organisations, newspapers and magazines that knowingly promote the Moonie message. There are at least three such fronts, including the "World Student Times", "New Hope News" and the "Unified World". There are at least 37 Moonie cultural and social fronts, ranging from the International Cultural Foundation to the Korean Cultural and Freedom Foundation.

Then there are the Moonie businesses. Outside the United Kingdom there are at least 119, ranging from businesses dealing in ice-packed sea foods in Alaska to jewellery shops in Maine in the United States to cosmetic manufacturing in Toronto, Canada. There are even

companies in Korea engaged in M16 rifle production, in newspapers in Japan and in hotels and casinos in Uruguay. There are undoubtedly many more businesses connected directly with the organisation, but it is the British connection as yet unmentioned with which I should like to deal.

The Minister is aware that a considerable number of Moonie-related companies exist or have existed in Britain. For example, in my constituency of Mansfield, with the help of the *Free Press Recorder*, a local newspaper, I have uncovered evidence of a printing supply business currently named Crescent Printing Services, based at Church lane, Mansfield. I am led to believe that it is the main printing house of the Moonie religious cult in the United Kingdom. At present, its manager is one Anthony Nicholas Dixon of 50 Victoria street, Mansfield, who also holds a directorship of Unified Family Enterprises and was a director of New Tomorrow Ltd., before that company was dissolved on 12 January 1988.

Both of those companies are undoubtedly Moonie front businesses, as their other company directorships are all registered as being based at the same address in Lancaster gate, London, the Moonie organisation's national nerve centre. In his diligent efforts to uncover the truth about the operations of the Moonie cult, Mr. Stephen Carr, the chief reporter of my local newspaper the *Free Press Recorder*, has established, via Companies House, other factors of connection between the aforementioned companies. His examination of company records revealed that some of the directors involved are also directly linked to the Moonies' main controlling boards in London.

For instance, I refer to Martin John Warner, Alexander Kenneth Stewart, Timothy John Miller, Michael Leslie Breen, David Fraser Harris, and Doris Barbara Orme, all well-known senior Moonie figures, together with one Dennis Frederick Orme, the ex-head of the Moonie cult organisation in the whole of the United Kingdom. Other companies listed as being involved with Moonie figures connected with that company are Alexander Wiltshire Limited, Ocean Fresh Limited, Omega Bakeries Limited, Holy Oak Community Limited, the East Lothian Shipbuilding and Fishing Co. Limited, and many others.

Both main link companies share one major similarity, that all shares in them are or were held jointly in the keeping of the trustees of the Sun Myung Moon foundation, the main financial clearing house of the Moonies' worldwide operations.

The Minister is aware that major challenges in the United Kingdom have already been made to the registration of the Moonies as a charitable body. Alas, I am sad to say that, so far, the Attorney-General has failed to act because of what he described as no exact proof that the charitable body was not functioning as a charity.

That view is not good enough for the House. It has not taken me long to get evidence that, rather than being charitable, that body is operating purely as a business venture, with the added advantage of its status, coupled with worse employment practices than any business should ever be allowed. For instance, there is definite evidence that many of the people employed in the ventures that I have mentioned are not paid for their endeavours. In some cases they are paid, but, immediately on being paid, they are asked to sign a form stating that they have donated their pay in total or in part to the Moonie organisation.

I have in my possession some horrific accounts of ex-Moonies who describe in detail how they were dispatched in groups from all over the United Kingdom, with everything from pot plants to toys, prints and other items which they were made to sell door-to-door in high streets and in pubs and clubs to raise money for that body. Worse still, they were told to refrain from telling potential customers the truth of the offer of sale and, instead, were encouraged to lie to be successful sellers.

It really is not good enough for the Minister to say that the Government cannot act because of the law in its present form. Evidence exists of hundreds of cases of the sort that I have described. Other opportunities exist in the laws related to tax evasion. Some of those companies are undoubtedly operating in part on the black side of the economy. Laws related to health and safety in premises, bank accounts and company law should be checked if proof is needed of their activities. I am positive that such endeavours would be fruitful.

If any proof of such endeavours as I have mentioned were needed, I would point to the fact that I have informed the Registrar of Companies at Companies House that the company, Unified Family Enterprises Ltd.—one of the companies that I previously named—is in breach of the Companies Act 1985. I discovered that at the time of my research it had only filed accounts of its activities up to 31 March 1986.

In my determination to rid the Mansfield and north Nottinghamshire area of the Moonies' business operations, I have today contacted the Inland Revenue in my area to ask it to investigate Crescent Printing Services' financial and business ventures to establish whether it is fulfilling legal tax requirements.

In addition, I have asked Mansfield district council—the local authority concerned—to conduct inspections under the Factories Acts to determine whether health, safety and employment practices are being properly fulfilled. Local police have been urged to acquire the names of all persons associated with that firm.

I have also advised all local businesses and organisations, private and public, voluntary and statutory, of the background to Crescent Printing Services and its connection in the wider world outside the Mansfield and the north Nottinghamshire area.

I say to the Minister that if either I or a local reporter with the *Free Press Recorder* in Mansfield can discover such information, his vast army of helpers in Whitehall must be able to find out much more and act on the matter. Will the Minister take the matter seriously? Excuses that the law is difficult do not hold water in this place, especially as the Government have a reputation of changing, scrapping or introducing new law at a pace that will be recorded in the annals of history.

I would be willing to supply the Minister with any of the documentation about which I have spoken to help him in his endeavours. I would be grateful if he could ask his noble Friend the Minister of State, who is responsible for such matters, to receive a delegation on this matter. I would be grateful, too, if he would commend the public duty fulfilled by both the *Free Press Recorder* in Mansfield and the investigatory work of its chief reporter, Mr. Steven Carr. They have tirelessly sought to uncover the evidence that I have presented in the interests not only of the people whom I serve, but others elsewhere.

[Mr. Alan Meale]

I urge the Government to stop funding the INFORM organisation until such time as the matters I have raised have been answered fully and to the satisfaction of the House.

3.48 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): The story of the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) is an interesting one. I appreciate his concern and the concern of his local community in north Nottinghamshire. In view of the talents of the chief reporter of the *Free Press Recorder*, it is likely that he will soon be lost to north Nottinghamshire and that he will find himself a bolthole in Fleet street. I fear that he may well be recruited by one of those newspapers which were the subject of some comment during the last debate, to which the hon. Member for Mansfield and for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) listened.

I shall certainly draw to the attention of my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Ferrers, who in another place is ministerially responsible for these issues, the strong feelings of the hon. Member for Mansfield. I shall ask him to look into those issues.

Before I consider the specific issue of INFORM and the body that the hon. Gentleman and I think of as the Moonies, it would be helpful to comment on the activities of religious cults in general.

Cults are not a new phenomena, but in the 1960s and 1970s there was a growth in their number. Strictly speaking, many are heresies within the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but some are influenced by mysticism, especially eastern mysticism. Many others are tinged with money-making influences, which seem to be a driving force behind their operations. Sometimes the definition is extended to include Christian fundamentalist sects, although that is debatable.

A characteristic of the groups is the elevation of a charismatic leader into a divine or semi divine status. To many of us their claims are ludicrous—it would be ludicrous to attach that status to any cult leader—but their appeal to the young, the impressionable and the inadequate, with a promise to build a better world or to develop character or improve the opportunities for adherents to succeed in a competitive world can be damaging. As a result, wealth has often accrued to those leaders at the expense of their ultimately misguided followers, leaving then indebted and disillusioned.

By and large, the people who join cults, such as the Church of Scientology, the Unification Church, the Hare Krishna or similar groups, come from surprisingly well-educated, professional or semi-professional backgrounds, with good prospects for their future careers. They are not children but young adults, and only a small percentage tend to remain linked to such cults in the long term. I am not suggesting that involvement with cults does not sometimes have tragic consequences. It is rarely those involved in the cults who come to us. Often it is the parents who seek help from us or organisations such as INFORM and others.

There is no doubting the distress and the alienation that parents feel. In the worst cases, parents experience not only a rejection of their standards and expectations, but also see a loved one dominated by a force which they cannot understand and which they believe is ultimately self-destructive. It must make it even worse to know that, on many occasions, the drive has precious little to do with mysticism and everything to do with making money and exploitation. It is understandable that those whose children are involved should, from time to time, ask the Government to intervene, and that is what the hon. Member for Mansfield has done this evening.

The problem, rather like the problem encountered in the privacy debate, which was heard by most hon. Members now present, is one of balance. We enter that dangerous and sometimes difficult territory where order must be balanced against liberty and where the cure must not be more harmful than the evil it seeks to remedy. In this country, we have a long tradition of religious toleration. In recent weeks, that tradition has been stressed by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, myself and right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Benches as the Moslem community has been in some tumult and turmoil about the publication of "The Satanic Verses".

Freedom of expression and freedom of religion is a difficult area through which to tread. Those freedoms, including the freedom to change religion or belief and the freedom to manifest religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice or otherwise, are guaranteed by the European convention on human rights, and that sometimes makes intervention difficult.

The Government can and should keep a close eye on cults. I urge the public of Mansfield and the surrounding towns and villages who have any evidence of any organisation or its members' involvement in breaking the law to inform the police immediately. The Nottingham constabulary would be pleased to hear from any member of the general public, or reader of the *Free Press Recorder*——

Mr. Sheerman: Many hon. Members hear complaints from members of the general public, who are rightly angry, as the host Christian community, when people such as the Moonies sell literature purporting to emanate from a Christian denomination or group, thereby wholly misleading people. Only when strongly challenged do such groups reveal their identity.

Members of the public then complain to the police, but they do not get very far. Could the Home Office give the police some general guidance for action? I have the feeling that most police forces do not know what to do when such instances are reported to them.

Mr. Patten: Any police constable or officer, when presented with prima facie evidence of a breach of the law, would consider taking it to the prosecuting authorities. Any police officer who thought there had been a breach of the criminal code of this country would act swiftly. However, I shall certainly bear the hon. Gentleman's remarks in mind. We shall review the need to give the police further guidance on this issue in our regular talks with the Association of Chief Police Officers.

The activities and views of organisations are often deeply repugnant to sensible people, as the hon. Member for Huddersfield has just said. That applies to a wider range of groups than those normally regarded as cults. It would be taking a big step if the Government selectively decided to intervene against individual groups without clear evidence of mass breaking of the criminal law——

Mr. Meale: Would it also be possible to give guidance about the business activities of people involved in religious

cults, such as the Moonies? There is disturbing evidence that many of the laws for the protection of ordinary citizens are being broken, yet little guidance for the protection of the public is being given.

Mr. Patten: During the last debate, the hon. Member for Huddersfield evinced some disappointment that no Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry was present. I shall draw these matters to the attention of my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. There may be something in what the hon. Gentleman has said.

There are real difficulties in grappling with the problems which are created by organisations which operate under the protection which is afforded to religious bodies. That is well illustrated by the reception which was given to the proposals for a system of voluntary guidelines adopted by the European Parliament. These were criticised not only by new religious groups, but also by the established Churches, which considered them seriously to limit religious freedom and likely to affect the established Churches, too.

The Government believe that the public exposure of the true nature and activities of cults will help people to reflect more carefully before becoming involved. It is for that reason that the Government are currently providing some pump-priming funds for Information Network Focus on New Religions, or INFORM, to which the hon. Member for Mansfield referred. We have said that we will provide funding for no more than three years. For the 18 months to the end of March 1989, we have provided £70,000 and, subject to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary being satisfied that INFORM is achieving its objectives, we will provide up to £50,000 more over the next 18 months.

INFORM promotes study and research into cults and makes available high quality and objective information about the activities of cults in this country. It operates through a network of experts, mainly academics and churchmen, who keep in touch with the changing circumstances of cults. The information which INFORM produces is available to parents, teachers and others involved with the pastoral care of young people in particular, so they can be alert to the practices and activities of these groups.

Through the network, those who are seeking help and guidance can be referred to qualified counsellors. An informal network already exists, but more formal arrangements are being developed by the board of mission and unity of the General Synod of the Church of England at the request of the British Council of Churches and with the support of leaders of other Churches, including the Roman Catholic Church. So it is being tackled at a high level by Churches in this country, who are operating in close co-operation with INFORM, a body which became operational only on 1 January 1988.

In the first 15 months of its work INFORM has established something of a reputation for giving objective information about the groups which operate. It has received many thousands of requests for information and, knowing the hon. Gentleman's interest in these issues, I took the trouble to inform myself about the number of cases it has dealt with: 129 substantive cases involving inquiry. This is a very time-consuming business, as the hon. Gentleman can doubtless imagine, and many days can be spent on each case. The majority of requests, it will not surprise the House to know, have come from parents, relatives or close friends of the generally young people involved with this cult.

The Church of Scientology has attracted the most references thus far to INFORM, but interest certainly also centres on the Unification Church—there have been a good number of cases—and on others such as the Children of God, Transcendental Meditation, and a wide range of other groups which I know are of interest to many on both sides of the House.

Some members of anti-cultist groups believe that those responsible for setting up INFORM are too closely involved with the cults and their objectives. A particular target of attention is Dr. Eileen Barker, to whom the hon. Gentleman has referred. She chairs INFORM's board of governors. She is a sociology lecturer in the London School of Economics, and has specialised in the study of cults, especially the Unification Church, the Moonies. I wonder if the moon is indeed shining out there as we speak now.

Dr. Barker's researches have necessarily brought her into contact with the Moonies, just as this debate has brought me into contact with the hon. Member for Mansfield this evening. I can imagine no one more agreeable to spend the early hours of Tuesday morning with, apart from you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and indeed my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown), for fear that the Whips Office is left out of the all-round approbation of those of us in the Chamber.

Dr. Barker has attended conferences organised by these organisations to present papers and to further her research. She is well aware of the dangers which such contacts could have for the researcher, but she firmly believes, in her own words, which I have secured for greater accuracy, that it would

"be nothing short of professional irresponsibility for the sociologist not to observe and understand"

at first hand the perceptions of the Unification Church.

"Considering the importance for the Unification Church of its conference, any systematic observation of the movement, which did not include attendance at Unification conferences, would, to say the least, be methodologically deficient."

I think she is right, and her methods were agreed by the Economic and Social Research Council, which funded her research.

Mr. Meale: I fully understand the methodology of someone who, at the highest level of a Government-funded organisation, attempts to act as a bridge and information unit between them, but the fact of the matter is that most of the organisations in the United Kingdom which concern themselves with religious cults and attempting to help people who have been damaged because of them distrust this organisation, and indeed, greatly distrust the director, Dr. Barker, whom we have just discussed. There is a wealth of evidence which clearly shows that Dr. Barker is very sympathetic to the Unification Church. Would it not be sensible for the Minister to accept that and ask the Home Office to examine it before the review is completed?

Mr. Patten: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that he chose his words with great care because he referred to someone outside this House and we are talking in a privileged way in the House tonight. If the hon. Member for Mansfield has clear evidence of improper behaviour by anyone connected with INFORM, it is extremely important that he brings that

[Mr. Patten]

evidence to the attention of my noble Friend Lord Ferrers who is the Minister responsible for this policy in the Home Office. If the hon. Gentleman has a dossier or papers about Dr. Barker, or anyone else, which he wants to lay before the Home Office, he knows that he need only approach me and I will ensure that my noble Friend examines the papers closely.

We should be cautious before we condemn anyone without the evidence being displayed before the House. The benefit of keeping in contact with the Unification Church is that INFORM can maintain contact with cults and provide a link between parents and children when all other means of contact have broken down. It would not be appropriate for me to discuss individual cases in the House, but there is evidence that, through contact with the Unification Church and the Church of Scientology, Dr. Barker has been able to provide a link to the benefit of parents and their children which would not otherwise have been possible.

If there was any doubt about INFORM, the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Free Church Federal Council would not have welcomed the establishment of INFORM. They were represented on the working group which set up the organisation and are now represented on the board of governors together with representatives from the British Association of Counselling and the British Sociological Association's sociology of religions study group. The most reverend primate, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is a patron together with Bishop John Crowley from the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Westminster. The General Synod of the Church of England is also providing funds. Those are distinguished people from Churches representing a variety of faiths.

I welcome the involvement of the Churches. They have an important role to play in guiding and teaching. I have no doubt that the cults will flourish only where there is a spiritual and moral vacuum left unfilled. I sometimes think that people turn to some of the nutty cults when no message is reaching them and they then indulge in things which they would not otherwise do. The Churches must assess their teachings so that they support and encourage those people who are most vulnerable in our society, the most impressionable and most easily led. In that way, they should be able to help expose the falseness of the claims of the cults.

For the reasons that I have explained, the Government cannot become involved in anti-cultist activity or make subjective judgments about groups on the basis of anecdote and prejudice. I urge the hon. Member for Mansfield to produce the evidence to put before the Home Office if he feels that anything is wrong with any organisation connected with cults.

The Home Office regards INFORM as a significant step towards healing the harmful side effects of the activities of cults. We hope that all those concerned in north Nottinghamshire and elsewhere with the effects of cults on family life will co-operate with INFORM and will regard it not as an obstacle, but as a tool in the work of exposing the sometimes undoubtedly unsavoury and sometimes undoubtedly unacceptable—and the hon. Member for Mansfield would say sometimes illegal—activities of the cult movement. We shall watch developments carefully and keep those cults under careful scrutiny. But if there is evidence of any illegal activity, we shall ensure that it is referred to the police. I urge the hon. Member for Mansfield to urge his constituents in turn to follow the same course.

Roads (Hampshire)

4.9 am

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): This is not only a god-forsaken hour but one that seems to have been forsaken by my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, whose presence at this debate I expected. I deeply regret his absence. Charitably, I acknowledge that the duties of a Minister are onerous, and charitably I acknowledge that therefore his absence is understandable. However, when I spoke to him between 10 and 11 o'clock there was no indication that he might be absent from this debate. [HON. MEMBERS: "Traffic jams."] Yes, such things happen.

Despite all that, I greatly welcome this opportunity to introduce a short debate—or, more accurately, a short dialogue—on the theme of capital allocation and spending on roads in Hampshire. Were my hon. Friend the Minister present, he would have noted that my interest in that theme has become a little more marked. I do not apologise for raising the subject again. Far from it—I am glad of the opportunity, for such opportunities do not often come the way of Back Benchers and are not to be overlooked.

Despite the lateness of the hour, and despite the fact that I have raised the subject with my hon. Friend on other occasions, I am unrepentant at doing so again because it is one of supreme importance. My broad theme is addressed to the circumstances in which the county of Hampshire finds itself, but I suspect that they are not wildly different from those found in other counties in the south of England.

One may consider first the background to the predicament in which Hampshire finds itself. It is obvious that infrastructure investment—not least in roads—must be seen and assessed as part of the overall strategy of any Government's economic policies. The Government, whom I support so strongly, have an overall policy strategy that seeks to give dominance to market forces. The Government believed that economic recovery and regeneration would come through giving market forces —I say good evening to my hon. Friend the Minister—the fullest expedient rein.

The Government believe also that economic recovery and regeneration has been brought about in that way, and I accept that proposition. The Government have always argued also that market forces would generate economic activity, which would be a catalyst for national economic recovery. Again, that argument is one that I accept. It follows that the Government have always acknowledged that there would be regional differences in the rate of economic regeneration. They argued that the south of England, including Hampshire—which has for a variety of reasons avoided in general the worst of recession and has a higher level of economic activity than other parts of the country—would act as a catalyst for economic regeneration in other parts of the country. The Government argue that, that is happening, which I also accept.

The Government further argue that despite recession and a lower level of economic activity nationally in their earlier years of office than was desirable, an acceptable level of infrastructure investment, especially in roads, has been maintained. In the 1983 general election campaign, for example, the Government proclaimed a 100 per cent. cash terms increase in local authority capital expenditure on roads compared with 1979. The election campaign guide proclaimed a real terms 12 per cent. increase in capital spending on motorways and trunk roads since 1979, and a total real terms increase in roads spending of 17 per cent.

The 1987 campaign guide proclaimed a 30 per cent. real terms increase in capital expenditure on motorways and trunk roads since 1979, and a 30 per cent. increase in Government grant for local authority capital spending on roads. As recently as the last Autumn Statement, the Chancellor declared that infrastructure investment would increase yet further because of continuing economic recovery. He spoke of an extra £220 million being spent on roads in 1989-90 and an extra £250 million in the following year, and proclaimed that £3 billion would be spent on roads within the next three years.

If Hampshire could look to a fair share of that increased investment, there would be no need for tonight's debate. Hampshire's experience is diametrically opposed to the broad national figures of which the Government boast. By any criterion Hampshire has been and is a county of growth, whether we measure that growth in terms of population, housebuilding, industrial and commercial development, job creation or the creation of wealth. Arguably it has done more than its fair share—if we can talk in those terms—of generating economic activity from which the rest of the country can benefit. All that has inevitably resulted in increased traffic. It might be reasonable to assume that there has been a corresponding and fully justified increase in the county's infrastructure investment, not least in roads, but the reverse is the case.

My hon. Friend the Minister may recall his answers to my written questions on 2 March—column *292* of *Hansard* —and 3 March—columns *341* to *343*. Hampshire county council has not been over-greedy or over-ambitious in its bids for allocations for capital expenditure on roads. In most years since 1979, at today's prices, it has bid for between £18 million and £20 million. In 10 years it has once exceeded £21 million—again at today's prices—and it has twice bid less than £18 million. There has been a broad consistency in its applications.

On the other hand—this is the galling reality—the county is about to enter its sixth successive year of real terms decrease in capital allocation. Allocation for spending on Hampshire's roads reached its height in 1984-85. Allocation in that year, in todays' prices, was £19,200,000. It dropped by 6·4 per cent. in 1985-86, by a further 2·6 per cent. in 1986-87 and by no less than a further 17·1 per cent. in 1987-88. In 1988-89 it fell by a further staggering 24 per cent., and is due to drop by another 6 per cent. in the financial year that is about to start. A capital allocation of more than £19 million at today's prices in 1984-85 will become a capital allocation of £10 million next year. The county has to accept that, despite the economic growth that it has witnessed and the economic activity that it has generated, for six years there has been a continuing decrease in capital expenditure on the county's roads because of central Government restraint.

Meanwhile Hampshire's roads have been used more and more, well above the increase in the national average for traffic, because Hampshire is a success story. The wealth and economic activity of the county is increasing and the traffic is increasing. The national traffic levels have increased by about 25 per cent. on average in the past six years. The figures for Hampshire vary in different parts of the county, but where development and expansion have

[Mr. Andrew Hunter]

been greatest the rate of increase in the volume of traffic has been phenomenal. The M3 passes through my constituency at Basingstoke where there has been an increase of about 95 per cent. in the past six years.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has announced increased investment in roads nationally of £220 million next year and £225 million the following year, reaching £3 billion over three years. Hampshire will not benefit from that next year. Experience leads the county to be extremely cynical about the following years.

I shall now make some local observations. All hon. Members representing Hampshire constituencies can recite their own catalogue of concern and disquiet about roads in their constituencies. I shall select just two. The A33 from Reading to Basingstoke is a nightmare, [illegible] increasingly a death trap. The road links two of the most industrially and commercially active towns in the country. The volume of traffic multiplies each year. The present road is lamentably and dangerously inadequate. Hampshire county council rightly seeks to construct a new dual-carriageway A33. Restraints on spending mean that nothing can be done for several years. There are between four and six fatalities per year on that road and the fatality rate is increasing. It is possible that between 30 and 50 people will die on that road before Hampshire county council can find the capital to build the new dual carriageway. That is simply monstrous.

Another example is the A30, which crosses the Basingstoke ring road or the A339, at what is known as the Black Dam roundabout, east of Basingstoke. My hon. Friend the Minister will recall our past exchanges on that subject. The Department of Transport is the highway authority for that part of Basingstoke's road network. Whatever may emerge from district and county or district or county initiatives, the present situation should never have arisen. There can be few clearer instances of under-investment in the roads of Hampshire than what now happens at what is effectively exit 6 of the M3. The danger factor increases monthly with the volume of traffic. Repairs currently being carried out on the M3 only aggravate an already intolerable situation. Basingstoke district council has an exemplary record of sensible and sustainable growth. Basingstoke has been a magnificent success story. Hampshire county council has much to boast about. In sharp contrast the refusal of the Department of Transport to do anything other than carry out cosmetic improvements speaks for itself.

I somewhat mischievously invite my hon. Friend to find time in his busy schedule one day to get into a car with me, drive down the M4 from London, take exit 11 at Reading down to Basingstoke and travel down the A33, roughly between a quarter to eight and a quarter past eight in the morning. If he accepts that invitation I will arrange for him to be shown a video of what was happening at Black Dam roundabout while we were doing that journey so that he will have personal experience of the traffic in one small part of the county of Hampshire.

Perhaps that is enough of purely Basingstoke concerns. The theme of the debate is further afield than just Basingstoke.

Recently I have been in correspondence with the county surveyor, Mr. A W Jacomb. I want to put firmly on the record my appreciation of his co-operation and kindness, and the high regard in which he is held by Hampshire Members of Parliament. The county surveyor has drawn to my attention another bone of contention—the transport supplementary grant criteria. The simple truth is that Hampshire is far from happy with its experience, perception and understanding of the working of the transport supplementary grant. The county argues that the grant works counter to its interests in a number of ways.

First, the county argues that the implementation of the review of the national primary route network has had disadvantageous TSG implications for Hampshire. In the circumstances created by the review of the national primary route network two years ago, the county council formulated a strategy based on the uncompleted spinal system of motorways in the county, a supporting trunk road system and a relatively small number of county roads. The county sought by that strategy to direct long distance traffic on to an appropriate road network. The county specifically sought to avoid the environmentally sensitive parts of the county road system.

The result has been that the county is receiving an unacceptably low allocation for county primary routes. It regards that state of affairs as intolerable. The county believes that the TSG criteria are biased against such a responsible overall county strategy, incorporating not just motorways and trunk roads but that small number of county roads.

Secondly, the county is deeply cynical about the implementation of the principle of more than local importance when seeking capital allocation for county roads. That principle seems in practice to work disadvantageously for Hampshire. Much of the coastline of Hampshire is urbanised. The linking road system forms part of the county primary network. The traffic flow on the road system of the urbanised coast route often far exceeds the flow of traffic on many national primary routes. The county's argument is that those routes should be given particular consideration as links to the national primary network, but that argument has been disregarded by the Department of Transport. The county's experience is that bids for capital allocation for such roads do not obtain TSG support.

Thirdly, the county believes that the TSG criteria insufficiently take into account development within the county, and especially the south Hampshire and the north-east Hampshire structure plans. The Department of the Environment tells the county council that it must foster economic growth, that it must revitalise older urban areas, that it must accommodate new development, that it must conserve the countryside. The county planners seek to do this, but without significant investment by the highway authority, it is impossible—and Government restraints do not permit this expenditure.

I have presented my argument. Because of the growth and development that Hampshire has witnessed, and the consequent increase in the volume of traffic, the county council needs a greater capital allocation for expenditure on roads and a greater transport supplementary grant. The county looks to the Government, and in particular to my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic, for a positive response.

4.31 am

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on taking another opportunity to raise the subject of roads in Hampshire. As he half indicated, he spends his time as a master of fox hounds with me as the fox. That is perfectly reasonable, of course, since as junior Minister at the Department of Transport I have to do all that I can to improve highways and to help highway users in England to protect the environment. In that respect, there are few areas more important than Hampshire. I must also do all that I can to reduce casualties—about which we have had various debates and questions this parliamentary day—and to allow for economic growth and cope with its consequences.

My hon. Friend acknowledged that infrastructure improvements—the things that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I would refer to as roads, bridges and railway lines—have enabled his part of Hampshire to grow at a rate substantially greater than that of the country as a whole, and to enjoy even the times of recession in Britain.

Indeed, Basingstoke and the areas around it have been showing the way towards a modern Britain. Large numbers of people, large numbers of vehicles, both domestic and commercial, and more movement have led to pressure on the roads in Hampshire and in other parts of the country. I shall pass over the dilemma of whether we should put extra money into the provision of more even economic growth across the country, or whether it is necessary to cope more adequately with those areas where pressure on the roads is greatest. Some areas would love to have the problems that my hon. Friend has described.

My hon. Friend and the House will understand if I interleave my remarks about Hampshire with comments about the country as a whole. It is well known to the county surveyor of Hampshire—and, I hope, to county councillors—that capital receipts must be taken into account when deciding how much the 107 highway authorities in England should have for expenditure on roads. I am delighted to be informed that in the last financial year Hampshire county council's spending power from receipts exceeded that of any other county council. I am sure that that is a reflection of good husbandry on the part of the county council, but I am not certain that those who provide information to councillors in Hampshire necessarily put that point at the top of their list. The ability to use capital receipts, or a portion of them, is one of those arcane mysteries that one comes across occasionally when people are making their points in public.

Some elements of the local authority capital control system are changing. The situation in the future may not be so good as I claim—I do not have perfect foresight—but in general the previous system had worse implications for counties than for areas governed by certain other types of authority. Government have been unable to make a total distinction between local authorities with substantial capital receipts, which tend to be the housing authorities, and those such as the highway authorities and the counties which have expensive capital requirements for roads.

My hon. Friend will recognise that for 1989-90 the capital allocations for roads, as for all other services, have been set lower than provision to take account of total local authority receipts across all services, including council housing sales. The spending power of local authorities from capital receipts in 1989-90—which my hon. Friend refers to as "next year" and which I refer to as "next month", which makes it sound closer—is expected to amount to more than £4·6 billion, an increase of about 30 per cent. All local authorities, including the shire counties, will have more than they have for the current year. We are talking about a spending power for each local authority in the forthcoming month, or the year that starts next month, which will be higher than that for the current year. I am not sure that that information was totally clear from my hon. Friend's speech, but it was implied in his comments.

In setting capital allocations, the law does not allow account to be taken of the distribution of capital receipts between authorities. Most local authorities responsible for highways have below average ratios of receipts to total capital expenditure programmes and, as my hon. Friend has pointed out, the system has had a particularly inhibiting effect on roads expenditure. That has influenced authorities to underspend their provision. It is for each authority to decide on which services its capital receipts are to be used. No highway authority is without capital receipts to top up its roads allocations.

As my hon. Friend knows—the House will want to welcome this—proposals for a new system for regulating local government capital finance were published by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in July 1988. Last month the Local Government and Housing Bill was laid before the House. Part IV of that Bill contains proposals arising from last year's consultation and provides for a fairer system to be introduced for 1990-91. There are two key features. First, central Government control will be reduced from control over the extent of capital spending to control on the use of borrowing and Exchequer grants for capital purposes. Account will be taken of each authority's access to capital receipts. That last point should be good news for most highway authorities and for Hampshire, although it will be relatively less good news for Hampshire than for other authorities because of its existing position in terms of capital receipts. Secondly, the funding of local roads and transport capital programmes will be put on a clearer, more logical basis. Local authorities will retain full responsibility for determining their road and transport programmes.

Transport supplementary grant provides central Government support for local authority capital expenditure on roads of more than local importance. The criteria and guidance for TSG go out for consultation to local authorities and I am sure that Hampshire, like other local authorities, will put its view forward when that process takes place again in the current year. However, the responses from the local authorities, together with the associations, will have to be taken into account, along with the representations that I am sure will be made by Hampshire directly.

Grant is paid on the local authority's estimates of future expenditure at a flat rate of 50 per cent. Each local highway authority puts forward an annual transport policy and programme submission setting out its expenditure proposals for the next financial year. The 1989-90 TPPs include a proposal for expenditure of £690 million on schemes that the submitting authorities consider appropriate for TSG support. The Secretary of State is required to determine how much of each authority's proposed expenditure he will accept for grant. In doing so, the main factors to be taken into account are whether expenditure is on a road of more than local

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

importance, the extent to which it would provide value for money and benefit traffic, its benefit to the community, industry and commerce, road safety and the environment.

Distribution of TSG is not based on a pre-determined formula. If it were, no local authority would receive extra when it has extra need and it could almost be included in rate support grant. Authorities could spend from current funds rather than relying on TSG to provide significant extra help. When a scheme is named for TSG, it carries with it a capital allocation to enable the local authority to borrow the rest of the money. In effect, having a scheme accepted for 50 per cent. funding by TSG allows the local authority to carry out work and solves the financial problems in getting a road scheme agreed.

Roads of more than local importance include not only roads on the primary network but bypasses, roads relieving communities of the effects of through traffic and links with motorways. The 1989-90 total for TSG is £204 million—an increase of nearly 7 per cent. on the current year. If TSG increases more than that capital allocation provision, the amount of capital allocation remaining available to highway authorities decreases. I do not remember during last year's consultations a local authority or an association of local authorities saying that it would prefer the TSG element of the capital allocation to be reduced.

Not all requests for grant can be met. There is competition for grant among authorities' programmes. That helps to ensure that grant support is concentrated on schemes which offer the greatest benefit. Some 61 new schemes have been accepted for TSG in 1989-90, 17 of which will directly assist inner-city areas. I make that point because although I am about to deal with Hampshire—we must recognise that in the past some areas have not received the attention that they should have. If it is possible to help to regenerate inner-city areas, some of the enormous pressure for continued economic growth in areas such as Basingstoke and Hampshire will be relieved.

If some of the figures that I am about to give do not appear reconcilable with those given by my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke, it is probably because I am not putting the case across in the clearest way. It might be sensible for Hampshire's county surveyor to take up detailed points with the regional office of the Department of Transport. I suspect that they will be able to agree facts, even though my hon. Friend and I may be putting some of the totals differently.

Hampshire's capital allocation for roads for1989-90 is nearly £11 million, which is a 4 per cent. increase on last year. Nationally, the average is a 2 per cent. decrease. I make that point gently, not because it is a significant cash increase for Hampshire but to compare it with the cut for the rest of the country. Hampshire's TSG for 1989-90 will be more than £4·8 million, which is a 17 per cent. increase. The national average is an increase of 7 per cent. Instead of a 7 per cent. increase, Hampshire is receiving an increase of 17 per cent., and instead of a cut of 2 per cent in capital allocation, which includes TSG, it is receiving an increase of 4 per cent.

Mr. Hunter: On capital allocation, it will be necessary for the county council and my hon. Friends' officials to consult further, but my clear understanding of his answer to my written question about a week ago, to which I referred in my speech, is directly opposed to the answer that he has just given. The matter therefore needs to be pursued in far greater detail.

Mr. Bottomley: I am sure that that is right. The difference may be between real terms and cash terms.

The change in transport supplementary grant—the 17 per cent. increase—has occurred despite an adjustment because of underspending against agreed TSG-supported programmes in previous years. An adjustment for underspending is not a penalty or a criticism. No highway authority, whether it be the Department of Transport nationally, which cares for 4 per cent. of roads, or the local highway authorities, which care for 96 per cent., can programme precisely what spending will take place in any one year. It depends on statutory procedures, the weather and a multitude of other factors.

The transport supplementary grant total for Hampshire includes continued support for six major schemes, including the Portswood to Swaythling bypass costing more than £10 million. I had better give the next figure quietly because other hon. Members may start to say, "What about us?" The Blackwater valley route is now estimated to cost more than £43 million. I am aware that the Blackwater valley route is a road shared with Surrey and is geographically on the boundary of Hampshire, rather than providing help for the centre of Hampshire which for the purposes of todays debate I regard as my hon. Friend's constituency. To be able to continue work on a £43 million scheme, or even a £10 million scheme, involves quite a lot of road and quite a lot of money.

Support has been included for one new major scheme —stage two of the Totton western bypass. Hampshire's capital allocation for 1989-90 is the sixth highest of all shire counties and the 10th highest of all 108 highway authorities. I seem to have miscounted previously. If I continue my speech much longer, the total may reach 110. The more serious point is that Hampshire's capital allocation is the 10th highest of all local highway authorities. Hampshire is a major highway authority and a major county.

Mr. Hunter: It is the largest county.

Mr. Bottomley: As my hon. Friend says, it is the largest county even without the Isle of Wight. The high estimated capital expenditure on roads in the future, especially on the Blackwater valley route, is likely to keep Hampshire near the top of the league.

Those points do not deal with my hon. Friend's underlying problem—what is to happen to the A33, the Reading-Basingstoke road. He rightly points to the fact that increased traffic is bringing increased danger. He has also made the point that he is not concerned only about county roads. He referred, too, to the Black Dam roundabout and asked whether the Department's grant criteria had a bias against Hampshire.

I shall deal with the third point first because it is the easiest. There is no bias against Hampshire in the transport supplementary grant criteria. If there were, it would not be the year for any county surveyor in Hampshire to make the point because a 17 per cent. increase in transport supplementary grant when the rest of the country has 7 per cent. suggests that any bias is working in favour of Hampshire rather than against it. For any good politician, which the county surveyor may be, or any good honorary county surveyor, which my hon.

Friend the politician may be, it is better to start striking early for future provision, as Hampshire will be able to use money to great advantage.

My hon. Friend came to the Department and put me right on a number of issues. I pay tribute to his past attention to the road needs of Hampshire as well as to the other needs of his constituency. I understood that the work on the A33 Reading-Basingstoke road was not expected to start before 1992. I am not sure to what extent the county has programmed in relation to the expected availability of funds and to what extent in relation to the planning, design and statutory processes that it would have to go through before it could expect to start the work. For the purposes of this debate, it is perhaps not particularly important that I should know. What matters is that the county should have the expectation of being able to obtain the funds reasonably close to the time at which it needs them. One of the advantages of our present transport policies and programme system, and of the transport supplementary grant system, is that most authorities can gain access to money when they are nearly ready to start a road. In general, we try to help highway authorities with roads when they plan to start to spend significant sums in the subsequent financial year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke referred to the Black Dam roundabout. The Department would like to cope with some of the problems as soon as possible. On another occasion my hon. Friend pointed to the doubling of the local work force that is forecast over the coming two or three years. It is important that the district and county councils should keep the Department's regional office informed of developments because significant increases in occupied offices in the area will contribute more significantly to congestion than it would in other areas, where there is no direct link between the use of offices and road access. We hope to make small-scale improvements in the roundabout, which we hope will ease traffic congestion in future. We shall also be looking for a more long-term scheme, to be added to the national programme when that can be justified. My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke and I agree on what needs to be done, but we shall have to try to sort out the timing of a long-term scheme to relieve congestion.

My hon. Friend engagingly invited me to go for a long drive with him. I am not sure whether to accept. I do not want to commit myself until I know the standard of his driving. One of my troubles is that by nature, and because of my responsibilities, I do not exceed the speed limit, so I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his tolerance of my arriving slightly late for the debate. Even at this time of the morning, I try to drive well within the speed limit. I can assure my hon. Friend that I shall continue to use my eyes as I drive through Hampshire, and my ears when I am within range of my hon. Friend. I shall also try to continue to help his part of Hampshire to cope better with traffic needs.

Without making too many partisan points, I should point out that it is important to have a road network which complements the country's public transport and rail network. We expect the railways to continue to contribute to the country's economic future, although we understand that it is no longer axiomatic—as it was for the first two years during which I was responsible for roads—that a new rail proposal will be welcomed with open arms. Privately, I think that the reason why Jonathon Porritt is to retire as director of Friends of the Earth is that whereas some people who regarded themselves as Friends of the Earth said during my first two years, "Never build a road —always build a railway," when a railway was proposed this time it was not the Friends of the Earth who leapt into public print to say "Don't worry about a railway—it's good for you." I am not sure that the railways in question were welcomed with open arms in the constituency of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) any more than they were in my constituency of Eltham.

It is right to have roads which meet the needs of people who now have access to cars. It is not complacent to say that we shall never be able to cope with all the potential demand for people driving into inner and central London as car commuters but that it should be possible to cope with congestion in most other parts of the country most of the time. More people now have cars than ever before. During the stewardship of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister since 1979, the proportion of adult women with driving licences has increased from 40 per cent. to 50 per cent., and it will go on increasing to 60 per cent. and 70 per cent. Since 1979, the proportion of retired people with driving licences has increased from 30 per cent. to 40 per cent., and it will go on increasing, as the age curve moves forward, to 50 per cent., 60 per cent. and 70 per cent.

I see no reason why women, pensioners and people who may have been categorised as ethnic minorities should not be able to use the roads in the same way that white middle-class men have been able to do for generations. Part of the democracy of transport is to say that, whatever one's background, sex or age, anyone who can drive reasonably safely can share the roads, although if all the car drivers get their cars out of the garage at the same time and try to drive in the same area they may have a greater opportunity to listen to local radio for a longer time than they otherwise might.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): The Minister cannot possibly be suggesting that all car drivers would get into their cars at the same time. He must acknowledge that, even though more women are acquiring driving licences and may be becoming car owners, for most of their lives the majority of women are still more dependent on public transport. Although he has again acknowledged that there are limits to car use in the city, when we are talking about a county as close to London as Hampshire it is important to recognise that we cannot keep building roads in counties such as Hampshire and allow all the increased volume of traffic to go into London.

There is a difference between the hon. Gentleman's and my party's policies on roads in London. As he knows, Opposition Members believe that there is no reason to justify major new road schemes in London. That point applies to other parts of the country, too, particularly the south-east and the traffic generated in the capital where restraint is undoubtedly necessary and will be more necessary in future.

Mr. Bottomley: As the county elections approach, it will be interesting to see the number of county council wards in Hampshire and other places in the south-east in which the Labour party puts up candidates.

Ms. Ruddock: Everywhere.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Lady says, "Everywhere." We shall see, but I believe that there is an informal alliance between the Labour party and the Social and Liberal Democrats or the SDP in parts of Hampshire.

Mr. Hunter: And in Basingstoke.

Mr. Bottomley: And in Basingstoke, too. The hon. Lady has contributed well to the debate. We must remember that, as the county council season approaches, people will put themselves forward to join the highway authority, which is what the county council will be. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke will tell the House whether the Labour party intends to stand down for the remaining parts of the alliance, or whether the alliance will stand down for the remaining parts of the Labour party.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): What about Durham?

Mr. Bottomley: That is rather a long way from the nominated subject for debate.

Ms. Ruddock: As the Minister tempts me into making party political points, he must acknowledge that, of taxes raised through road funds, the proportion spent on roads was close to 35 per cent. when Labour left office in 1979. I understand that it has now fallen to 25 per cent. The Minister cannot suggest that in general the Labour party has been less committed to investment in and expenditure on roads. None of our county council election candidates would have any difficulty in making the case that they have been committed and will continue to be committed to road matters. As the Minister knows full well, my point related to London.

Mr. Bottomley: If I can stop when I get to London rather than going further north on this occasion——

Ms. Ruddock: Why?

Mr. Bottomley: I would rest by saying that we spend on roads roughly what is raised by vehicle excise duty. The argument that we do not spend all that we raise on taxation on fuel on roads would be a fair point. Hypothecation—which is one of those polysyllabic words that means spending the money raised on things from which the money comes—was a principle that was dropped 51 years ago. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) can probably confirm that. I do not believe that it applies any more to alcohol duty than it does to petrol duty. If it is Labour party policy that all the money raised on the combined tax on fuel and on vehicle excise duty should be spent on roads, I am not sure that the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has approved that. Perhaps the hon. Member for Deptford could consider that matter with her right hon. Friend.

Mr. Hunter: More than 51 years ago, the window tax was never spent on windows.

Mr. Bottomley: I grant that point to my hon. Friend.

I shall pick up the point made by the hon. Member for Deptford about London. If the Labour party is saying that it will never spend any money on roads in London, that is not the point. The hon. Lady has conceded that we should spend some money on some roads in London. The question is what sort of roads. I am grateful that, as a constituency Member of Parliament, I managed to persuade the Labour Greenwich council and the GLC to put forward proposals for the Rochester way relief road.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I remind the Minister that we are dealing with capital allocation for roads in Hampshire. Perhaps he will refer to the subject under debate.

Ms. Ruddock: We got carried away.

Mr. Bottomley: I apologise for being led down the garden path by the hon. Member for Deptford, who is continuing an invitation that she extended to me at Question Time today.

I shall return to the capital allocation for Hampshire. I hope that it will be possible for the Labour party to play a greater part in the local politics of Hampshire. It would reduce the chances of the Social and Liberal Democrats or the Social Democrats winning as many seats as they might otherwise win. I hope that the Labour party's reinvolvement in Hampshire will be echoed in Surrey, in the Isle of Wight and in the other counties where at one stage it slipped to about 2·4 per cent. of the popular vote. With the capital allocation in Hampshire, I believe that local politics would be enhanced by that greater participation. If it meant that the local Labour party started to vote at Labour party conferences on the sort of matters that concern people in Hampshire—such as roads, a sensible defence policy and other important issues—that would be good for politics in Britain.

Ms. Ruddock: What about railways in Kent?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke did not raise the question of railways in Kent. Perhaps the hon. Lady will allow me to return to the points that my hon. Friend made.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced an increase in road spending. As my hon. Friend said, most of that will go on national roads. I give a warning that if the people tendering for roads decide to put their prices up they will not get a steady programme in the future. The person who wrote the second editorial in the *New Civil Engineer* misinterpreted what the Department was saying, is saying and will say in the future. It would be much easier for us to release a fairly steady work load if the contractors put forward fairly steady prices. We shall not go back to the sort of budgeting of the last Labour Government who between 1975 and 1979 had to halve new national spending on new national roads in real terms. We are not that kind of Government. We are willing to take the hard decision, even if it means disappointing some of the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke for a time. It matters that we should keep the national finances under control and spend more money on capital investment than on current subsidies. We expect to see a 40 per cent. increase in the money available for the national roads programme during the next two years of the public expenditure survey period, and we expect to have a more sensible system of local government capital spending so that counties such as Hampshire can spend the kind of money that they need.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): The Minister said that contractors should not expect to put in tenders at the same prices. That is interesting. From the evidence given to the Public Accounts Committee a week

ago, it is clear that his Department is relying on a recession in this country so that tender prices will drop. That is the significance of the Minister's remarks and of the evidence given to the PAC.

Mr. Bottomley: It would not be proper for me to anticipate the conclusions that the PAC will reach in its report following the attendance of the permanent secretary. The point that I was seeking to make about the *New Civil Engineer* is that officials gave clear advice to Ministers and Ministers took the decision. I am in no sense trying to do the work of the PAC—that would not be proper—but it is perfectly reasonable for me to point out that whoever supplied the information to the *New Civil Engineer* did not understand or did not listen when questions were answered about how the Department's budget would be spent. Ministers took a clear decision on whether the new capital programme or the capital reconstruction should carry the load. When second leaders in the *New Civil Engineer*—not an earth-shaking event, although I pay tribute to the magazine's general role—put on the accounting officer a responsibility taken by Ministers, and accuse Department officials of not understanding what they understood perfectly well and put to us in a way that we understood perfectly well, it is right to put the record straight. I wish that the rest of the press would occasionally report the words of Ministers when they praise the work of civil servants for giving clear, non-partisan advice rather than saying that the Civil Service has been politicised or is incompetent. I note that the Press Gallery is not full—not that one ought to notice even if it were.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke has rightly drawn attention to the fact that a highway authority, especially Hampshire, could spend more money to great advantage. We are moving towards a system whereby counties such as Hampshire will be able to do just that. My hon. Friend says that Hampshire has been badly done by. I have done what I can to refute that in a friendly way. Hampshire has had more capital receipts available than other highway authorities and has had a greater increase in transport supplementary grant, although I accept that the free capital allocation is not so great as it would otherwise have been.

There were some points of difference on detail and number and I will ensure that the regional office gets in contact with the county surveyor of Hampshire to see if there is an irreconcilable difference that my hon. Friend and I should sort out. If it turns out that I have given any incorrect figures, I shall say so as soon as I can.

The residents of Basingstoke are well served by my hon. Friend. I hope that it will be possible to move forward with the transport supplementary grant system in such a way that my hon. Friend and Hampshire will be satisfied with the criteria and with the outcome and that unnecessary congestion, casualties and inhibitions on economic growth will be removed by sensible improvements to national and county road networks.

Children (Special Educational Needs)

5.7 am

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I am grateful that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science is present to respond, but as I have already told the Minister and his Department, the services for children with special educational needs are provided by the health authorities. That is an important point to stress.

In 1987 there were about 134,000 children with special educational needs in our schools. About 109,000 of those children are in special schools and the other 20,000 plus are in ordinary schools either in ordinary classes or in special units. Therefore, not all the children with special educational needs are in special schools, but only about three quarters of them.

Under the Education Act 1981 these 134,000 children were assessed in respect of their special needs; a statement of their needs and how they were to be met was produced. I shall not go into the details of the children's problems —their disabilities are many and varied. These children are our fellow citizens. They have brothers and sisters and mums and dads and they are as entitled as the rest of us to flower physically and intellectually to their maximum potential. The Education Act 1981 was an advance, and I pay tribute to it. However, all legislation passed by the House with good intentions should be carefully monitored so that it delivers and does not merely build up people's hopes, only to dash them again.

I want to discuss physiotherapy services for pupils. Later, I shall touch on speech therapy, too. Unless many of the pupils with physical disabilities can obtain the services and resources of a physiotherapist, their legal right to education under British and international law will be lost.

The Wilson Stuart special school in Kingstanding is in my constituency. It is a typical special school for children with disabilities. It is attended by about 140 pupils aged from three to 16. It shares a site with two other special schools, one for pupils with hearing difficulties and the other for children with a sight handicap.

The physiotherapy input to the school is provided not by Birmingham education authority but by the west Birmingham health authority. Wilson Stuart school has always served my constituents, as it has those living in Erdington, Ladywood and Sutton Coldfield. It has been in my constituency only since the boundary changes of 1983. I seem to recollect—as I watch the Minister's smiling face —that we both represent west midlands constituencies and share former membership of the Birmingham education committee.

I have raised the subject of this school in the House before. Back in 1987 I complained to the then Secretary of State for Social Services—my constituency neighbour, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler), whose constituents' children attend the school—about the lack of physiotherapy. I do not want to be partisan in this debate, but the right hon. Gentleman dismissed my complaints as nonsense and said that the services were adequate.

Some of the parents who complained about the lack of physiotherapy for their children in early 1987 ended up having their children re-classified as needing no physiotherapy—just supervision. That did not go down

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

too well. Late in 1987, the pattern of physiotherapy was adjusted to improve matters—that cannot be denied. On 27 October 1987 I asked whether Ministers were satisfied with the amount of physiotherapy for children in the special schools in Birmingham. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), the then Minister, replied: "Yes". In answer to a supplementary question, she pointed out that the school

"was affected by a shortage of . . . physiotherapists at the end of last year"

—1986—

"but is currently up to establishment".—[*Official Report*, 27 October 1987; Vol. 121, c. 158-159.]

She also said that there had been an increase in the west Birmingham health authority physiotherapy levels.

Later in 1987, the parents had to form the Wilson Stuart parents' action group. During 1988, they had several meetings with the staff of the west Birmingham health authority. I do not mean just the staff but the leadership of the health authority, Mr. Gerry Goghlan, and the general manager of community medicine, Dr. Mike Hilburn, who have given this matter personal attention, having actually met the parents on at least two or three occasions in 1988 at a time convenient to the parents, and that, of course, does not mean office hours. Notwithstanding that, in January 1989, during the Christmas recess, at the request of the representatives of the action group, the parents asked to put the up-dated position to me because there were again difficulties.

It is, as I said to the Minister, a humbling process to listen to a group of parents describe how they organise their lives around their handicapped children. Some of them have, of course, other, perfectly normal children, who need the love and affection of their parents and do not need to be shut out because of concentration on one of the children. We all live together on this planet as equal citizens and it is remarkable what the parents of handicapped children have to do, and do willingly, to create as normal a life as possible for both their normal and handicapped children.

I give the Minister four of the examples I was given in January of this year in relation to 1988, having been told in late 1987 that matters had been put right and that, by and large, services were adequate. First of all, Liam, aged five, was at Wilson Stuart for two years but over an 18-month period received no physiotherapy. At one time this young lad was actually left off the speech therapy programme as he was thought to be uncommunicative. The whole point about speech therapy, I thought, was to increase and improve communication skills.

Next, Anthony, aged six, at Wilson Stuart for three years: during 1988 he received no physiotherapy at all. This young lad had a real problem with balance, with no chance to help improve it through physiotherapy, and the parents told me that he had indeed, stagnated.

Kate, aged eight, was assessed as needing intensive physiotherapy and yet over an 18-month period received virtually none, albeit this was partially due to illness among physiotherapy staff. Tragic though that is, and this is appreciated and understood by the parents, there were not enough resources to back up physiotherapy staff who became ill.

Then there was Katherine, aged seven. She again had had a period of almost 18 months with no physiotherapy. Indeed, she was removed from Wilson Stuart in September 1988, and was actually sponsored by Birmingham city council at a residential school near Cardiff.

Many of the pupils attending this school, which serves at least four of the north Birmingham constituencies, reside not in the area of west Birmingham health authority but of north Birmingham health authority, and I understand north Birmingham health authority makes no financial contribution to west Birmingham health authority in respect of those services.

I do not expect the Minister to deal with this point, as I know that this matter may well end up being addressed as a result of the recent White Paper on the Health Service, but the general issue of the input to special schools is not addressed at all in the White Paper. I do not intend to raise that here tonight.

In January I again took up these matters, and indeed other matters relating to Wilson Stuart School, with West Birmingham health authority and I had a considered response from the chairman on 14 February. He made it quite clear that the situation was improving from a managerial point of view and that the authority was to employ physiotherapists who would provide a better service than had been provided. Notwithstanding the points which the chairman made, he concluded:

"I think that the authority would accept that the need and demand for physiotherapy at the school outstrips supply, but I think that the measures that we have taken indicate our concern to maximise the use of limited resources."

The "need and demand" for physiotherapy input at Wilson Stuart school "outstrips supply". It could not be clearer that there are not sufficient resources for the pupils at Wilson Stuart school. The parents and I do not criticise anyone at the school. We have no criticisms of the non-teaching staff including the caretaker, cleaners and the dinner ladies or of the teaching staff including Mr. Grantham the headmaster. We also have no criticisms of the physiotherapists. The school is extremely well supported by the local community. The school's annual fete attracts well over 2,000 people. It is impossible to move for the hustle and bustle of people willing to support that important school. The parents' action group and the governors have been very supportive in their fight for their rights.

I appreciate that the legal position has been slightly muddied. Until the end of last year I do not think that it was possible for a local authority under statute law to employ physiotherapists or speech therapists. That would have been classed as non-educational provision.

Unless pupils at schools such as Wilson Stuart, who are typical of the 100,000-odd pupils who have had statements written about them, can obtain physiotherapy, some of it on a daily basis, they cannot receive the education which is their right. As a layman I would say that there is a specific and direct connection between the input of physiotherapy servies and the receipt of education. I would argue that that input becomes an educational provision because those children cannht receive an education without it.

I accept that section 7 of the Education Act 1981 was changed during the passage of the Education Reform Act 1988. An amendment was passed in the Lords at the third attempt against the wishes of the Government, but they accepted it in this place and there was no attempt to overturn it.

That change potentially allows local educational authorities to employ therapists, although there are no extra resources to enable them to do so. The change is referred to in paragraph 64 of the draft circular issued by the Department of Education and Science in December. I believe that that draft circular is out for consultation at the moment.

Paragraph 64 contains the only mention in the draft circular to the amendment to section 7 of the Education Act 1981. However, there is no mention of the resource implications and the resources are still a matter for health authorities and not the local education authorities. According to the draft circular, the local education authorities may provide services but the responsibility for provision rests with social services departments and district health authorities. There is no question of buck-passing there.

It has been put to me—although I do not know how far this might progress—that the position is so serious in many special schools that the deprivation of a proper education caused by a lack of those services might result in the Government being dragged before the European Court of Human Rights. That is being contemplated at the moment. Obviously the amendment to the 1981 Act referred to in the draft circular relates to the case involving Avril Muller of Colne and Lancashire county council in respect of speech therapy provision for Avril's nine-year old son Christopher. I understand that the Court of Appeal ruled on that case last week.

I make no criticism of health authorities, which work as closely as they can with local authorities in the provision of educational and social services. However, they are hamstrung. Last August, the Birmingham-based National Association of Health Authorities published a report on health authority concerns about children with special educational needs. That report resulted from a survey of health authorities concerning implementation of the Education Act 1981. My understanding is that up to last Wednesday, the Government had not responded to that report. Although the Minister is concerned with educational matters, I hope, that as there is a joint responsibility between two Departments, he will be able to comment on that important report.

That case, which may or may not go to the House of Lords, concerns the provision of speech therapy for Avril's nine-year old son, Christopher. It is claimed that speech therapy must be provided, and the courts support the mother in that contention. The same case could be made for physiotherapy as for speech therapy, where the potential damage to the child's education is such that he or she does not receive the education to which they have a right. We do not really want to refer all such cases to the European Court, if only because they take so long. It is the children who suffer from such delays.

It must be remembered that this country is not short of financial resources. We may think that it is now 5·25 am on Monday 13 March, but to the 55 million other people in this country it is Tuesday—Budget day. We all know that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has a tremendous surplus, but probably he is too frightened to spend it. If a little of that surplus could be given to health authorities for extra resources, such as physiotherapists and speech therapists to help the 100,000 children having special educational needs, it would not go amiss. It would not be wasted but would represent a fantastic investment in those children, in their future, and in their families and communities.

No fewer than 105 health authorities with responsibility under the 1981 Act for children with special needs responded to the survey, which represents a substantial proportion of those involved. The report kicks off with a quote from a health authority in the north-west that

"this district is unable to meet fully the physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy needs of children in either mainstream or special schools . . . The generally held opinion was that whilst the procedure imposed by the circular was both comprehensive and largely appropriate, it has the major effect of placing a heavy administrative demands on occupational physiotherapists, speech therapists, physiotherapists, senior clinical medical officers, health visitors and all sectors' attendant clerical support staff."

I ask the Minister and his right hon. and learned Friend in the Department of Health to ensure that the circular, when it is published, removes some of the bureaucratic burden on the specialist professionals. It may be that more clerical resources—perhaps including specialist clerical resources—will release professional physiotherapists and speech therapists to do the job that they are trained and want to do, which is serving their patients.

Let me put on record part of the report's summary and conclusions for follow-up purposes, as I certainly do not expect this to be the end of the matter. Its powerful arguments include part of the submission from the district general manager of a Mersey region authority:

"It was one of the intentions of the 1981 Education Act that education authorities should first outline a child's special educational needs as perceived after a multi-professional assessment and then make a statement of how it was proposed to meet those needs. One object of this exercise was to use the assessments to ascertain levels of need in various respects, this information to be used for planning purposes etc. The reality has been that the distinction between these two stages has been fudged and blurred as much as possible because a clear separation of the two would simply indicate the stark reality of the gap between need and provision, and make life impossible for education authorities. The agencies involved have therefore entered into more or less of an implicit conspiracy to mumble about ascertained need sufficiently vaguely for the statement of provision to be made in terms of the grossly inadequate resources available. I am advised that this is a professionally and ethically unacceptable situation with which, however, we are forced to live.

That is a powerful indictment from a health authority administrator concerned, I suspect, that parents were being conned.

According to the report, it

"was the generally held opinion that the continuing successful implementation of the 1981 Education Act"—

for it has been a plus, and I do not knock it in that respect—

"did and will, depend on the allocation of additional resources to:

- fund an appropriate number of paramedical posts to provide therapeutic services of good quality,
- provide nursing care in mainstream schools for children with special physical needs,
- provide adequate administrative/clerical support to professional staff."

I cannot over-emphasise the importance of that last item. We are not calling for a doubling or tripling of the number of therapists, but for the full potential of existing therapists to be released. Hospital consultants are not expected to do the filing: that is done by filing clerks and trained administrative and clerical staff so that surgeons can be released to perform operations. It is exactly the same at other levels of health care.

The report concludes:

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

"The general impression is of health and local education authorities struggling with greater or lesser success—in terms of administrative co-ordination—against the fundamental problem of under-resourcing."

That problem is constantly reiterated.

The 1981 Act has, I think, been on the statute book for long enough. In view of this extra survey revealing health authorities' concern that they are unable to fulfil its full requirements, we should now put the necessary resources into making it a reality. The final paragraph of the report quotes the Trent region as saying:

"The Circular on its own, it is felt"—

I presume that this will apply equally to the draft circular—

"could not be revised to assist health authorities in fulfilling their responsibilities. To put it bluntly, it is more people that are required, not more paper!"

That is putting it most bluntly. The report concluded that the National Association of Health Authorities requested that the Department of Education and Science, together with the Department of Health

"immediately respond to the matters detailed in this report, setting out a timetable for action to ensure that children with special needs do receive the assistance that is theirs by right."

I emphasise that "by right."

Under British and international law, children have an inalienable right to an education. It would be a tragedy if British citizens have to seek that right under international law because they cannot get it under British law. Therefore, the Government are required to respond sensitively and carefully to a matter which concerns every constituency in the country and involves 134 children statemented as having special needs.

I know that the Minister is a caring and sensitive Minister, so I stress with all the force as I can that the needs outlined in those statements must be met with sufficient resources to allow those citizens with disabilities that require special services to achieve their full potential.

The House of Commons must address the matter, particularly as we all know, and as will be confirmed later today, the country is not short of financial resources.

5.36 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John Butcher): First, I thank the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) for raising the debate and for the manner in which he made his speech. Clearly he spoke not only for the interests of his constituents but on a number of general issues which have exercised his concern for some time.

I, too, have been impressed by the sheer commitment of parents of children with statemented needs. The way in which they deal with the pressure that puts on the family, whether or not they have other children who do not have statemented needs, extracts the admiration of many Members of Parliament who meet such parents. Those parents have to be, and nearly always are highly motivated and particularly dedicated. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the opportunity to address the subject of children with special educational needs—an issue which transcends party differences and unites the House in a way that few other subjects can.

I shall spend just a few moments on definitions which are germane to a number of points that the hon. Gentleman has raised. It needs to be recognised from the outset that "children with special educational needs" is not a term which defines a homogeneous group, easily identifiable and equatable with a label. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's supportive remarks on the objectives of the Education Act 1981. Although he is now looking at the follow-through and the practicalities, we agree that it was a good Act in its intention and most of its practice. Since that Act, and following the recommendations of the Warnock committee, the concept of special needs has been applied to children who have a learning difficulty which requires special educational provision to be made for them.

The Warnock committee estimated that perhaps 20 per cent. of children have, at some time in their school career, special educational needs, and that at any one time one sixth of the school population may have learning difficulties. The bulk of such children's needs can be met by special educational services—the 1981 Act uses the term "provision"—supplied by their own mainstream school. A small proportion of children, however—the Warnock committee estimated that it might constitute 2 per cent. of the overall school population—can be expected to have difficulties which are more severe and which call for something extra.

Under the 1981 Act those children will be formally assessed and provided with a statement of SEN. The statement specifies the nature and extent of the learning difficulty. It specifies also the special educational provision or services which they require in order to address those difficulties. The emphasis is rightly upon the individual needs of the child. The particular requirements of each pupil are assessed and provided for without regard to some general category of disability or a particular label. This was not discussed tonight, but it is all germane. It is the relevant backcloth to all discussions in this area. I think most people across the parties and across the experts welcomed the move away from labels categorising young people. That was a positive move.

For those children within the Warnock 2 per cent. the responsibility for assessing and determining the nature of the child's learning difficulty, and what the requisite provision should be, lies with the local education authority. The nature of the services or provision specified on the statement will depend upon the nature of the learning difficulties identified after a formal multi-professional assessment, which must include educational, medical and psychological advice, together with parental representations and any evidence submitted by or on behalf of the child's parents.

I will say a few words about the educational provision, although I know that the hon. Gentleman is only interested in the mix of the educational and health provisions and how the two relate. On the educational provision, a distinction is made in the 1981 Act between educational provision and non-educational provision which may be required to meet the needs of children with statements. The educational provision of services is to be specified in terms of facilities and equipment, staffing arrangements, the curriculum and teaching methods. Where relevant, educational environment, access and transport provision should be specified. Such educational services are the responsibility of the LEA. LEAs are legally bound to provide the special educational services which are detailed in the statement of SEN.

As to non-educational provision, an LEA is also required to provide details in a statement of any

non-educational provision which it considers advantageous and is satisfied will be made available for the child by the district health authority, the social services department or some other body, if not made available by the LEA. The Education Reform Act 1988 changed the legal position to enable an LEA to provide non-educational services, but it does not place a duty on an LEA to do so. That is the point made by the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the recent dispute in the courts involving parents in Lancashire. I noted from a press statement of 11 March 1989 that the Court of Appeal ruled that speech therapy could be classed as a special educational provision under the 1981 Education Act, so the council had a duty to provide it. Further on, Lord Justice Balcombe said that the court accepted that such therapy stood between medicine and education. Lord Justice Stuart-Smith's comment in the High Court was that at one end of the scale it was akin to teaching while at the other it might be regarded as purely medical.

According to *The Independent* report, a very interesting parallel was asserted: to teach an adult who had lost his larynx because of cancer could well be considered as treatment rather than education, but to teach a child who had never been able to communicate by language seemed, according to the judge, just as much an educational provision as to teach a child to communicate by writing. The judges refused the council leave to appeal to the House of Lords, but that does not prevent a direct application for leave. For reasons with which I am sure the House is all too familiar, I shall not comment further on that matter, except to say that it goes to the very heart of the debate that the hon. Gentleman has raised on this occasion and, indeed, on other occasions.

I want to deal now with the hon. Gentleman's point about physiotherapy in special schools and to the resource implications to which he referred. The provision of physiotherapy services for children in both special and ordinary schools remains the responsibility of individual health authorities, although, under paragraph 83 of schedule 12 to the Education Reform Act 1988, education authorities can provide any therapy specified in a child's statement of special educational needs. We would expect them to co-operate with health authorities in the provision of physiotherapy for such children. Health and local education authorities must work closely together to make the best use of available resources to meet the needs of individual children. We should not object to a local education authority funding physiotherapy provision where this had been discussed with the health authority and was in the best interests of the child. Physiotherapy services are required by many groups of patients with acute and chronic conditions. It is for individual authorities to determine the priority that can be given to services for children in special schools, in the light of the particular local circumstances.

As for resource implications nationally, expenditure on physiotherapy services has increased from £38·2 million in 1978-79 to £115·3 million in 1986-87. Expenditure on community physiotherapy services, which are particularly relevant to children with special educational needs, is increasing at about twice the rate of the increase in expenditure on the hospital physiotherapy services. If my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health were here he would probably talk about the Health Service index. Even making that allowance, the growth that I have cited is real, and I suspect that the debate will turn on targeting and on the link between educational provision and Health Service provision.

The numbers of physiotherapists employed in the NHS in England continues to increase. The total went up from 6,430 whole-time equivalents in 1979 to 9,330 whole-time equivalents in 1987—an increase of 45 per cent. The Department of Health is looking at the longer-term demands for, and supply of, physiotherapists through a joint Department of Health—National Health Service manpower advisory group. The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy is co-operating in a study of manpower issues, and an initial report is expected later this year.

The Wilson Stuart school is, of course situated in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. That school has had difficulty in securing adequate levels of physiotherapy. The hon. Gentleman has raised the matter with the Department and with the West Birmingham health authority, which is responsible for such provision. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I begin with the time-honoured words "I am informed that". I will unravel my own conclusions, but I am informed that the position at the Wilson Stuart school has improved. There are now four physiotherapists working full-time at the school throughout the year, including the school holidays. In addition, the school has a full-time physiotherapy helper and a part-time helper, who works 20 hours per week.

The relevant unit general manager meets the head teacher each term to discuss and review provision. I am advised that there are currently no unresolved issues between the school and the district health authority. Having said that, however, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I will very carefully and clearly draw the attention of my hon. Friends to his comments.

We shall look especially at the examples that the hon. Gentleman gave—of Liam, Anthony, Kate and Katherine, who could provide interesting exemplars about the change of requirements and therefore of provision that the hon. Gentleman is commending. I am afraid that I cannot go any further tonight than to use the word "interesting" because, as the hon. Gentleman will understand, I cannot commit a colleague to a particular response. However, I am sure that colleagues at the Department of Health will respond to the hon. Gentleman in detail.

I turn now to the report of the National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales on the implementation of the Education Act 1981 to which the hon. Gentleman referred, having had the courtesy to advise me that it would figure in his speech. The report adds little to what is already known and is a disappointingly anecdotal and, some would argue, even superficial report that provides no firm evidence on the level of manpower resources that health authorities need to fulfil their role. Several initiatives are already under way, aimed at solving some of the problems that have been highlighted. They include a major research project undertaken by the Institute of Education and jointly funded by the then Department of Health and Social Security, and Department of Education and Science. Although originally three separate research projects, the findings have been pooled to produce a training pack and a manual for use at local authority level, which is aimed at improving local collaboration for children with special educational needs. The training pack and manual are due to be published in the near future.

[Mr. John Butcher]

There has also been recent agreement on a revised pay and grading structure for speech therapists. There is also a joint Department of Health and NHS manpower advisory group to consider the long-term demand for and supply of physiotherapists. The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy is also co-operating with a study of the manpower and an initial study is due——

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): We in the south-east would be peculiarly pleased if the proposals to allow district health authorities to pay the going rate for services such as speech therapy are implemented as proposed in the White Paper because in my constituency at the moment the acquiring and retaining of speech therapists has become virtually impossible because of the price of housing, and that that is putting a huge strain on the treatment of children with special educational needs.

Mr. Butcher: That is potentially a major debate in its own right. Indeed, if I were sitting where my hon. Friend is sitting, I would join him in making a fairly lengthy speech about the rigidities in national pay systems and structures. I suspect that that will loom larger and larger in my Department, the Department of Health and in other major employers of public service personnel and I hope that it will do so as much in the minds of trade unionists as in those of Ministers. I have no doubt that several of my hon. Friends who represent constituencies in the south-east and in London are becoming anxious about that question. I hope that my hon. Friend will not mind if I do not launch off into that at this time in the morning, whether in the context of speech therapists, teachers or other public servants. However, his point was well made.

I return to the report by the National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales and the comment that the joint DHSS-DES circular 83 will be taken into account in the current review of that guidance.

In conclusion, I reassure the hon. Gentleman that his concerns will be brought carefully to the attention of my hon. Friends in the Department of Health. I was interested in his view that circulars should remove the bureaucratic burden. They certainly should, and I suspect that in the future someone will do an audit of the impact of circulars on education or health. For the hon. Gentleman's money, and mine also, it is what they do for costs, simplicity—or the lack of it—as well as resources, manpower and womanpower, that is important.

At this time of the morning, a number of matters fall out of context but others return into it. The hon. Member for Perry Barr has done the House a service in raising the subject today.

At 4.15 am, the blackbird in Mr. Speaker's Court was singing with gusto. Such a welcome when one arrives at the House at that time of the morning tends to cheer one up a bit, but one is also cheered by the quality of debate on an occasion such as this.

5.55 am

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): If the House will forgive me, I shall say a few words.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on raising, with his usual sincerity, what is happening in his area, which is reflected throughout the country. That is one of the most important points to be made following the Minister's speech.

I understand the problems that the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) is experiencing in the south-east, but it is important to recognise that they are being faced nationwide. In my constituency, the employment position is different to that in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. A major report appeared recently in the local press about the shortage of speech therapists and the problems recruiting them. I hope that the Minister will not mind me saying that he mentioned manpower, when womanpower would have been appropriate. Most of the people employed in speech therapy and physiotherapy are women.

Speech therapists' pay is a major issue. The Minister will be aware of a case that has been before an industrial tribunal and is now before the European Court about equal pay for speech therapists for doing work of equal value. I have been involved in the case because the speech therapists are members of my union. Indeed, I have met the women who brought the case.

The main issue involved in this subject, as in quite a few others, is resources. There is the commitment and will to move forward and resolve problems. As the Minister said, there is cross-party support about need and even the way in which it should be met. We know what we should be doing, but the resources are not being provided to meet those needs.

A major crisis is facing speech therapists especially, but also physiotherapists. As we are becoming an aging society, we are making more demands on physiotherapists. The problems of speech therapy for children who are or are not statemented is becoming increasingly acute. There is hardly an hon. Member who has not had respresentations made to him or her about shortages in their area and children whose needs are not being served. There was widespread support for the Education Act 1981. I was in a primary school yesterday where the head said that the best piece of legislation for education passed under this Government was the 1981 Act. However, he said that the problem is that the resources required have not followed to ensure that the Act can be brought into effect. The welcome for that Act is now tinged with near despair at the lack of resources to fulfil its aims and the aspirations of parents of children with special needs.

I appreciate that since his appointment the Minister has been studying special needs with some attention and in some detail. I hope that he will continue to do that. The resolution of the issue that we have raised tonight requires some national direction because, with the implementation of local financial management for most of their schools, local education authorities have had the resources that they have available constrained, if not restricted. In talking to the authorities, they have expressed to me concern about health authorities being frequently unable to meet the demand, so education authorities may have to meet the demand, but with a diminishing resource base.

I hope that the Minister will continue to study this matter. The Opposition will return to the matter fairly frequently, I hope, over the next year. The will and commitment of parents, local communities and local authorities is there. It is the responsibility of the House to ensure that adequate resources are made available so that that will and commitment are not frustrated and the aspirations of parents and the abilities and prospects of the children are given the fullest support from the House. That

inevitably means resources. I hope that we can come back to that subject and reassure parents and authorities soon that the resources will be available so that the children will be given the opportunities and support that they need.

36th Engineer Regiment

6.2 am

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this morning the important issue of the 36th Engineer Regiment. The issue is important not only to the regiment itself, but to the town of Maidstone, and it carries wide implications for decision-making on matters concerning the armed services. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), who is in his place, and who will, I know, be participating later in the debate, seeking permission to raise this issue, because the 36th Engineer Regiment is just across the boundary from my constituency, in his constituency. The issue is one of such vast local importance that it concerns us both.

The matter before us is the proposed move from Maidstone, where the regiment has been for the past 40 years, and with which it has a considerable connection and in which it takes considerable pride, to Thorney island, a place with which it has no connection and in which it would be difficult for it to find any pride or affinity.

From correspondence and representations from my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent and myself to my hon. Friend the Minister and his predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), my hon. Friend will be aware of the strength of feeling in both town and regiment and of our concerns about some of the issues. My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering saw fit to visit the regiment in December in response to a request I made in a debate in July. I shall say more about that visit later. I think that it was important because it opened my hon. Friend's eyes not only to the strength of feeling but to the valid arguments against any move from the present base.

We are talking about considerably more than sentiment. It is not sentiment that makes us raise the matter in the House. It is concern for recruitment and retention, and grave concern for morale. We are concerned too, that financial and operational sense should prevail in the decision that is made.

The 36th Engineer Regiment is a regiment of sappers and, by definition, spends a great deal of time away. The regiment spends the majority of its time outside Maidstone and, indeed, abroad. For example, 50th Field Squadron has spent nine months of each of the past three years abroad, while 20th Field Squadron, which looks set to follow in its footsteps, spent nine months of last year abroad. That contrasts sharply with the time spent away by the artillery regiment now based on Thorney island, which spends only comparatively brief periods abroad.

During the past year the 36th Engineers have been posted to Belize, Cyprus, the Falklands, Ascension Island, Germany and Northern Ireland. The regiment has one of the highest rates of separation from spouses and families in the Army. Let us pause to think what that means. If we are to recruit and retain soldiers, we need morale to be high. An essential part of the morale of a regiment that spends so much time abroad is that the men, who spend so much time away from their wives and children, should be convinced that they are happy and integrated into the community. Similarly, the wives will have a considerable influence in determining whether their husbands will stay in the Army. If the wives are unhappy, they will influence

[Miss Ann Widdecombe]

them not to stay on in the Army and not to renew their contracts when statutory periods are over. They will not give a happy account of the regiment to potential recruits.

Of the 803 men in the 36th Engineers, 604 operate out of Maidstone. They have with them 197 wives and 274 children. The factors that keep wives happy are social integration, the opportunity to work—a most important point if husbands are away for any length of time—and schools. Social integration means accessibility. In Maidstone the 36th Engineers are very near the centre of a large town. Some 123 of the wives work locally in the community. There are good accessible shops and schools, which include the envied grammar schools.

By comparison, on Thorney island the nearest post office is three miles away. The nearest shopping centres is 12 miles away. Buses run once every two hours. There is limited schooling with limited choice and there is extremely limited opportunity for employment. It is almost certainly necessary to own a car to get to and from work—not a happy prospect for an Army wife. Is it any wonder that the wife of a CO on Thorney referred to:

"real welfare problems caused by the isolated nature of the island"?

Thorney island presents a similar prospect to the Falklands, but without the penguins. It simply cannot be an encouragement to wives, or a boost to soldiers' morale if they feel that their families will be removed to a remote area with few facilities and that their wives and children will be left alone to face that lack of facilities in that remote area for considerable periods.

When my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health visited the regiment last December, he pronounced himself impressed with all that he saw of the social integration of the wives in the community. Those wives made strong representations to him to the effect that they wanted to stay in Maidstone, that they were happy in Maidstone, that they had confidence in Maidstone's schooling, and that, if they were to stay on as Army wives and if their husbands were to pursue careers in the armed services, staying at Maidstone was a major factor in any such decisions.

There will be problems in retention and recruitment if the regiment is moved to Thorney island. That is a pity, because, as my hon. Friend the Minister knows, there is currently a high retention rate in the regiment.

Combined with the possibility of moving to Thorney island, we must consider the possibility of alternative employment. At the moment, a married Sapper on a nine-year contract can expect to earn £100·47 a week, but, if he were to leave the Army and take employment with a local Maidstone construction firm, he could expect to earn £221—twice as much—a week. Is there any point in having brand new barracks on Thorney island—we would have to build such barracks to accommodate the 36th Engineers—if we end up with no Sappers to put in them?

The history of the 36th Engineer Regiment is extremely proud. It includes service in the Falklands war. Several soldiers were badly wounded in that conflict. The regiment's efforts to rehabilitate them, keep them on and find them employment have impressed my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent, myself and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State. The proposed move is a waste, not only of retention, recruitment and training but of the massive efforts involved in attracting young men into the regiment, and it is an expensively equipped regiment. It has £13 million worth of engineering and vehicles alone in Maidstone and half as much again in Laarbruch in Germany.

There are arguments not only about retention but about operational matters. It is the only regular United Kingdom home defence regiment, and it carries out exercises in every country. At the moment, it is placed close to the royal school of military engineering in Chatham. It plays a major part in disaster relief. I cannot see that it can be anything but operationally less effective if it is moved to Thorney island.

Then there is national policy. The Gaffney report identified the regiment and its relationship with the town as ideal for a major unit. It seems odd to fly in the face of that report and to move the regiment.

Then there are financial arguments. I submit, and the regiment would submit, that the Minister's analysis is wrong. For example, it was said that, if the regiment were to be moved, there would be £8 million worth of savings in maintenance costs. The costs of the new barracks on Thorney island have been substantially under-estimated, and the loss of retention and the expense of recruiting and training again from scratch is considerable.

On the first point, a new road is involved. I am hugely proud of most things connected with my constituency, but I am hugely horrified by its traffic. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent will join me in that horror. Traffic flow is extremely restricted, largely because entry roads from other major towns are simply not up to carrying it.

One of the proposed new roads actually goes through the site of the old barracks—not the barracks currently occupied by most of the regiment, but the old barracks. The council and regiment have been negotiating what will happen when that road goes through the old barracks. The possibility is that the barracks will be rebuilt at the expense of the council and not of the Ministry of Defence. If that hope is realised, it follows that the £8 million worth of maintenance savings is, in fact, not such a saving at all, because the rebuilding will be carried out without expense to the Army. It also makes building afresh at Thorney island much less attractive. That would be an entirely incremental expense to the Ministry, whereas, if the rebuilding is at Maidstone, it will be an expense to the council as well as to the Army.

Secondly, for example, the costs at Thorney island do not include separate officers' messes that would normally be expected, and which would certainly inflate the current estimates considerably.

Thirdly, my hon. Friend the Minister will be only too aware of the costs of the highly technical training of a sapper and what it would amount to if large numbers were to leave and had to be replaced.

It is not only the effect on the regiment about which I am concerned, but the effect on the town. A couple of weeks ago I presented to the House a petition from the men of Kent to retain the engineers where they are. There are 21 regular users of the facilities enjoyed by the regiment. They include sports clubs, but also clubs for the hearing-impaired, wheelchair clubs, the police, the fire brigade and many other important groups, clubs and institutions in Maidstone. In addition to regular users, there are also numerous ad hoc users.

The regiment enjoys the freedom of the town with which it has had a 40-year association. Since I have been

a Member of Parliament, I have been aware of the gratitude felt by the town to the regiment for the substantial help that it provided during the October wind storm that completely wrecked parts of my constituency. That caused tremendous travel and access problems in Kent which the regiment was able to ease.

Similarly, the regiment has been used consistently to help with snow clearance, not only in my constituency but in many parts of Kent. It is difficult to imagine that the regiment will come back from Thorney island when we have snow.

I am joined in my plea to keep the regiment in Maidstone by the borough council, by parishes, by schools, by those who use the facilities and by those who are grateful for their presence and for their disaster relief.

The suspense has been too long. The question mark hanging over the regiment has been there for many years. It is having unsettling effects. It is unsettling for morale, for the wives and for recruitment. The general belief held locally was that we had convinced my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering during his visit that there was an unanswerable case for keeping the regiment on its present site. Now, because of a changeover, once again there is a question mark. People are no longer so convinced locally that their views are fully understood. I would welcome reassurance from my hon. Friend the Minister on that point if on no other.

Meanwhile the negotiations over the road, the rebuilding and the contribution from the council must all be carried out in a vacuum because we do not know the regiment's long-term future. It flies in the face of national policy and the Gaffney report if we remove the regiment. It will cause a wasteful loss in a regiment with an excellent record of retention. It will make operational nonsense. There could be financial gains from staying rather than from going.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister consider visiting the regiment? I recognise that that invitation should be properly made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent. Will the Minister settle the matter one way or the other? If my hon. Friend cannot offer a firm settlement this morning, will he at least give a firm date for its settlement as the suspense has gone on for too long and the reasons for the disastrous move are not understood by the regiment, by the town or by its parliamentary representatives?

6.19 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) for raising this issue and I am glad that she has given such an overwhelmingly comprehensive display of the argument for retaining the regiment in Maidstone. I am particularly glad, because I only received notification of her intention to raise this matter less than 12 hours ago and that has not provided me with the same opportunities for research as my hon. Friend has usefully employed.

In addition to my hon. Friend's forceful argument there are three things that I shall mention. First, it is appropriate that the MOD should constantly review the capital stock upon which the defence of the country is based. Changing financial circumstances mean that any part of the Ministry's capital assets are likely to be in need of revaluation at regular intervals. I have no quarrel therefore with the Ministry's desire to consider the financial value of Invicta barracks as part of its regular review process. There could be no more appropriate time to review that site than when, as my hon. Friend has pointed out, a part of those barracks is about to be redeveloped.

During that perfectly proper review I hope that the Ministry has understood the value of keeping the regiment in a place where it is not only a focus for recruitment of young men, but a place where service families are sufficiently content to live. It is therefore possible to retain such highly valued people in a highly competitive atmosphere and because of that the regiment has flourished.

The straight book transaction that means that land in Maidstone may be more valuable than land in Thorney island only tells a small part of the story. As my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone rightly argued, there is no point in building new barracks in Thorney island merely to find that everyone who might have lived there has left the service because their families have dissuaded them by telling them that there is nothing to do down there and that they would be much better off earning considerably more in private employment.

The second point that must be stressed is the opportunity provided to the regiment for joint exercises with the royal school of military engineering at Brompton barracks. Such exercises represent a sensible use of joint facilities. No doubt my hon. Friend the Minister has learnt from the files, if nowhere else, that, in the past I have been involved in attempts to acquire training territory in my constituency. What a bitter disappointment it was that the last of those efforts fell to bits. The principal villain in that negotiation was the sheer cumbersome review procedure for such acquisitions which operates within the Department. I hope that he will take on board the enormous importance of the Ministry of Defence being able to move swiftly when the opportunity to acquire territory for exercises or for other purposes comes up. Land in the south-east is at such a premium that it is absurd that procedures are so cumbersome that any private developer or farmer can move faster than the Ministry of Defence. I very much hope that that lesson has been safely learnt.

Thirdly, I happen to share the Government's belief that it is appropriate for Government personnel to be distributed around the United Kingdom as far as that is practicable. It is wholly wrong to fill up expensive space in overcrowded urban areas and parts of the economy that are under pressure with central Government bureaucracy. I believe in the dispersal of personnel around the country, but to move an Army unit to another part of the south of England requires enormous justification, and so far none has been forthcoming. It would not be right to destroy the close local links of the regiment merely in order to move it somewhere else in the south.

As it happens, in this case the regiment's operational requirements are much better served by keeping it close to the motorway network, by which it can swiftly transport its heavy equipment and skills to any part of the south when they are needed.

When I first raised this subject some years ago, after the story had broken that a threat was hanging over the barracks, almost at once two major local crises occurred. The engineers were indispensable in coping with the effects of the extraordinary blizzard and with the exceptional hurricane, as my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone pointed out.

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

The liaison with the civil power, which has been of a high order in Kent, is not lightly to be thrown aside. It is good for the Army and the future of the armed services in Britain that there should be warm and effective links with the civil power. Thank goodness, it is a long time since people in this country have had direct experience of war, and it is sometimes difficult to persuade them that the armed forces are a necessary and appropriate form of employment for their children.

This is a clear demonstration that regiments such as the engineers greatly contribute to the quality of civilian life and is well worth treasuring. Maidstone is a fine place in which to demonstrate that; it is shown there every day of the year. I understand that my hon. Friend the Minister has already made it known that the regiment may stay for the foreseeable future. I hope that the debate this morning will encourage him to lengthen his perspective to the point where "foreseeable future" becomes just "the future".

6.30 am

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I intervene briefly because my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes), our Front Bench spokesman on the Army, asked me to apologise for his absence this morning due to a long-standing engagement. I can assure the hon. Lady that the points made in the debate have been listened to very carefully.

I have always had a keen interest in the Royal Engineers, being an ex-Sapper myself and having served at Chatham, both at Kitchener and Brompton barracks, many years ago, before serving with the Royal Engineers in Cyrenaica, formerly a small country now part of Libya. I well remember spending many months building a bridge half-way between Benghazi and Tobruk, at a place called the Wadi el Coovu, the Valley of Caves, and to the best of my knowledge that bridge is still there 40 years later. So I agree with the points made about the skills of the Royal Engineers and certainly support any efforts to maintain that particular regiment.

6.31 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Michael Neubert): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) has been able to take advantage of this debate to raise once again the question of the deployment of 36th Engineer Regiment, which has, as she pointed out, been based in Maidstone for many years. I know that she has a strong personal interest in this matter, and I am pleased to take this opportunity to express my apreciation for the concern that she has shown for the regiment, its morale and welfare, not only on behalf of those serving in it but also of their families. These are obviously matters of no less concern to me and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, and to those directly responsible for the management and well-being of the Army. I am therefore also glad to have this opportunity to say something about 36th Engineer Regiment and about the Ministry of Defence's policy on managing the defence estate, although I would have preferred a different hour than six o'clock in the morning.

It might be helpful if I first say a little about the history and role of 36th Engineer Regiment and its connection with Maidstone. The regiment forms part of 5th Airborne Brigade in peacetime and has a strength of 621, all ranks, at Maidstone. In peacetime it exercises and carries out a variety of tasks in the United Kingdom, including the provision of emergency assistance as and when required. Elements of the regiment also exercise overseas and are liable for emergency tours in Belize and the Falklands, as well as in Northern Ireland. In war, the regiment and its squadrons would be required to carry out a variety of roles in this country, the NATO central region, and beyond. During the many years that 36th Engineer Regiment has been based at Maidstone it has forged an excellent relationship with the local authority and the local community. This is symbolised by the grant to it of the freedom of Maidstone which, other commitments permitting, the regiment exercises each year.

I have spoken of the regiment's long association with Maidstone and the strong ties that it has with the town and the local community. My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone has also spoken warmly of that connection and of the value placed upon it. I am sure that her words will be echoed by members of that community, by their other representatives and by the local authorities there. From the Army's viewpoint it is gratifying that the regiment stands in such high regard in the area and that its presence there is so well appreciated. I am sure that it is well-deserved recognition of its place in the community, the part that it plays in local life and the assistance that it gives from time to time, about which I shall have more to say. I also know that the regiment itself attaches considerable value to this connection and that it appreciates the benefits of its location and the facilities to which it has access through being based at Maidstone. I am thus well aware that the regiment's present location is to the mutual advantage of the Army and of the civil community, as my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone and my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) have made clear this morning.

I wish to consider the particular question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone and I will explain why the possibility of relocating 36th Engineers Regiment is under consideration and the factors that we must take into consideration when reaching a decision in that respect.

The size of the defence estate depends on the needs of the services and the procurement executive, but we are determined that it should be no larger than is necessary to carry out its task efficiently and effectively. We vigorously pursue opportunities to dispose of land and buildings no longer required for defence purposes. In the last financial year, for example, we raised more than £75 million by such sales and we hope at least to double that figure this year. Those sums are in addition to more than £400 million achieved in sales of land since 1979. I was encouraged to receive the explicit support of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent for that policy this morning.

Ministry of Defence landholdings of some 600,000 acres account for about 1 per cent. of the total area of the United Kingdom. Some four-fifths of this MOD land is taken up by airfields and training areas, and our main opportunities for reduction and rationalisation are therefore likely to occur in the remaining area with, for example, depots, workshops and barrack accommodation. We are always seeking to identify opportunities for rationalisation in those areas, and decisions on future deployments take account of the estate costs.

As I am sure hon. Members will appreciate, our main consideration must be the operational requirement of the Armed Forces. Although possible receipts from disposals are one element in such decisions, we cannot manage the estate as a property portfolio in its own right. We need also to take into account other factors such as relocation costs. We are not always able to move as quickly as we would like, as the need to reprovide often very specialised facilities at the new site can involve significant initial capital investment which acts as a delaying factor and in some cases, may negate the advantages of rationalising and disposing of our holdings.

Despite those difficulties, we have recently been able to announce the relocation of a number of facilities which will enable us to release high value sites in the south-east. My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), when he was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces announced last October that the officer and aircrew selection centre would move from RAF Biggin Hill to RAF Cranwell, where it will be located alongside the RAF college and will benefit from the environment of a busy station with an active military airfield. The decision to close Biggin Hill, with all its associations with the last war and the Battle of Britain, was taken only after a great deal of very careful thought, but it demonstrates the need to keep abreast of changing circumstances and to make the best use of our resources. Of course, we shall be maintaining the Battle of Britain memorial chapel at Biggin Hill, and the Gate Guardians as a lasting remainder of all those who sacrificed their lives within the Biggin Hill sector in the second world war.

Elsewhere, the No. 1 school of technical training will be transferred from RAF Halton to RAF Cosford. That co-location will give us benefits in respect of costs and training facilities. Similarly, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement announced last week, we have concluded that a move to Preston farm in Teeside is the most cost-effective solution for the headquarters and laboratories of the directorate general of the defence quality assurance. The move would concentrate these functions on a single site with fully modern facilities, while at the same time releasing the Bromley and Woolwich sites that they currently occupy for disposal and redevelopment. We shall be consulting the trade unions about these plans, as is normal practice. More generally, and in line with the Government-wide relocation strategy, we are looking at the options for moving parts of our headquarters away from the high-cost and difficult recruitment area of London. In addition, I hope to be in a position to announce shortly our detailed plans for the rationalisation of the mainly RAF and Army holdings in the north-west London area.

Hon. Members should be in no doubt that we take our responsibilities for the ownership and management of our estate very seriously. It is in that context that we have been considering the current location of 36th Engineer Regiment. A study carried out some five years ago to examine the potential for rationalisation of the estate considered a number of sites of high value which might be vacated and disposed of, and which would yield a substantial return to the defence budget. The site in Maidstone currently occupied by 36th Engineer Regiment was one identified for consideration of disposal in that way, and the report indicated that in view of its development potential the proceeds from selling the site would be very substantial. However, the study recognised that all cases would have to be considered on their merits and that a range of factors would have to be taken into account in reaching a conclusion. That course has been followed in the Maidstone case.

The Ministry of Defence has accordingly considered possible alternative locations for 36th Engineer Regiment. Two have been identified.—They are Thorney island, near Chichester—mentioned by my hon. Friend—and Hawley, near Aldershot, where one of its squadrons is already based. Both sites are owned by the Ministry of Defence and have space available to accommodate the regiment. New accommodation would need to be built, but the cost would be offset by the expected proceeds from the sale of the Maidstone site. That is, of course, being taken into account in the investment appraisal, together with all the other quantifiable factors which have a bearing on the comparison of the options available to us. They include the cost of the works services that would need to be carried out if the regiment were to remain at Maidstone. The living accommodation there will need refurbishing and modernising in due course, at substantial cost.

As in any other case affecting the deployment of a service unit, a raft of factors must to be taken into consideration, and my hon. Friend has touched on some of them. Not all relevant considerations can be quantified, but we fully appreciate the need to weigh those in the balance as well, in order to arrive at a proper judgment. While it is clear that 36th Engineer Regiment could carry out its task from either of the alternative locations that I mentioned, we need to consider whether they would be as good as Maidstone as locations both for the regiment's peacetime commitments and activities and for its operational role.

We must take account of the need for access to the training facilities which the regiment requires as well as to the parts of the country to which it needs to be able to deploy readily. Its peacetime role includes assistance to the civil authorities in the south-east in such emergencies and natural disasters. I am well aware of the valuable part that it played, together with other Army units in Kent, in the aftermath of last winter's storms, and to which my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent also paid tribute.

As my hon. Friends pointed out, there are other perhaps less tangible aspects which cannot be ignored. For a regiment of some 650 men, many with wives and families, access to a range of facilities is clearly important. The comparison also needs to take account of the availability and proximity of local schools, health and welfare facilities, shops, social amenities and employment for wives and children.

The importance of that is reinforced by the fact that wives and families regularly need to be left by themselves for periods of three to six months or more when the whole regiment, or parts of it, may be deployed elsewhere in the United Kingdom or overseas. I understand that Maidstone is a popular location from this point of view, and I fully appreciate that. Moreover, I recogise that many members of the regiment and their families are well established at Maidstone, and tend to regard it as a home as well as a place where many of the wives have jobs. I appreciate that in those circumstances there would be some reluctance to leave, whatever the alternative locations might have to offer. We fully recognise the need to take such morale and welfare considerations into

[Mr. Michael Neubert]

account, and are naturally anxious to avoid any course that might lead to a loss of well-trained and well-motivated manpower from the regiment.

I hope that my hon. Friends will appreciate from what I have said that we are well aware that our judgment should not be determined by purely financial considerations, important though those are, and that they will feel assured that the other factors that they have mentioned will also be given due weight.

I have sought to explain the background that has led us to consider the possibility of relocating 36th Engineers Regiment, and to bring out the range of factors that need to be taken into account. We need to consider the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the different locations in relation to all the aspects that I have mentioned so that a balanced judgment can be reached, and that is what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will do. I was somewhat bewildered by what my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent said towards the end of his speech, as I had made no statement about the regiment's future until this morning. Although I understand the unsettling effects of uncertainty, the Army has had a connection with Maidstone for nearly 200 years and it is essential that enough time is given for a thorough evaluation of any alternative. I shall, of course, notify my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone and my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent—in whose constituency the regiment is located—of my right hon. Friend's conclusion as soon as I am in a position to do so.

North-east Derbyshire (Environmental Regeneration)

6.47 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): As Chernobyl illustrated, at least some environmental issues cannot easily be confined within local or even national boundaries. Certainly they cannot be confined within local boundaries in my constituency.

If, heaven forbid, there were a serious explosion at Staveley Chemicals, the worst effects—depending on the prevailing winds—could have a devastating impact on the Chesterfield and Bolsover constituencies rather than on mine. That case, however, is hypothetical; there are actual cases to illustrate my point.

A fire explosion at Leigh Environmental in Killamarsh, in my constituency, in 1986 raised fears and problems in the neighbouring south Yorkshire area, especially in the Rother Valley country park, which is next to the plant and in the Rother Valley constituency. Discharges from Coalite in Bolsover seriously pollute the Doe Lea river, which feeds into the River Rother, part of which runs through my constituency. They are two of the worst-polluted rivers in Europe.

A recent underground fire in Dronfield, in my constituency, threatened Sheffield and south Yorkshire gas supplies. In environmental matters, no man, woman or child is an island. I believe that green issues have strong Socialist implications. The current major environmental issues have general and specific impact on north-east Derbyshire. The problems affecting the ozone layer and the control of CFCs through hairsprays, fridges and so on obviously have the same impact in north-east Derbyshire as they do elsewhere. However, the explosion at Leigh Environmental was caused by the crushing of aerosols. The firm was prosecuted for the danger it created for a YTS apprentice.

Specific problems are also associated with the greenhouse effect through the heating of the atmosphere by the use of fossil fuels and the production of acid rain. That affects two extractive industries in north-east Derbyshire. At one time coal mining was dominant throughout the constituency, but following the closure of Renishaw Park pit, it is confined mainly to High Moor pit. Action needs to be taken to attempt to control the acid rain produced by power stations which make use of fluorspar and limestone which are extracted by Biwaters at Milltown in Ashover, although its licence is to extract merely fluorspar and the limestone should be extracted only temporarily and should be re-established. That is causing considerable problems as movement is by road instead of by rail, which is the sensible way to move coal and chemicals extracted from the ground.

The solution to the greenhouse effect being offered by the Prime Minister is nuclear power, so the cure is likely to be far worse than the disease. Nuclear power is associated with the production of nuclear weapons, which are probably the most serious threat that humanity faces. I am pleased that Derbyshire county council is Labour-controlled and has a nuclear-free zone policy. However, inevitably, part of that policy is a pious commitment to ideas and cannot be put into practice. Unfortunately it does not stop nuclear shipments by rail or on the M1, which clips the end of north-east Derbyshire at

Heath so an accident in that vicinity could seriously contaminate areas such as North Wingfield in my constituency.

In a small nation, the nonsense of nuclear power stations as far away as Sellafield affects everyone, including my constituents. It is clear that free market individualism is incapable of handling the problems that I have outlined. The free market gives power to monopoly capitalism rather than to large numbers of entrepreneurs in classical competition with each other as envisaged by Adam Smith. The Government use political power to remove any constraints upon the operation of monopoly capitalism by containing trade union and employment legislation and allowing only limited or unrealistic regulations such as those affecting Oftel, on which I have a number of constituency problems, and the National Rivers Authority, which will be quite inadequate to handle the problems of the River Rother.

I accept that the Eastern bloc bureaucracy has produced a host of environmental problems and that Chernobyl occurred within the Soviet Union. There are also serious environmental problems in areas such as Latvia. I believe that democratic Socialist solutions of collectivism and participation might help to solve the type of environmental problems that exist in north-east Derbyshire.

Although it is part of my case that the environment knows no boundaries. I had better say something about the boundaries of the area that I am talking about. The north-east Derbyshire district covers the major part of the constituency of Derbyshire, North-East and also a section of the Bolsover constituency. The constituency of Derbyshire, North-East goes into Chesterfield borough, as well as covering the north-east Derbyshire district. It covers the northern part of Staveley, which has Staveley Chemicals in it, and the River Rother running through it. North-east Derbyshire could be defined as the entire area of the Derbyshire North-East constituency, Chesterfield and Bolsover, which form an integrated unit. Although the three constituencies and the three districts have slightly different boundaries, they have common external boundaries.

I have considerable information on the constituency. I am grateful to Mrs. M. E. Hicken, who is an information consultant living in Brimington, which is close to my constituency. She has supplied fantastic information about the environmental and social make-up of the constituency.

The constituency and the district of north-east Derbyshire are socially divided. The eastern section is solidly Labour and will have masses of losers under the poll tax. It has the same characteristics as the Bolsover constituency. Within each of the wards more than 10 per cent. of the people are still employed in coal mining, a great deal of which takes place outside the constituency boundary. The western section is solidly Conservative, with masses of poll tax gainers. It has the characteristics of west Derbyshire. It is a rural area with two commuter towns.

The usual north-south divide is more of an east-west divide in the constituency. For instance, unemployment in Clay Cross, which in my analysis is in the eastern section, is more than twice the level in Dronfield, which is the western section, although Dronfield has its own working class area.

Environmentally, the eastern and western sections have considerable common interests. We are faced with electricity privatisation, and the establishment through private Bills, of two ports on the Humber, which will lead to massive imports of coal and will have a great effect on the remaining coal mining in the wider north-east Derbyshire area. In response to that, in one attempt to survive, British Coal will opt for massive opencast mining activities. North-east Derbyshire is part of the Leeds-Sheffield-Nottingham central east region of the opencast executive. I have already given evidence against the Rainge site south of Domesmoor in Clay Cross, where the prevailing winds produce pneumonconiosis problems. I have presented a petition to the House on behalf of residents of the Mastin Moor area of Staveley about the development of the Pinnock site, which is to take place a short distance from the recently closed pit at Renishaw Park.

These two sites are but the tip of the iceberg. The whole heart could be ripped out of north-east Derbyshire. Information that I have received from the opencast executive indicates that in both the east and the west of the district and the constituency there is considerable potential. There is a vast area in the eastern section of north-east Derbyshire district—the Pilsley-Morton-Stonebroom complex—and Arkwright was discussed earlier today by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) because of the closure of the pit and the escape of methane and its terrible effect in the area. That, too, has considerable opencast potential, which could lead to replacement of the closed pit. In the western section, the rural area of Brackenfield would be affected.

In the constituency there are many other areas of high unemployment where mining was once conducted: Killamarsh, near High Moor pit; Renishaw, where the pit is closed; Barrow Hill, which has had considerable industrial development and blight over the years, and was at one time a railway centre; an area south of North Wingfield and Holmewood; and Apperknowle in the Unstone area.

But it is the western section of the constituency, where the Dronfield green belt separates Dronfield from Sheffield and will presumably come to be known as the black belt, which will cause considerable traffic problems.

In a large rural area there are Commonside, Barlow and Cutthorpe, and a region south of the second largest commuter town in the area, Wingerworth. Here, there is considerable extractive potential that could be realised if only there were rail links to move the extracted materials. Of course, even if that were to happen, there would still be serious problems.

Many of the problems centre on the eastern working-class side of the constituency. In the mining areas, the latest pit closure has led to unemployment, social deprivation and serious environmental problems at Renishaw Park. The Eckington parish council is seriously concerned about the lack of consultation and the fact that it is not clear what is to be done with the derelict pit. Despite plans by the district council, for the nearby Westthorpe pit, the same happened. Then there is the combination of a colliery in the Staveley area called Ireland, which merged with Markham in 1986. The Ireland section closed the following year. Since 1981 several closures and mergers have taken place, leaving a very wide area of industrial dereliction. It is an area whose mining history goes back over considerable periods to the time of small drift mines. it is pockmarked with old pit shafts and worked-out seams. There has also been considerable gas

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

and oil exploration and constituents are seriously worried. Constituents from the Tupton area have petitioned me —125 residents from a very small area. They are worried about the possible use of these areas by Nirex.

The industrial past and the industrial future both produce mining subsidence problems. Homes are people's strongest concern and when they begin to collapse around people's ears there is considerable worry, and when whole areas of farms start to cave in and disappear, there is a problem that needs to be resolved.

I have a considerable list of complaints from the Hartington view, Hillcrest and Frankly drive areas of Stavely and if I had the time I should love to quote them as they illustrate my point better than I can. The people there feel that the board has an off-hand attitude; that they are frustrated in pursuing their claims even by the agents who are supposed to be acting on their behalf and that they get shoddy workmanship from cowboy builders.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Is my hon. Friend aware that there is currently a fund that is valued at over £200 million for subsidence damage, which British Coal has the greatest reluctance in paying out to repair the damage to homes throughout all the coalfield areas?

Mr. Barnes: Having more money in funds for people who have suffered from subsidence is of considerable importance. I know that my hon. Friend is interested in that issue, which affects his constituency. Indeed, he has a Bill before the House on coalmining subsidence, entitled the Coal Mining Subsidence (Damage, Arbitration, Prevention and Public Awareness) Bill that would allow arbitration procedures to operate to cover some of these problems.

That problem will affect my constituency in the future. The Markham pit, which is still open, currently operates in the Chesterfield constituency in the Inkersall area and will be moving to the Lowgate area of my constituency. Some of the things that could improve the position would be possible without primary legislation. Plans of advance workings should be made publicly available; local arbitration disputes procedures, which have been promised by the board could be established—that would work well in the Staveley area with the current problems that my constituency faces; and facilities should be established for individuals to more readily be able to use their own contractors and builders. They should not be paid a lump sum by the board to try to get rid of them.

Apart from those problems associated with mining, there are also many non-mining environmental problems. The River Rother, which has the longest stretch of grossly pulluted river in the United Kingdom, passes through many of the areas that I have already discussed, and then goes on to pollute the rivers Don and Humber, and finally the North sea. Coalite, Orgreave coking plant and Staveley Chemicals are the worst offenders and regularly break the law on discharge consents with mercury, cyanide, phenols, oils, grease, suspended solids and ammonia ending up in the river. The last recorded fish in the Rother were there 50 years ago, although at one time it was an area renowned for its great fishing and natural beauty. There is no longer any aquatic vegetation on the river banks or in the river itself. Indeed, the water from the river could not be used when the Rother valley park, which is next to my constituency, was being established. Water had to be imported to establish an artificial lake. What is required is the full implementation of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and the supply of resources to county councils to help them handle the problem.

Derbyshire county council has a good record and has helped Yorkshire Water. Mr. Tim Birch, who is Greenpeace's clean-river campaigner, said:

"Derbyshire is the most forward thinking council on Green issues that we have had to deal with."

Derbyshire county council has established itself as one of the country's leading authorities on many aspects of environmental work, through its own initiatives or in conjunction with other agencies. Several of its initiatives have been recognised by outside bodies in awards and prizes, including countryside trails, town restoration projects, design work, country parks and tourist facilities.

Another source of environmental problems is the Leigh Environmental plant at Killamarsh, which is situated close to the northern point of the River Rother. It was fined £1,500 following a fire and explosion at an aerosol recovery plant in 1986. In court, Her Majesty's inspector said:

"Here was an accident waiting to happen."

No public inquiry into the plant's operation was held, although I, the parish council and others pressed the Department of the Environment for one. Many complaints have been made about solvent smells and problems associated with the plant. It now has a Berridge incinerator, and under old planning permission this was used at Hucknall in Nottinghamshire, creating considerable nuisance in smells, destruction of plant life and smoke emission.

We need legislation on waste disposal that will allow proper co-ordination of district councils' environmental health work, county councils' licensing and planning responsibilities under the Control of Pollution Act, the role of Her Majesty's inspector of pollution, water authorities' duties to prevent pollution of sewers and the work of health and safety inspectors. If the Government co-ordinate, nothing will be done. Proper co-ordination that is committed to collective responses and participation is needed. This would ensure full consultation with the people affected by developments and could have speeded up successful action recently taken by Her Majesty's inspector of pollution against Biwater Pipes and Castings Ltd. at Clay Cross because of airborne pollution. Airborne pollution affects the River Rother because the muck in the air falls on the ground and is washed into it.

The Dronfield underground fire occurred in a working-class area in the west of my constituency. I gave details of the fire in an Adjournment debate on 5 November 1987. I also mentioned it in my maiden speech, which I made during a previous Consolidated Fund Bill debate. There is a danger that the North-East Derbyshire district council will be left with a bill of at least £600,000 for the abatement of this statutory nuisance, although it does not own the land concerned. Conservative Members have referred to the Bellwin rules, which were applied in the south-east following the gales of 1987. They could be used, for example, to assist North-East Derbyshire district council. The council, which pays a 0·15p rate would then have 75 per cent. of its net expenditure grant aided.

I tried to pursue that issue last week in the context of Northern Ireland appropriation discussions on the Strabane floods, which occurred at about that time. The

provision should be used—and I hope that the Government will get round to using it—in the case of the gale damage that occurred in Scotland on 13 February. It would be nice to know whether there could be an interpretation of the Bellwin rules that would allow them to extend beyond the area of southern gales.

The Dronfield fire illustrates the massive problem facing North East Derbyshire district council. It receives the lowest grant-related expenditure per head of population of any of the nine councils in Derbyshire. On environmental and social problems for 1987-88, for example, it received less than one fifth of the figure for Chesterfield borough, although the two areas integrate considerably. It is eighth in terms of expenditure for the physical features of the area and I think that the Minister would agree, in view of what I have said that there are problems about the physical features of the area because it has been polluted. The council loses out in terms of the people of the area because people have to move out of the area to work and few people come in as visitors because the area has few leisure activities or entertainment facilities.

Under the poll tax, the area's prospects for environmental issues are bleak. The environmental matters that I have raised—opencast mining, mining subsidence, river pollution, airborne pollution, hazardous waste disposal, dereliction and the underground fire—call for collective action and democratic involvement and participation. It is evident that the Government can deliver on those issues only to the extent that they abandon their free enterprise philosophy.

7.16 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I congratulate the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on putting to the House some of his constituents' concerns. It also provides me with an opportunity to give an account to the House of some of the steps that the Government are taking, not only in response to the specific interests of his constituency, but on a more general level.

As the hon. Gentleman said, no man, woman or child is an island. We are confronted with various environmental challenges which affect not only the islands of the United Kingdom but affect us globally. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the singularly successful conference on saving the ozone layer which the Government held last week and at which 123 nations were represented, many at ministerial level, working together constructively and realistically to find ways of reducing the threat to the ozone layer. By the end of the conference, the number of countries prepared to become parties to the Montreal protocol had effectively doubled. As the hon. Gentleman said, the citizens of Derbyshire, like those of every other part of the country, are affected by the future of the ozone layer. We face similar environmental challenges in the questions of climate change and the greenhouse gases, which the hon. Gentleman did not mention.

The hon. Gentleman challenged seriously the extent to which a free market economy can properly and effectively deal with pollution control and protect the environment. I want to take the opportunity to challenge that assertion profoundly. Only through economic growth and development can industry produce the technology necessary to deal with pollution control. In fairness, the hon. Gentleman referred to the record of Eastern Europe and to the fact that the Chernobyl disaster took place at the far end of Europe. Much of the threat of acid rain is generated by the eastern European countries.

The Department has an environmental protection technology scheme which offers support to new radical ideas to help with pollution control—suggestions for reducing emissions from municipal incinerators, for odour control, or for removing heavy metals or organic compounds from industrial waste water. Only last week we announced a further matter of concern for the environmental protection technology scheme—the reduction and removal of chlorofluorocarbons. The challenge for industry is to develop technology that will meet the needs of pollution control and abatement. A very big market is available if industry is prepared to grasp the opportunities.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): The Minister said that the problems of pollution outlined so well by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) can be dealt with using market forces. Is the hon. Lady aware that in the recent report on toxic waste by the Select Committee on the Environment Leigh Environmental is quoted as having said:

> "We have never been run out of any town yet, and as long as we are making some money out of it, we are not going to be run out of Walsall."?

Does the Minister agree that it is not merely a question of having new technology to deal with the pollution problems of the future? We need to regulate and control companies which are concerned only with making money and which are not prepared to invest in an infrastructure, which would clear up the dereliction and contamination that have developed purely because of the failure to have regard to such investment.

Mrs. Bottomley: As I move on, the hon. Lady will realise that I share many of those views. Regulations, licensing, the enforcement of the necessary requirements is a vital part of the Government's role and of waste regulation authorities. I hope to outline in more detail later our proposal for updating our waste disposal laws. I hope that that will bring the hon. Lady confidence on that front.

Let me deal with north-east Derbyshire. The Government are already committed financially to helping with environmental regeneration support. For example in 1988-89, more than £12 million has been allocated for derelict land grant schemes—a further increase on this year's record level of expenditure. Almost £2·6 million will be spent on coalfield dereliction in the east midlands of which more than £1 million will be spent by Derbyshire county council in north-east Derbyshire. That represents concrete financial recognition of the hon. Gentleman's point about the difficulties for his constituency in adjusting to the change in the coal industry. I appreciate and understand the part played by the coal mining industry in the history of the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the pollution of the River Rother. In general, our rivers are of a high standard. Over 90 per cent. of the length of our rivers is already of good or fair quality, as compared with an average of only 75 per cent. throughout the European Community. The Thames has 100 different species of fish: even salmon can be caught in it. The Tyne, the Wear and the Tees have all improved greatly in recent years. I am aware, however,

[Mrs. Bottomley]

that rivers in north-east Derbyshire and south Yorkshire, including the Rother and the Don, are among the most polluted rivers remaining, with much of their length classified as poor or bad. We are anything but complacent. We are committed to several steps designed to ensure that the remaining pollution black spots are eradicated as quickly as possible.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) referred to the importance of regulation and the enforcement of standards. The crucial point of the National Rivers Authority, which will be established as a result of water privatisation, is that, for the first time, the role of poacher and gamekeeper will be separated. There will be no confusion, no compromise, and no difficulty in setting the necessary standards and ensuring that they are properly enforced.

Ms. Walley: I emphasise that, whatever the Minister may have said about rivers, we have seen a deterioration of river quality. As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East said, there has been grave cause for concern in north-east Derbyshire. I wonder whether, rather than make general points, the Minister will tell the House—if not now, she could write to my hon. Friend—how many applications are being made in north-east Derbyshire for relaxed consents between now and when the water privatisation will come into effect?

Severn-Trent is responding to invitations from the Department of the Environment to submit sewage discharge consents which could be relaxed. The standards that the Minister talks about are not good standards if they have been considerably lowered. It is a matter of when they come into force. We need specific information about how many relaxed consents there will be in north-east Derbyshire.

Mrs. Bottomley: I will come back to the hon. Lady with that specific information. I will probably write to her in due course.

Capital spending by water authorities is at its highest level since 1973. The purpose of the National Rivers Authority is to set and enforce the necessary standards which we all want for our rivers.

There has been concern about pollution in the River Drone. Sewage disposal has been a source of concern.

Mr. Barnes: I had intended to raise this issue. The problem is that a large commuter town has grown up, and the existing sewerage arrangements are obviously inadequate. The River Drone moves through Unstone, and passes schools, and so on. It is often an open sewer. It finds its way into the River Rother.

Mrs. Bottomley: Indeed.

Poor quality sewage effluents are recognised as a significant cause of river pollution. Investment in sewage treatment and disposal by water authorities has been steadily rising throughout the 1980s, and it will more than double over the next four years, partly as a result of a major programme at a cost of about £1 billion, which we have announced, aimed at bringing substandard sewage works into full compliance with their discharge consents by March 1992. The programme is complementary to the existing programmes which water authorities already have in hand for improvements to their works to achieve planned upgrading of rivers.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Staveley chemicals firm. It is important to recognise that badly polluted rivers—often the legacy of the industrial revolution—obviously cannot be cleaned up overnight. Sensible time scales have to be set—which take account of the substantial improvements needed to many plants—to allow sufficient time for the design, construction and commissioning of the work involved. I understand that major discharges to the Rother have the necessary improvements planned. Of course, it will be for the National Rivers Authority to ensure that the improvements are satisfactorily carried out and, if not, that adequate enforcement powers will be available to it.

The Government are strongly committed to improving the quality of our water. Following the second conference on the North sea, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hosted just over a year ago, several proposals were made by all North sea countries on steps that should be taken to improve the quality of our water and the North sea. We were among the first countries bordering the North sea to come forward with our own red list—the list of especially toxic, persistent substances that are liable to bio-accumulate, that we believe are most damaging to our water and that we hope to see reduced to at least 50 per cent.

Mr. Barnes: The hon. Lady is moving beyond the River Rother. Derbyshire county council has been trying to do a great deal in connection with the River Rother and in discussions with the Yorkshire water authority. It was unfortunate that the Yorkshire water authority pulled out of a seminar that was organised between the various interested groups—such as itself, the Clean River Campaign and the Derbyshire county council. In view of the current circumstances and possible developments, it would be fruitful if those discussions and negotiations were re-opened.

Mrs. Bottomley: Obviously, I cannot comment on those particular circumstances. I can only reiterate the basic commitment to our rivers and to our waterways; the crucial part that will be played by the National Rivers Authority, and that in the national context, our rivers are of generally good or fair standard. However, we recognise that the rivers to which the hon. Gentleman referred are ones that require special consideration. I believe that both the investment programme and the framework of legislation and control that we are outlining will make a major contribution to achieving the end that I believe we all agree we want to reach.

It is my understanding that the Leigh group commissioned a chemical incinerator at Killamarsh for the disposal of simple low-chlorine slightly contaminated solvents. I recognise the concern of local residents because of past problems with other plants of that nature. I would point out that the incinerator now operates without problems.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) wrote to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East to explain that Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is monitoring the position to ensure that the best practicable means are used to minimise emissions to the air. The plant currently meets

all the European Community emission standards. The fact is that, as in other areas, good practice and the proper respect for pollution requirements must be maintained by all industries.

Mr. Meale: I am interested in what the hon. Lady has said about air pollution. However, she is aware of the changes that the Government are about to make in respect of the air pollution inspectorate, which will make it virtually impossible for inspectors to inspect. Rather they will be confined to industries and to their desks on a regional basis. Will the hon. Lady comment on that?

Mrs. Bottomley: The Government are preparing legislation that will give statutory backing to an integrated system of pollution control. It is true that in the past the inspectors of hazardous waste, of radioactive substances and of air pollution have all worked rather separately. We have reorganised the pollution inspectorate to establish an integrated model. We have no doubt that that is the most effective way in which to organise the pollution inspectors, because inevitably the pollution of the air, of the land and of the water are closely related. We have no doubt that it will lead to a more effective system of pollution control.

Mr. Meale: I can understand that the inspectorate will become more efficient if it is placed on an industrial basis, but will the Minister explain how that will make it more effective? That new base will be double the size of the regions that it once covered and, at the same time, the link with local authorities will be broken. They will no longer be able to notify the inspectorate on an area basis—a much smaller basis—which guaranteed a much quicker response. Because of the size of the new area to be covered, the inspectors will be confined to their desks, so how will the change make the inspectorate more effective?

Mrs. Bottomley: The most effective way in which to achieve the goal that the hon. Gentleman and I share is a matter of judgment. The hon. Gentleman advances the small is beautiful argument, but we believe that the most effective way in which to deploy Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is to integrate that inspectorate and for it to work on a regional basis. Obviously there will be an opportunity to debate this further when we come forward with our green Bill which provides the statutory backing for it.

By having an integrated inspectorate it will be much more effective in regulating industrial processes that cross some industrial boundaries. Therefore, a particular industry will not be faced with an inspector from a different, unrelated sector of the inspectorate. I believe that that is a convincing argument for such an integrated inspectorate. I would welcome the opportunity for a full-blown debate on integrated pollution control and perhaps the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) will put in for a debate on that subject on another occasion.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East mentioned the Coalite works and he may know that its operations have been systematically monitored by HMIP and by inspectors from the Health and Safety Executive. Its waste is of concern to the county council as a waste disposal authority and I assure the hon. Gentleman that there is a full framework of control over Coalite's operations. The new system of integrated pollution control will strengthen the position and provide a cross-media approach, which will ensure that the environment receives new and further protection.

I am aware that Renishaw Park pit is due to be closed by British Coal at the end of the month. The colliery site lies within the approved north-east Derbyshire green belt. I understand that Derbyshire county council is keen to acquire the land following closure to implement a derelict land grant-aided scheme to reclaim the site for soft—after uses compatible with green belt policy—whether that means agricultural, forestry or recreational use or use as an open space—which would also secure significant environmental improvement.

The future ownership of the site is a matter for negotiation between British Coal and any interested parties. If, as a result of such negotiations, the county council were able to secure an agreement in principle to acquire the site, the Department's regional office at Nottingham is, as always, willing to consider with the county council the prospects for grant aid.

Mr. Barnes: Renishaw Park pit had a good seam that was worked and which, at one time, extended its life beyond what British Coal wanted. Surely it is worrying that opencast mines are next to that pit. Therefore the same coal that was once collected from what was virtually a drift mine will be collected by opencast techniques. It is not just the jobs at the pit that will go, but other jobs that served the pit community. The prosperity created by those wages will also go.

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman referred to the impact of opencast coal on the environment. There is no Government target for coal production or opencast output. We believe that that is a matter for the market. It is for the industry to decide the level of opencast output for which it wants to aim in any period, but it is for the mineral planning authorities initially, and ultimately for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment —if the case comes before him on appeal, or on call-in —to determine the acceptability of specific projects, having regard to the benefit of opencast coal and the proposal itself, the environmental and other material considerations relating to the specific site.

The Government recognise that, although mineral workings are temporary uses of land, they can have a serious impact on the environment. At the same time, minerals are essential for the economy and can be worked only where they occur. It is the job of the planning system to balance the need for the minerals against environmental and other factors. Our aim is to encourage a positive and constructive approach by the industry and the mineral planning authorities, to ensure that this important resource is extracted in an environmentally sensitive way.

Imports through Humberside are another source of concern to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East. The Government have no plans to ban coal imports from whatever source. The CEGB and the SSEB are already free to import coal if they choose. Private generators will retain this freedom. Coal is likely to remain the primary source of our electricity supply industry for many years, regardless of whether the industry is public or private.

British Coal must be the supplier of choice, not of necessity or compulsion. Its share of the market will and should depend on its ability to improve its efficiency and to provide reliable supplies of competitively priced coal. Pit

[Mrs. Bottomley]

closures, although extremely stressful for the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East and people in the affected constituency, are a matter for British Coal to decide, after careful reviews of individual pits. Current closures are not due to privatisation; they would have happened anyway as part of the continuing restructuring of the industry——

Mr. Meale: I am interested to hear the hon. Lady's views on the effect that pit closures will have on communities. Does she recall that a few years ago the area that I represent stood firmly by the Government during the miners' strike and kept on producing, with a promise of a great future? Since then, the area has sustained closure after closure. Because of lack of Government action and because of the Associated British Ports (No.2) Bill which will shortly be passed, a possible further 12 of the remaining 18 pits in Nottinghamshire will close. Does the Minister think that the Government should honour the promises given at that time?

Mrs. Bottomley: We believe that one of the reasons for the overall economic strength of this country is that we have not been prepared to make arbitrary and artificial decisions, or sought to ensure the maintenance of many industries as a form of social or community security. I said that I understood that the closure of a pit was stressful. Any community that has traditionally relied on a particular industry for its support will inevitably undergo stress during a time of transition, but it would be wrong for the Government to try to counteract the market.

We recognise some of the difficulties involved. That is why I stressed the sizable amounts of derelict land grant which are provided for circumstances such as this——

Mr. Meale: Does the hon. Lady recall what the Government did during the miners' strike? What has changed since then?

Mr. Barnes: One area in which the derelict land legislation moneys were never used and in which great pressure was exerted by the North-East Derbyshire district council to persuade the Department of the Environment to use such provision is in connection with the Dronfield underground fire. Having failed on that, we are now trying the Bellwin scheme as an avenue for provision. There is a great problem in the area, not just because of the closure of the pits. The decline of the railways has meant that areas such as Barrow Hill have been affected. The decline in the steel industry means that people moving into the Sheffield and Rotherham area to work have been affected. Also, there was a great deal of traditional iron malleable foundry work there. There are great problems, which reinforce each other and mean that when employment improves a little in the western part of the constituency the situation in the east worsens.

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall try to confine myself to the aspects of this question which concern my ministerial responsibilities rather than re-opening the debate on the miners' dispute, which most of us feel is well and truly behind us. I understand that there are hon. Gentlemen who want to re-fight old battles, but I do not wish to follow them down that track.

The Government recognise many of the needs of Derbyshire, which is why this year grant is rising by £23 million, so that it will receive a total of £148·6 million as its entitlement, quite apart from the amounts produced by derelict land grant and other sources of income.

The hon. Gentleman made reference to the Dronfield underground fire and I admire his campaign to try to use the Bellwin rules to meet this need, but the fact is that they are simply not appropriate to those circumstances. No Government assistance, as he knows, could be made available to meet the cost of putting out the fire. The court judgment recognised that the financial responsibility lay with the owners and occupier of the site, and the council should press ahead as hard as it can with efforts to recover the cost of the works that have been done.

The hon. Gentleman referred also to his concerns about subsidence at Staveley. The day-to-day management of the subsidence repair and compensation system is the responsibility of British Coal. I understand, as the hon. Gentleman said, that he has had discussions with British Coal, both locally and nationally, and I understand that 60 per cent. of the claims in the Hartington estate have now been resolved. Decisions on coal mining subsidence legislation will be taken in due course, after careful consideration of all the comments received on the Government's consultation paper, issued last year, and legislation will be introduced when the parliamentary timetable permits.

The hon. Gentleman also made reference to questions of air pollution, particularly in relation to Biwaters. Air pollution from industrial processes, which is the most difficult to control, is the responsibility of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, and we touched on its work earlier in our debate. The processes scheduled for air pollution control may not be started until they have received inspectorate approval, and the inspectorate will not issue such approval until it is satisfied that the best practical means have been used to prevent atmospheric emissions from the processes, and that any emissions that cannot be prevented are made harmless and inoffensive.

The inspectorate undertakes regular inspections and requires pollution controls to be tightened as and when appropriate. The prior approval approach has been broadly endorsed in a European Community directive on the combating of air pollution from industrial plants. We intend to extend this system of prior approval to a second tier of industrial processes under the control of local authorities. A consultation paper seeking views on the new processes to be scheduled was published in December 1988. As a first step, regulations were laid last Thursday, adding to the number of processes scheduled for control by the inspectorate. The regulations also require applications to be made available for public comment and approvals to be placed on a public register. I hope that that will meet with approval from hon. Members.

We also recognise that pollution control cannot be compartmentalised into air, water and waste. The consultation paper which the Government issued in July 1988 proposed a system of integrated pollution control for certain types of industrial processes which discharge significant quantities of harmful waste, including all processes currently scheduled by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution from the point of view of air pollution. When we have had the opportunity to bring forward legislation to provide the necessary backing for the integrated pollution inspectorate, we shall once again be leaders in that important area.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East referred to the extraction of limestone. The extraction of limestone is a case study of the ramifications of pollution control. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East will be aware that, with the £1 to £2 billion gas desulphurisation programme, to which we agreed, and the large combustion plant directive from the EEC to reduce the effects of acid rain, we have embarked on a major programme. The Drax programme will be the largest gas desulphurisation programme in the Community while our overall programme is the second largest.

Our programme requires a great deal of limestone and it is an example of how one form of pollution control and abatement has effects in other areas of the community. I am aware of the environmental problems arising from quarrying at Milltown and Ashover and of the impact of heavy goods traffic serving the quarry. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East will appreciate that transport matters do not concern me.

Mr. Barnes: The only problem with limestone extraction at Milltown, which the Minister has justified as being used for socially useful purposes, is that it is not part of the planning agreement. The planning agreement refers to the thin streams of fluorspar and other minerals in the limestone.

Mrs. Bottomley: I will consider the hon. Gentleman's comments further. However, I understand that Derbyshire county council has been the minerals planning authority and the highway authority and is considering whether the current mining operations contravene the planning permission for mineral extraction under which the quarry operates and if so whether enforcement would be appropriate. As any enforcement may lead to an appeal to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the merits of the situation at present.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East also referred to the use of nuclear power. The Government believe that a balance of fuels is necessary and it would be unwise to rule nuclear fuel out altogether. Although I understand the hon. Gentleman's view and his particular constituency interest, the fact is that nuclear energy does not produce carbon dioxide which is the most prevalent greenhouse effect gas. Neither does it produce acid rain and in some cases it can be argued that it is particularly environmentally sensitive.

The transport of all radioactive material in the United Kingdom is subject to stringent internationally agreed standards laid down by the International Atomic Agency. Those standards prescribe that safety is built in to any package design for the carriage of radioactive materials by whatever mode of transport so that even in the case of a severe accident in transport there would be no significant radiological hazard to the public, workers or staff of the emergency services. Long-standing and frequently rehearsed plans are in place to respond to any incident, on any scale, in any location.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East has outlined a number of environmental concerns in his constituency. They are all subjects to which the Government are giving detailed consideration. We hope to bring forward proposals for legislation to update our waste disposal laws. Derbyshire county council, as the waste disposal authority, has a particular responsibility for licensing, regulation and enforcement of proper waste management standards. We hope also to bring forward proposals to strengthen air pollution controls and to give statutory backing to the integrated system of pollution control.

In his opening remarks, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East said that no man, woman or child is an island. That is very much the Government's view, whether combating threats to the environment on a global, national or local level. It may be that the many citizens of Derbyshire will think that they would get better value for money and better services for the rates—soon, the community charge—that they pay if Derbyshire decided, instead of being a nuclear-free zone, to turn itself into a litter-free zone.

7.55 am

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on setting out so clearly the environmental problems confronting his constituents. North-east Derbyshire is not an island, and many areas in the north face precisely the same problems. Whatever the Minister may say, when my hon. Friend returns to his constituency tomorrow morning the fire will still be raging underground. As the Minister said, there is no clear way of finding Government money to deal with such an environmental disaster.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Without a Government commitment to provide the necessary finance and resources, the problems caused by opencast coal mining, derelict land and British Coal will continue. As to the ozone layer, I should have liked to hear the Minister say that the Government will be as involved in developments in The Hague as they were in their own conference last weekend. There is a strong case for a ban on CFC production, and the Government must develop a clear programme for dealing with that aspect.

As for Leigh Environmental, I have made it clear that there is grave concern about the way in which that company operates in the west midlands, and it seems that concern is shared in north-east Derbyshire. How many sites and operations does the company own? I understand that it has been buying up haulage businesses and landfill sites at an alarming rate. If the state of the company's operations is as bad as we have heard, we need to know whether it is in a position to carry out the waste management functions for which it has responsibility without risk to the environment.

On the inspectorate of pollution, the Government's attitude to integrated pollution control would be easier to understand if it included proposals for water. Instead, water is to be dealt with separately. We welcome the National Rivers Authority, but why cannot water be part of an integrated pollution control programme?

With regard to local authorities, it is regrettable that the Minister attacked Derbyshire county council for being a nuclear-free zone. It is clear from my hon. Friend's comments that Derbyshire is dealing with environmental issues as well as it can, given the Government's financial restrictions. Will there be a rolling programme in respect of derelict land, and so on? Will Derbyshire county council and other local authorities trying to deal with the legacy of

[Ms. Joan Walley]

derelict land be able to progress confidently in the knowledge that there will be a rolling programme, or will there only be one-off grants?

I was concerned when the Minister said that there was no Government target for opencast coal mining. I do not believe that this can be left to the industry. All over the country great wounds are opening up where opencast mining is being established, simply because it is cheaper to get coal out of the ground in that way than to do it through more traditional deep-pit mining methods. Considerable environmental hazards may result, which should be a matter of concern to a Government who profess to care so much about the environment. I should like to see a greatly reduced target. Left to market forces, British Coal is creating huge environmental problems all over the country.

Mrs. Bottomley: Will the hon. Lady confirm that she appreciated the point that it is for the planning system to balance mineral considerations against environmental and other factors? Environmental considerations are certainly regarded, but at the planning stage.

Ms. Walley: I only wish that that were so, and that a series of planning decisions made by local authorities had not been overruled by the Secretary of State. If we could leave it to local authorities to act through the planning procedure without the iron fist of the Secretary of State interfering, fewer planning decisions on opencast coal mining would be overturned.

We are worried about compartmentalism. We were told earlier that transport was a matter for the Department of Transport, which suggests that unless a joint initiative can be taken embracing all Government Departments from Transport to Energy—if we continue to compartmentalise every problem of environmental protection without looking at the whole in an integrated way—we shall continue to experience all the problems that have been so clearly described.

I wish that our discussion on north-east Derbyshire could be taken up by every hon. Member to allow close scrutiny of environmental issues, and that instead of a lot of talk about integrated pollution control we could have a Government committed to acting in a genuinely integrated way and to ensuring that resources are available to local authorities, which know best how to deal with the problems.

Trident

8.2 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I admit that when I found that I was 12th on the list of speakers and that there were 18 hours of debate in front of me I did not expect to speak at all. I am delighted to be able to raise the issue and to try to press the Government for some answers.

I do not wish to talk about the morality of Trident, or even about its current costs. I want to return to the issue that I raised in the Royal Navy debate—it has, I believe, been raised on other occasions as well—namely, the question of its credibility and efficiency.

I understand that, while reviewing Labour party policy on nuclear weapons my hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench have been reluctant to become involved in the general debate. I feel, however, that if they paid more attention to the question of the system's credibility and its command and control that would be very useful. If evidence were drawn up of how many questions about that have not been answered, it would help the country to develop a logical policy to get rid of nuclear weapons.

Let me deal first with the insult that the Minister uttered in the Navy debate. It was not the sort of thing that he would have said on reflection, although I realise that he was stung into it as a result of an intervention. On 28 February, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said:

> "Yes, I have deliberately dodged the question of command and control of Trident. In repeated answers to the hon. Gentleman I have told him that this is classified information. We do not intend to reveal to him how we communicate with our submarines or how we intend to do so in the future. That information would be of enormous use to the Soviet Union."
> —[*Official Report*, 28 February 1989; Vol. 148 c. 249.]

That is absolute rubbish. There is no doubt that the Soviet Union can find out how we communicate with our submarines. It is perfectly easy to put together a great deal of information from published material in Britain, without having to examine material published in the United States and elsewhere.

If the Government are out to deceive anyone, it is not the Soviet Union, it is the British public. They do not want a proper debate about the credibility of Trident because they believe that if the information were made available, the British public would see through the Trident farce. I am not seeking to get the information for which I asked because I have no desire to damage our national security, although I see no way in which our national security would be damaged if any of the questions I have tabled or points I raised in the Navy debate were answered. But I repeat to the House that I am not in the business of damaging national security. I am interested in the House of Commons having effective control over the Executive.

The system has no credibility, so the Government are covering it up. It is a case of the Emperor's new clothes. For our deterrent to be credible we have to establish clearly to any agressor that it is independent, that we have proper command and control over it and that we are in a position to use it. The United States clearly understands that that has to be established and that there has to be a proper debate about command and control. Most of the questions that I have asked the Government have been asked in the United States and answered. In the United States there is a clear public debate about the form of its

weapon control systems. Even in France, which is traditionally a secretive country the TACAMO-type system that controls their submarines is discussed.

The United Kingdom Government has a history of avoiding political debate in the guise of secrecy. The number of statements that have been released when Cabinet papers have become available which have nothing to do with the technical details of defence systems but have much more to do with political systems is amazing. We have Macmillan's views on nuclear weapons and we have the way in which the Chevaline programme was pushed through with no report or accountability to Parliament. We have the quote from Robert MacNamara that I mentioned in the Navy debate, when he attended NATO meetings in 1962 and questioned the credibility of the British nuclear deterrent. That information was not released in the United States until 1979—17 years after the statement was made—and as far as I am aware, it has not been revealed in Britain.

The Government have a tremendous desire to avoid a proper debate about nuclear weapons systems. Even when the Prime Minister is challenged about Trident, she brushes aside the question of its credibility and effectiveness with the bland statement that for 40 years nuclear weapons have kept the peace in Europe. There is never any mention of the British independent deterrent contributing to that.

I want to return to the key questions that should be answered. Have the Government really worked out what can be done about the effects of electromagnetic pulses? What happens if a nuclear bomb is exploded at high altitude? Will such an explosion effect almost all our radio communications systems? As far as I know there is not one shred of evidence in Britain that low frequency, medium frequency, high frequency or ultra-high frequency radio transmitters in the United Kingdom are not vulnerable to electromagnetic pulse. All the evidence is that communications will be virtually impossible by any of the traditional radio methods with submarines or elsewhere. When we turn to the RAF and its reports, it openly admits that there would be a major problem with communications if such a nuclear weapon was ever exploded.

When we come to the Navy and the command and control of submarines, the Government are not prepared to discuss the problem. Perhaps it is because of the second key question—whether there is an inherent problem with submarines as a base for deterrent weapons. If there are to be easy communications with submarines, they are extremely vulnerable. If the submarines are to be made as safe as possible from enemy attack, they can be hidden away on the ocean floor, but if that happens, communication with them will be very difficult. Submarines might be reasonable as a first strike force, but if they are to be a deterrent, and if the Prime Minister, the Government and the nation are committed to not using them as a first strike but only in retaliation, the Government have to deal with the question how they can get political command for the weapons to be fired in retaliation when it is likely that the communications system will have been destroyed by the first strike.

I question the Minister on the logic behind the decision to develop experimental low frequency transmitters at Glengarry forest near Invergarry in Scotland. Is that recognition that the existing system of command and control would not work? If that is not the reason for it, why are these transmitters to be built? As I understand it, work on the experimental transmitters is planned to start in 1991-92, if planning permission is given, and would be completed by about 1994. The Minister ought to be able to tell us how much the experimental transmitters will cost, whether they will be operationally effective systems, or whether there will be merely an experimental transmitter which will have to be replaced later by an operational system.

What information will be given to the planning inquiry? If there is to be an effective planning inquiry the people will want to know about cost, use and efficiency, and whether there are likely to be adverse effects from the extremely low radio transmitter. If it is only an experiment, and if it is decided later that the experiment has been successful and that a larger station will be built, the people will want to know whether it will be built on the same site and whether the initial planning permission will pre-empt the decision about a larger system being built in future.

We should also be told by the Government whether there are alternatives to extremely low frequency transmitters, whether the Government are investigating a form of laser system and what the cost of that might be.

The Government have also to answer the question I posed in the Navy debate about what we have as an early warning system. We understood in the past that Fylingdales early warning system, installed basically by the United States, was supposed to share information with Britain. As I understand it, the United States is spending most on updating that radar system. The Government should tell the House whether there is a clear understanding that the early warning system will be shared with the United Kingdom Government, particularly if we wanted to use our deterrent independently of the United States.

The Government should also tell us why they have committed themselves so firmly not to go for a TACAMO system of communication, where there is a trailing wire from an aeroplane which acts as a transmitter to communicate with submarines. The French seem to believe that if they are to have command and control it is absolutely essential that they have this system, but all the information I can find suggests that the British Government do not seem to be prepared to use it.

The other question that we have to ask is whether the British Government are not really avoiding all the costs of a command and control system by simply relying on the United States for its communications system. If that is what is going on, we have no credibility as a nation with an independent deterrent. I can understand how the Minister, for political reasons, would want to avoid letting the House know that we have to rely on the Americans for our communications system, but it is a matter that should be in the public domain.

There has been considerable speculation in the newspapers, particularly an article in the *New Statesman*, that our whole programme for the development of warheads for the Trident is a very long way behind and that, possibly, there is not sufficient material for their manufacture. The Government ought to make the position clear. If they want their deterrent to have any credibility, it is in their interests to tell people that they have an efficient system. The only reason for hiding behind secrecy would be knowledge of a major problem in the production of the warheads. If there is such a problem, it puts in doubt the £10 million that is being spent.

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

I want to deal briefly with the question whether the system will be independent. What contingency plans do the Government have? When I last put that question, it was dodged. If, as we all hope, the negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States succeed, if the levels of nuclear weapons are reduced, and especially if any deal results in the elimination of the United States Trident system, what will happen to Britain, which is so dependent on the United States for the supply and servicing of its system? Is there an absolute guarantee that if the United States abandons its own production and servicing lines, our costs will not change dramatically?

Since the Government believe very firmly in multilateral disarmament, they should tell us how they intend to get Trident into any negotiations that are going on. The system is supposed to have a life that will take it up to the year 2015 at least. It seems to me that the Government ought to have a clear strategy if they want people to believe that they are really committed to multilateral disarmament. I understand their wanting to keep the fiction that by 1994 or 1995 there will be a fully operational Trident deterrent system in place and that it will not cost any extra, but they will have to answer the questions that have been posed in this debate if they are to continue to make that claim.

It is absolutely clear that Trident is a total waste of time unless it can be used as a deterrent. I am very relieved that the Prime Minister has made it clear that even she would not consider using it as a first strike weapon, that it is intended purely as a retaliatory system. But it can have credibility as a retaliatory system only if there is effective political command and control—if the Government can decide to fire, rather than leave that decision to an individual commander who is unable to communicate with anyone.

If one looks closely at published American, French and NATO information, and even at available Soviet information, one gets the impression that there are major problems with command and control of a submarine-based system. The only excuse for the Minister not answering these questions is that he knows that we do not have an efficient independent command and control system and he wants to keep a vestige of credibility by hiding behind a veil of secrecy.

I am deliberately not taking much time today because these points have been put to the Minister previously, and this time I should like to hear some answers.

8.20 am

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): The timing of this debate is about right—certainly for myself, because I had the pleasure of being a member of a delegation on the scientific, technological and aerospace committee of the Western European Union, which was with General Dynamics in San Diego last Friday. During the question and answer session that always takes place, and realising that we were not a highly classified committee—in other words, some members of the committee were of the far Left, especially among the European members—it was impossible to get across the type of detail that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) would wish because when he discusses the credibility of the whole system, the command-control and the information that a commander-in-chief would need during a crisis or emergency, he moves into a highly classified area. He has probably not realised that fibre optics are almost old hat now and that we now use a system of photonics with a laser controlling vast data banks, which could be used by the commander-in-chief.

One question that arose was whether the Trident programme had slipped. One always imagines that there is slippage in these vast programmes. However, we were told firmly by several vice-presidents of the company that the Trident programme was not only on time but, if anything, a little ahead of time. Such facts need to be raised.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish referred to the sum of £10 billion, but if he looks at page 10 of the Defence Estimates for 1987-88, he will see that in the submarine section, annual expenditure is more in the region of £431 million per annum. That puts the sum more in context than to keep on saying, parrot-like, over many years, "£10 billion; £10 billion; £10 billion."

Mr. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Hill: I shall give way later to the hon. Gentleman by all means, but I am elaborating my case at the moment.

I do not believe that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement was being deliberately rude, and no insult was intended, when he said that he could not give classified information to the House of Commons. It is only sensible to say that as *Hansard* is printed, and what is spoken about here is available for everybody to read the next day. I am fully behind my hon. Friend in restricting a certain amount of information because of its classification. I do not think that my Government would, at any time, set out to deceive the British public. On the point of whether the Trident system will be fully independent, I am fully assured that it will be so.

Mr. Bennett: While the hon. Gentleman is on the question of the cost of £10 billion, how much in that costing figure is for a communication system or is an existing communication system to be used, thus involving no cost?

Mr. Hill: A communication programme would be an additional cost, and an anti-satellite programme would have to be costed. We receive many of our communications from satellites, and the cost of ensuring that they could operate and be properly protected would have to be taken into account. I do not know whether, when the Trident contract was signed, communications such as photonics were foreseen. I am unaware of the cost of it, information which again I am sure is classified, as my hon. Friend the Minister will make clear when he replies to the debate.

If anything, we are too mealy-mouthed about our underwater defence fleet. Reading through official documents, one becomes aware of how well defence contractors in the north and in Scotland do from the defence industry. Vickers, which is involved in the Trident programme, Yarrow, Swan Hunter and Vosper Thornycroft, which builds minesweepers, regard Navy contracts almost as their whole livelihoods.

We could be more adventurous in our spending on the underwater fleet. Currently, we anticipate that the cost of the type 2400 Upholder will be £550 million. We are almost getting our defence programme on the cheap. We

are all concerned that the Navy should be able to defend us in times of emergency. Although the Prime Minister has said that Trident will not be a first-strike weapon, we must be assured that its use will not be so neutral that it will lose its effectiveness.

The number of personnel for the submarine fleet is minute. In 1982-83 it was 2,900, but in 1988-89 it is 3,000, which is not a tremendous increase. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister is fully aware of the need to make savings, but to make them in the submarine fleet would be short-sighted.

We had an interesting debate at General Dynamics about cruise and Tomahawk missiles, part of the INF treaty, being returned to the Lindberg field, where they are being dismantled. Russian verification observers have paid two visits, which went smoothly. The scrapping of those nuclear weapons shows the faith that the United States and its allies have in the INF treaty. There is a further need for a chemical warfare treaty and a conventional arms treaty. Gorbachev has made magnificent offers to reduce the numbers of tanks, but Russia's present tank capability would be extremely frightening in a European war.

Those are the problems that we shall meet in the future. We should not let down our guard at any time. I am sure that Mr. Gorbachev will be in power for many years and will succeed in his almost revolutionary changes in policy. But it would be as well for the United Kingdom Government to realise that politics in the USSR are unpredictable—almost as unpredictable as politics in South Africa. If we allow ourselves to be lulled into a state in which we think, "This is going our way", we may be caught out without the defence programme that we need.

8.30 am

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I want first to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on obtaining an opportunity to raise an important topic, which he has raised several times in the House. He has argued his case forcefully and as he produces increasing evidence about the command control and communications system, he seems to receive increasingly less from Ministers. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity while it is quiet, with few hon. Members present, to answer in detail some of the questions raised by my hon. Friend not only this morning, but a couple of weeks ago, when we had a debate on the Navy. I want to emphasise some of the points made by my hon. Friend this morning in the hope that receiving a double dose may encourage the Minister more.

There are two important questions about the Trident command control and communications system. The first is whether it is independent and the second is whether it could survive survive a nuclear attack. The arguments over whether Trident has a fully independent command control and communications system are complex. Needless to say, it is impossible to prove the case that we are dependent on the United States for communicating with our missile-carrying submarines with the information that is currently in the public domain. I rely on *Hansard* of 23 May 1988, columns *37* and *38*, in which my hon. Friend tabled a series of questions on a series of topics. To say that the answers were thin, negative and dismissive understates the responses he received.

There are various methods of communicating with submarines. It is not certain that they all depend on the use of United States equipment or United States communications channels. Another, even more complicated problem, is whether the Trident command control and communications system can survive a nuclear attack. It is certainly hard to imagine how our Trident communications system could escape heavy damage in a nuclear attack. It is also hard to imagine that anyone would be left to issue orders to our Trident submarines after a full-scale attack. Given the amount of information in the public domain, it is impossible to be certain that communications would not break down completely. We have little information about what back-up systems could be used in a war.

The procurement of Trident is an area of extreme sensitivity for this Government. They devote an increasingly large amount of the defence budget to this programme and put considerable time and effort into monitoring its progress. Taking inflation into account, the Government have managed so far to keep costs within the estimates given in 1982 and that is mainly for two reasons, which appear in table II of the third report of the Select Committee on Defence—HC 422, 1987-88. The first is the decision to use missiles from the American stock in King's bay, Georgia. That saved about £770 million in maintenance costs for the missiles. The other cause is the considerable reduction in the amount of expenditure by the United States—partly as a result of exchange rate variations and partly because of savings in the United States missile programme.

Therefore, the only significant way in which the Government have reduced the cost of the Trident programme is by sacrificing our supposed independence by hiring the missiles from the United States. Instead of claiming credit for savings that have nothing to do with them, the Government should be examining their record much more closely.

The Government have had significant problems in the capital works programmes at Aldermaston and Burghfield. In 1980, when the plan was to purchase the C4 missile the Ministry of Defence had hoped to have the A90 production complex in use by 1986, but it is now planned to get it into use by 1992—a delay of six years. That was fully considered by the Select Committee, which pontificated on the reasons for the number of delays.

The Government claim that there will be no delay in the in-service date of 1994 as a result of the problem because they will continue to use the old facility to produce missile components. It is self-evident, therefore, that the old facilities will have to continue in use for much longer than was originaly planned and presumably that will increase the risk of breakdown.

There has been a significant lack of effective parliamentary scrutiny of the Trident programme. A Ministry of Defence report on the Trident programme dated 11 March 1986—page 163, HC 399, Session 1985-86—said that the construction programme continued to make "satisfactory progress". That is a somewhat odd use of English given that in November 1985 the Ministry of Defence hired a seven-man audit team from British Nuclear Fuels plc because of the concern about slippage in the programme. We ascertained that from a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) in which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement said:

"The BNFL programme audit reviewed four major projects and was carried out by a seven-man team, representing 218 man days' effort. It is not the practice to

[Mr. Roland Boyes]

reveal the details of individual contract costs for reasons of commercial confidentiality."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. *158*.]

Perhaps the Minister will comment on that.

Eight meetings were held between the team and the Ministry of Defence between 20 November and 18 December 1985. We ascertained that in a written answer of 18 January 1989 at column *199* of *Hansard*, also in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan. If the programme was making satisfactory progress, why did the Government devote so much time and money to the audit? How many more procurement programmes in the Ministry of Defence budget that we are told are making satisfactory progress have had to have outside teams of experts brought in because of concern about slippage? If the Ministry of Defence is concerned about slippage in procurement programmes, it should tell Parliament before it brings experts in to sort the matter out.

Finally, I come to the question of threat. I referred in the Royal Navy debate to the lack of arms control at sea. Nothing that was said by any Minister or any Conservative Member suggested that there should be naval arms control. Opposition Members think that such talks are essential and urgent.

We have seen a reduction in Soviet naval activity. I am not saying that, at this moment, Soviet procurement has been affected. There is no doubt that the Soviets are continuing to build large numbers of submarines—maybe eight or more a year. Nevertheless, they have made positive moves, mainly in pulling back their ships and submarines. In *The Observer* of 5 March 1989 there was an article by Ian Mather about the withdrawal of Soviet nuclear missile submarines from waters close to Europe and the United States. Obviously, if they are in an aggressive or threatening position, they pull them back. Mather said:

"'The decision stems from Gorbachev's defence doctrine of 'reasonable sufficiency', which has produced other important Soviet arms control initiatives, according to Western intelligence sources."

I only hope that the phrase "reasonable sufficiency" is taken on board by the Government.

Another important article was by John Keegan, the defence editor of the *Daily Telegraph*. I presume that the Minister has read it or even leaked some of the information contained in it. Keegan states:

"There has been a 'distinct reduction' of deployments of submarines and surface ships outside the Soviet navy's home areas in the Baltic and Barents seas during the Gorbachev era."

He went on.

"The Royal Navy is puzzled to explain the reason."

No doubt, the Minister will have good reason to explain that statement. I shall take another couple of minutes, so that he has ample time to consider the matters, particularly those which were raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish.

Admiral Crowe, chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, referring to the Soviet navy, is quoted in the *International Herald Tribune* as saying:

"There is no question that we have seen fewer forward naval deployments."

The hawkish interpretation of the changes is that the main cause for the fall is that the increased range of Soviet submarine-launched ballistic missiles means that Soviet submarines no longer need to be deployed as far forward as they were.

It concerns me that, although the Soviets are making important soundings in an effort to reduce tension—this debate is about sea matters—the Government seem to regard all of Gorbachev's statements in a cynical way. Obviously, one must question and probe what is going on. In a series of speeches since he came to power, Gorbachev has made it absolutely clear that he wants talks, reductions and unilateral and asymmetrical activity. In many instances, he has done what he said he would do. I hope that that the Government will take seriously some of the things that have been said in the Soviet Union and that we can make appropriate reductions in the NATO Alliance, along the lines of what the Warsaw pact countries are doing.

The one thing that is absolutely clear is that the Government are out of step with everybody else. Throughout the world there is no doubt that the present mood is to make the world a safer place by force reductions and less aggressive postures. Only this Government are wanting to be more and more out of step. Even in Europe the Prime Minister is out of step with other Governments in wanting more modernisation of short-range nuclear weapons.

It appears to the Opposition that the Government are hell-bent on continuously increasing the amount, the quantity and the quality of nuclear weapons. The Opposition want to see a worldwide reduction of those horrific weapons.

I shall end with a quotation that shows just how far the Prime Minister is out of step. It is from the *International Herald Tribune*. It says:

"'Things have begun to move in Europe.' Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher of West Germany told an economic conference in Davos, Switzerland, two weeks ago. 'Europe's future is openness. Europe must find its peaceful order. Anyone who adheres to out-dated hostile preconceptions,' he said, 'is opposing the tide of history.'"

That is exactly what the Prime Minister and the Under-Secretary of State for Defence procurement are trying to do.

8.45 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): We can all agree that Trident is a subject that is frequently debated in the House and is also the subject of numerous questions. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) certainly plays his part in ensuring that the subject appears often on the Order Paper. It is rather odd in those circumstances for the Opposition to suggest that the whole programme is subject to some veil of secrecy and that nobody knows anything about it. Compared to Warsaw pact nuclear programmes, I am sure that Trident is most exhaustively discussed. Indeed, when one reflects on the need, in the national interest, to have secrecy, I certainly feel that the Labour Governments have not been perhaps as forthcoming as this Government about nuclear matters.

I am sure that most of those hon. Members who reflect seriously on the matter must appreciate that there are a number of matters in the defence world—not just nuclear—that must remain classified. If they were discussed at length in the House, they would be recorded in *Hansard*, and *Hansard* is widely available. My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) clearly

appreciates that point. It inevitably must mean that Defence Ministers and others must be limited sometimes in their answers to questions. I should have thought that that was something that could be appreciated and supported by anybody who really had defence interests at heart.

Every British Government of both political persuasions have thought it right to maintain an independent strategic nuclear deterrent and also to keep under security classification a large number of aspects of that programme. That policy has consistently received the support of the British people and obviously continues to do so today.

Before turning to the specific questions raised by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish and others, I shall put Trident in the broader perspective. In comparison with the strategic arsenals of the super-powers, the British deterrent is small, but the damage that it can inflict in absolute terms is immense. Indeed, to be effective as a deterrent—the hon. Gentleman was asking if it was effective—it must be capable of inflicting damage on the Soviet Union that would be clearly unacceptable to its leadership.

Deterrence is a matter of perception—perception by the other side and not by us. The United States' commitment to the defence of Europe is clear, but for the United States to use its nuclear weapons in the defence of Europe would be a momentous decision. It is not impossible that at some time circumstances might prevail that would lead the Soviet Union to imagine that it could attack Britain or Europe without risking a nuclear exchange with the United States.

The independent control we retain over our deterrent and the fact that we are prepared to use it in defence of national as well as NATO security, goes to the very heart of why the commitment of our nuclear forces to NATO is so valuable. It creates a second centre of nuclear decision-making within the Alliance. That complicates the Soviet ability to judge the likely response to any attack on NATO in Europe and thereby reduces the chances of such attack.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister therefore realise that it is absolutely essential that he demonstrates to the Soviet Union that we have got independent command and control? If we rely on the United States for that command and control, as an awful lot of people suspect, we do not have an independent deterrent. If the United States is not prepared to use its own sytem neither would it be likely to allow us to use ours.

Mr. Sainsbury: If I demonstrated that independence by explaining exactly how everything worked and thus gave the Soviet Union the maximum opportunity to ensure that it did not work, that would seriously damage the credibility of the deterrent. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is unable to appreciate that point. It is an independent deterrent.

We chose Trident to replace Polaris because we judged it against our requirement to have a credible independent deterrent in the mid-1990s and beyond. We wanted to find the minimum force which fulfilled our defence criteria and which was, at the same time, affordable. Trident represents that minimum and affordable force. It meets the criteria for effective deterrent.

In the Government's judgment those criteria are, first, that the force must have the power to inflict a level of damage which is unacceptable to the Soviet Union; second, it must possess sufficient capability to convince Soviet leaders that, notwithstanding defensive or other measures, its weapons will reach their target. Trident will meet those criteria, no more, no less.

Trident, like Polaris, will be a four-boat force; a force this size is the minimum which will be required to guarantee that one boat is on patrol at all times—as we have maintained with our Polaris force—and that is essential to credibility.

Trident will be a minimum force in terms of boats and in terms of the number of warheads. Contrary to some of the wild claims that have been made, it will carry far less than the maximum theoretical capability of the system, but nonetheless sufficient for deterrence purposes. We have made no secret of the fact that there will be more warheads than currently carried by Polaris. But to appreciate why this extra capability will be needed and will represent only the minimum required for effective deterrence it is necessary to remember the environment in which Trident will be operating. The force will have to cope with Soviet defence systems that did not exist when Polaris entered service.

The range of the Trident D5 missile will enable the launch submarines to operate over a significantly greater area of the sea than their Polaris counterparts. That will be vital if the boats are to maintain patrol undetected in the face of continuing advances by the Soviet Union in anti-submarine warfare techniques.

Time is running short and I should concentrate on those issues of particular concern to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish. Affordability has been discussed, but there is already enough on the record about that. Successive announcements of the Trident costs show that they have come down in real terms after allowing for inflation. The hon. Gentleman has a considerable interest in communications and in the command and control of Trident. He has asked many questions on this subject in the House and my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces has repeatedly told him that that is classified information. We do not intend to reveal to him how we currently communicate with our submarines nor how we intend to communicate with them in the future. This is an area of immense interest to the Soviet Union. It would obviously like to know how we will control our SSBNS in the future and it would not be in the nation's interest to allow such information into the public domain.

I should have thought that that was obvious to anyone who considered the issue and considered how the Soviet Union communicates with its submarines. If the hon. Gentleman were able to ask questions in the Supreme Soviet he would get exactly the same answer.

Mr. Bennett: Why does the United States seem to feel happy to discuss the systems that it uses openly? It obviously wants to convince the Russians that the United States can work them. Surely the British Government have an interest in telling the Soviet Union about the broad outlines of the system, so as to convince the Russians of the same thing? I am not pressing for a detailed technical explanation, but the broad outline of the systems that are available should be made available to convince the other side. Surely that is common sense?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am amazed if the hon. Gentleman is not asking for detail —that seems to be exactly what he is doing.

I hope I can clarify one of two points that the hon. Gentleman raised. On the use of United States communication systems, we have always said, quite clearly, that the British strategic nuclear deterrent force is independent. When we say independent, that is precisely what we mean. We do not use the United States TACAMO very low frequency system for communicating with our submarines, neither are there any agreements between our two countries to do so. This also applies to the use of the extremely low frequency transmitters in Wisconsin and Michigan in the United States. However, that is all I am prepared to say on the subject.

Work on the extremely low frequency transmitter at Glengarry is at an early stage of development. It is too early to predict the outcome, or a possible date for development. The hon. Gentleman has been given a number of answers on that subject.

The hon. Gentleman commented on electromagnetic pulses. We are fully aware of their possible effects—I daresay the Soviets are, too—on communications, but I am not prepared to go into the implications for communications with our nuclear deterrent force. I will only say that any nation with an independent nuclear deterrent must be aware of the phenomenon.

The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes)——

Mr. Boyes: Pronounced Hawton.

Mr. Sainsbury: I find myself occasionally following the hon. Gentleman in these debates; coincidentally, the next constituency listed after his in the "Times Guide to the House of Commons" is mine—Hove. We are neighbours in the guide.

The hon. Gentleman commented on the services at King's bay. The issue of independence in that context turns on whether the Government of the day have control over the operations of the strategic nuclear force. The King's bay arrangements will not affect the operational independence of the United Kingdom deterrent. We shall purchase missiles from the United States and will retain title to this number of missiles. Full control of the deterrent will remain directly in the hands of the Government, and a large proportion of our missiles will be on board our submarines and ready for use. Of course the King's bay arrangements do not affect the warhead, which remains in United Kingdom hands at all times. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that by opting to service the United Kingdom's Trident missiles at King's bay, rather than building dedicated facilities in the United Kingdom, we have saved more than £780 million.

Processing of these missiles will be done at infrequent intervals. In the extremely unlikely event that the United States ever withdrew the use of King's bay processing facilities, Britain would still have custody of sufficient missiles to maintain an effective deterrent for a sufficient period for steps to be taken to provide our own processing facilities.

Turning to the procurement aspects, I begin by reminding the House that the programme to replace Polaris with Trident in the mid-1990s continues to schedule and to budget. The current estimate has come down, as I have already said.

The nuclear warhead is being produced in the United Kingdom at the atomic weapons establishments. A certain amount of publicity has been given to problems in the construction programme; it is recognised that it is a little behind schedule. The Public Accounts Committee has looked into that exhaustively, as has the Select Committee on Defence. I assure the House that measures are in hand to overcome the difficulties that have been encountered in the construction of the new capital facilities at Aldermaston and in staffing. We are confident that the Trident in-service date will be met. The National Nuclear Corporation has been appointed the facilities project management contractor and I think the measures we have taken will be found to have been effective in overcoming the difficulties that are recognised to have occurred at an earlier stage in the programme.

The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington referred to reductions in arms and Soviet naval activity. Of course, Soviet naval activity further away from the Soviet homeland, as has been referred to, has been reduced, but what we would be interested in seeing is a reduction in Soviet naval capacity. As was brought out in the debate on the Navy, that capacity has continued to increase both in nuclear and non-nuclear terms.

It being Nine o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Surrey Structure Plan (Horley)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

9 am

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): I wish to raise on the Adjournment the modifications proposed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to the draft Surrey structure plan so far as they affect the town of Horley.

Horley is at the southern end of my constituency, immediately north of Gatwick airport. In 1974 it had some 10,000 residents. Thanks to planning decisions since, the number has grown to more than 22,000, resulting in severe strain on its infrastructure, most notably roads and drainage. Further to the north of the town lies the metropolitan green belt, but between it and the green belt lie some 1,200 acres of land currently defined as white land, to which green belt policies allegedly apply.

Accordingly, when in July 1985 Surrey county council published its consultative draft of proposed alterations to the 1980 structure plan, the council proposed running the green belt south to Charlwood, only excluding Horley and its "immediate" surroundings. But in March 1988, when the Secretary of State issued his proposed modifications, he suggested removing the word "immediate", on the grounds that these 1,200, acres should be reserved for possible housing development after the structure plan expires in the year 2001. Thus this one word "immediate" has immense significance, since its removal offers the prospect of Horley more that doubling its population in the early years of the next century, absorbing the parish of Salfords and of severely narrowing what is regarded as green belt.

The Secretary of State made his proposal following an examination in public of the consultative draft, held in Dorking in February 1987, when the panel appointed by him advised against drawing the green belt tightly round Horley. My hon. Friend and I have had considerable correspondence on this, and twice I have described this consultation process as being "severely flawed", in that 11 firms of builders and developers were directly represented, as against just one representative from Reigate and Banstead borough council. There were no representatives invited from Dorking town council nor from Salfords and Sidlow parish council, and no representative from any residents' association or amenity society in the area. My hon. Friend has replied that their interests were represented by someone from the Surrey Association of Town and Parish Councils and another respresentative from the Surrey Amenity Society respectively.

I do not want to make a lot of this in the short time available, but I am afraid that my hon. Friend has missed the point. At this examination in public, 11 firms of builders and developers were represented directly; the elected councils and residents' associations most immediately affected were allowed representation only indirectly. So long as there is such inequality of representation at examinations in public, the Secretary of State will go on facing accusations that he gives greater weight to the interests of builders and developers than to those people in a locality most affected. Given this unequal representation, it is hardly surprising that the panel came to the conclusion that it did, or that the Secretary of State should then propose deleting that word "immediate".

In May 1988 Surrey county council accepted the proposed modification, but before it had been considered by the local planning authority, the Reigate and Banstead borough council, which was in the process of drawing up its draft local plan. In September 1988 the borough council approved its draft, which did draw the green belt boundary tightly round Horley. This local plan was then referred to the county, since it did not conform with the county's decision four months previously, and in November 1988 the county decided to take no action until the Secretary of State decided whether to proceed with his proposed modification.

So now we have the local planning authority strongly in favour of drawing the green belt tightly round Horley, and the county taking a neutral position. The only ones in favour of keeping those 1,200 acres out of the green belt for possible development after 2001 are the Secretary of State and, of course, the developers.

Yet the Secretary of State has been proclaiming to the Conservative party conference, advising in seminars and writing in newspapers that he wants

"local planning to be a local responsibility. It is not something that I can do from the centre, but it needs to be done well and it needs to be done locally."

That quote is from the *Daily Telegraph* of 1 August 1988. Well, either he means it or he does not, and what he eventually decides on his proposed modification at Horley will be the test.

My hon. Friend the Minister seeks to allay local fears by claiming, in his letter to me of 1 March this year, that if development of this land were to take place it would only be in the longer term—after 2001. To be fair to him, I quote from his letter:

"If this conclusion were to be incorporated into the finally approved form of the Structure Plan, I would expect the Borough Council's Local Plan to include policies to the effect that land excluded from the Green Belt on this basis was not available for development while the Plan was in force. Such a policy would be given considerable weight at appeals, as the recent record shows."

He then cites a decision at Runnymede this January.

I do not know about Runnymede, but I can tell my hon. Friend that the record of appeal decisions concerning this white land around Horley shows the very reverse. In the last 15 years, 2,400 new houses have been built at Horley on land to which allegedly "green belt policy applies". Furthermore, I can tell him that developers have already purchased options to build on many of those 1,200 acres —and they are certainly not expecting to have to wait until 2001. Without full green belt protection for this land, applications to build and appeals against local planning refusals will come bounding in, and there is no faith locally that the decisions of the Department of the Environment's inspectors will be any different from before.

Finally, I come to perhaps my most important point, which I have possibly not developed forcefully enough in my correspondence with my hon. Friend, yet which is as relevant after 2001 as it is now. That concerns the width of the metropolitan green belt.

In a letter dated 14 April 1980, Mr. Thomson of the Department of the Environment, writing on behalf of the then Secretary of State to Surrey county council giving approval to the 1980 structure plan, referred to

"a preferred minimum width or depth of the Metropolitan Green Belt around London to be 12 to 15 miles."

I repeat, a minimum of 12 to 15 miles. If Reigate and Banstead borough council's draft local plan is adopted without modification, the width of the green belt between Purley and the Sussex border south of Horley will be 11·5

[Mr. George Gardiner]

miles. If the Secretary of State's proposed modification prevails, the width of the green belt will be fixed at 9·5 miles.

The logic of the Department's position would seem to be that a width of 12 to 15 miles was desirable in 1980, that a width of 11·5 miles of green belt and white land to which green belt policies allegedly apply is acceptable in 1989, but that after 2001, the width of the green belt could come down to 9·5 miles. I put the question straight to my hon. Friend: is he prepared to contemplate a green belt narrowed to 9·5 miles after 2001? If so, that will have implications far away from Horley.

We would find Horley coalescing with Salfords to the north and with Smallfield to the east, creating a new town of 55,000 inhabitants just three miles away from the existing new town of Crawley. Is that what the Secretary of State wants? If he does, let him have the honesty to say so. If he does not, he must withdraw his proposed modification of the Surrey structure plan—and in so doing, stay true to all that he said about

"local planning to be a local responsibility."

9.10 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) on securing the debate. As he said, the matter has been canvassed in correspondence between us, and I hope that my remarks will allay the concerns of some of my hon. Friend's constituents.

Before dealing with specific points, I shall set out the current position. The Surrey structure plan first alteration was submitted for approval in June 1986. A public examination of the provisions of the alteration was held in February 1987, and the panel reported in July 1987. It made its recommendations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, and in April 1988 he announced the terms of his proposed alterations to that structure plan and invited comments.

The terms of the final approval are still under consideration, and I know that my hon. Friend will understand that I am unable to comment in detail on the merits of the issues that he raised. However, I shall make a few observations.

My hon. Friend raised the matter of the scale and location of the Horley development and the question of where the green belt boundary should be drawn. That was explicitly considered at the public examination, when the panel considered both the housing issue in the Horley area and that of the outer boundary of the green belt. Its conclusions were explicit. While recognising that there is long-term potential for development, it concluded that there is no case at present for a large-scale development in the Horley area. However, the panel stated that the area's long-term development potential should be taken into account when the green belt boundary is drawn.

That recommendation is in line with national planning policy guidance that green belt boundaries should not be so tightly drawn around existing settlements that either all future development is proscribed or, more plausibly, that green belt boundaries have to be breached and the integrity of the green belt undermined. The panel noted that there had been much new development in Horley and that time should be allowed for it to be absorbed into the existing settlement.

The panel recognised that infrastructure problems connected with any substantial new development would need to be carefully considered and be resolved by negotiation before major development is permitted. It recommended that when the local plan drew the detailed boundary of the green belt, it should exclude "Horley and its surroundings" rather than, as had formerly been the case,

"Horley and its immediate surroundings."

In making that recommendation, the panel recognised that it would alter the policy in existence for the area since 1980, but concluded that circumstances had changed since then. The plan under consideration now looks forward to the year 2001, and it must be recognised that growth in the Crawley/Gatwick area between 1989 and 2001 is expected to continue and that the plan must take account of that fact.

It is worth noting that in the draft modifications my righ hon. Friend did not seek to increase the housing allocation for Horley in any substantial way, beyond that already in the submitted plan. Nor, as I made clear, did he seek to dissociate himself from the panel's view that any development that might take place would only do so in the long term. My right hon. Friend recognised that Horley needs time to absorb recent large-scale developments before additional ones are committed. There is a world of difference between declining to place an area in the green belt and allocating that area for development.

My hon. Friend questioned the validity of the examination in public. I must say that I find it difficult to accept that the EIP process was flawed simply because not all those who would have liked to have spoken were given the opportunity to do so. If that were to happen, the whole procedure could become extremely protracted. Indeed, section 9(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, as amended, states clearly that there is no automatic right to be heard at an EIP without invitation from the Secretary of State or the panel.

What is vitally important is that all the main issues are raised and properly discussed and that all the relevant points are brought, through the panel, to my right hon. Friend's attention. Invitations to appear before the examination in public are therefore issued with a view to ensuring that the full range of interests are represented and that no particular point of view goes unheard.

I think that the record of the proceedings of the Surrey EIP speaks for itself. A number of development interests were represented, but were counterbalanced by local amenity interests. I am confident that the cases both for and against further development at Horley were clearly put, and that the panel reported the arguments with equal fairness. It is important to remember that the primary duty both of a panel and of my right hon. Friend is not to find a middle course between conflicting private interests, but to ensure that planning decisions are made in the broader public interest. The reasons for the panel's recommendations are set out fully in its report.

I cannot accept my hon. Friend's argument that the process was undemocratic. The district council, as the democratically accountable local body, represents local views. Again, the record shows that those views were clearly presented and taken into account. The panel's report shows a clear appreciation of both sides of the

question. But even if that were not the case, it is open to anybody—including those who did not appear at the examination—to make representations and objections to my right hon. Friend following the publication of his modifications. He will take into account all those views before making a final decision, and the views expressed in the Chamber today by my hon. Friend will be considered before the final decision is made. I am sure that my hon. Friend will accept that the arguments that he has deployed today and on previous occasions are a very good summary of the arguments against what is proposed by the panel.

My hon. Friend attempted to suggest that the structure plan process was a negation of local responsibility for planning. He has questioned whether my right hon. Friend is really committed to a planning system in which responsibility rests with the locally elected district council. Let me assure the House that my right hon. Friend is committed to such a system. Both planning policy guidance note No 12 on local plans and the recently published White Paper "The Future of Development Plans" clearly show that.

It must be recognised, however, that local decisions cannot be made in isolation. The planning policies of district councils must have regard to the scale and type of demand affecting the region in which they are situated, and to national planning policies. Without broader guidance it would be almost impossible for a district council to formulate appropriate policies.

Local plans must be seen in a strategic context. My hon. Friend seemed to suggest that the local district council should be responsible for strategic as well as local planning, but I cannot agree with him. We fully recognise the right of the local council to have responsibility for local planning, but responsibility for strategy must rest elsewhere.

Similar considerations apply to the principle of the green belt. The green belt seeks to control and restrain growth over a wide area, and the issues arising from that often go far beyond the areas of a single district council. As a Government we must seek to respect the wishes of local residents about the proper development of their area, but that must be tempered with broader considerations of regional or national importance.

The Government have consistently upheld green belt policy, emphasised the permanence of the green belt and stressed that its protection should be maintained for the foreseeable future. Once the general extent of a green belt has been approved, it should be altered only in the most exceptional circumstances. It is necessary in the context of structure and local plans to establish boundaries that will endure, and that are carefully drawn so that they do not include land which it is unnecessary or inadvisable to keep permanently open. Thus we advise local authorities at the stage of defining their green belt—as in the present case at Horley—that proposals in structure plans or local plans that affect green belts should be related to a time scale longer than that normally adopted for other aspects of the plan. That approach is a long-standing element of green belt policy, and was stated in January 1988 in planning policy guidance note No. 2.

Horley is not the only place in the south-east which has accommodated significant growth in recent years, and where the possibility of further development—however remote—has raised local concern. But we cannot pull up the drawbridge on all new development. New development means proper homes for people who need them. In the south-east those people looking for homes are largely the sons and daughters of existing residents. An additional pressure on the south-east in the 1990s will be that of one-person households; this in part reflects the need of people who are already in the region as they live longer. It would not be justifiable to seek to adopt a planning policy for the region which sought to frustrate or deny these quite reasonable requirements. I know that most people are reluctant to have development in their own back yards, but we have to recognise that there is a justifiable pressure for increased development and this development must be accommodated somewhere. As my right hon. Friend said in his June 1986 letter to the chairman of the south-east regional planning conference, our aim is to cater for much of this requirement by a process which is well related to the pattern of settlement. This is what the Surrey structure plan and all those with a responsibility for drawing it up, are seeking to achieve.

I can understand the views of those who would like no development to take place in the area in question and Ican understand that they see a green belt designation as the ultimate deterrent to development—and indeed it would be. But if my right hon. Friend accepts that the area is appropriate for long-term development, then the question is how can it be protected in the short term. I have already explained that it would be inappropriate to leave it in the green belt. Green belt status is not the only way of controlling development proposals. The whole process of drawing up, consulting, and approving local plans within the context of a structure plan is intended to identify in detail where development should go and where it should be restrained.

My hon. Friend referred to my letter to him setting out the possible scenario were the examination in public recommendations to be concerned. My letter outlined the emphasis which could be placed on the local plan which the borough council could draw up. It could identify precisely the area of land involved, propose policies echoing the structure plan approval, and declare that for the lifetime of the plan the land was not seen as being appropriate for development. If, despite such policies, planning applications were made for development, and on being turned down by the council went to appeal, the inspector hearing the appeal would give considerable weight to the policies in the local plan. I cannot therefore agree that a failure to include this area in the green belt, will automatically see it being developed in the next few years. My hon. Friend fears that possibility, but he is more concerned that the area will be liable for development beyond 2001. It is absolutely certain that more land will be needed for development as the years go by. If we are to maintain the integrity of a green-belt policy, it must be a long-term policy. That is what we are trying to achieve.

My hon. Friend referred to the width of the metropolitan green belt. The green belt varies in size. In some areas it is very narrow and in other areas it is wider. We have set out the latest green belt policy in a planning policy guidance note in which we make no reference to the width of the green belt. We emphasise the permanence of the green belt and the need to have precise boundaries and set out the objectives which the green belt serves. My hon. Friend will discover that many green belt areas around the country are much narrower than the nine miles that he feels would be inadequate in his constituency.

I hope that I have given some reassurance to my hon. Friend. I congratulate him on the persistence with which

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

he has deployed his arguments on behalf of his constituents who are understandably concerned. I hope that he will realise that we are discussing the long term—beyond 2001—rather than the prospect of a substantial immediate additional development in the Horley area.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty three minutes past Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 14 March 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

New Writ

Motion made and Question proposed,

That Mr. Speaker do issue his warrant for the Clerk of the Crown to make out a new writ for the electing of a Member to serve in this present Parliament for the county constituency of Vale of Glamorgan in the room of Sir Herbert Raymond Gower, deceased.—*[Mr. Sillars.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Speaker: Objection taken. The debate will stand over until after Question Time.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 16 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

1. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people currently in employment in the north of England.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): In the three regions, north, north-west, and Yorkshire and Humberside, the work force in employment in September 1988 was 6,099,000. This has increased by 268,000 or 4·6 per cent. in the last two years alone.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend's excellent reply helps to confirm why unemployment in my constituency of Fylde has fallen in the past year by 30·3 per cent., but does he agree that the figures also confirm the excellent findings of the recent labour force survey, which show that the Opposition's attempts to rubbish our approach to employment creation are bogus and bankrupt?

Mr. Fowler: I agree with my hon. Friend on both points. Unemployment in the whole of the region, including the north, the north-west, and Yorkshire and Humberside, has come down by 140,000 in the year to January—a reduction of almost 18 per cent. As my hon. Friend reminds us, at the last Employment Question Time the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) asserted that the labour force survey

"reveals that unemployment today in Britain is still over 2·6 million"—[*Official Report*, 14 February 1989; Vol. 147, c. 140.]

The hon. Gentleman now knows what he said. To use his own characteristic words, that is utterly bogus. We wait for his withdrawal.

Mr. Allen McKay: When the Minister talks about Yorkshire and Humberside and the labour force survey, will he admit that the survey does not tell the whole story, as pockets of unemployment remain? Will the Minister take account of the fact that in my constituency of Barnsley, West and Penistone male unemployment is still more than 16 per cent? What does he intend to do about that?

Mr. Fowler: There are parts of the country, including Yorkshire and west Humberside, where we wish the employment position to improve substantially. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will also recognise, however, that unemployment has come down by virtually a million since the last election and that there are more than a million new jobs in the economy. That all-time record is certainly better than the position in 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my right hon. Friend accept that employment would be even higher if the Government encouraged a positive "Buy British" campaign when British goods are best? Does he further agree that employment would be higher than it is today if there was free and genuinely fair competition, not least for the magnificent British textile and clothing industry, which is one of the largest employers in the country?

Mr. Fowler: I think that the Government would want free and fair competition. The Government support the organisation that is encouraging British goods and their marketing. As my hon. Friend knows, Sir Basil Feldman is chairman of that organisation, to which my Department subscribes.

Restart

2. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the restart scheme.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. John Cope): Since July 1986, about 5·4 million interviews have been carried out under the restart programme, of which just under 90 per cent. have resulted in an offer of positive help being made.

Mr. Lloyd: Will the Minister confirm that there has been some concern in mining communities about the use of the restart scheme for people in their late 50s and 60s who have retired from mining but who nevertheless have to suffer the indignity of that procedure? Can he confirm that that position is to be resolved and that he will now instruct local offices to cease harassing such people so that they no longer have to undergo the indignity of such irrelevant interviews?

Mr. Cope: I do not accept that there is harassment, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy is confirming in a written answer today that he is considering modifying the redundant mineworkers pension scheme, which has given rise to the problem to which the hon. Gentleman draws attention, so as to remove the link with unemployment benefit and availability for work. Obviously, we shall take account of what my right hon. Friend does.

Mr. Marlow: How many bluffs have been called, how many people have been rumbled, and how many have magically disappeared from the unemployment register when they have been called to a restart interview? What further action will my right hon. Friend take to ensure that paid voluntary unemployment does not continue in those parts of the country where there is a labour shortage?

Mr. Cope: I should be inclined to say that the aim of the restart interview is to contact the longer-term unemployed and to provide them with advice and information, but it sometimes has the effect that my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Eadie: Will the right hon. Gentleman reflect on the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) about the plight of redundant mineworkers? Does he recall that when the miners' parliamentary group met him he gave a pledge that he would do his best to resolve the anomaly? In the light of that, should there not be some announcement about the matter so that the harassment of miners can cease pending resolution of the problem?

Mr. Cope: I remember the meeting when the hon. Gentleman brought his colleagues to see me. I will reflect on that, but I urge the hon. Gentleman to reflect on the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), in which he should find some comfort.

Labour Statistics

3. **Mr. Speed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment has fallen over the past year in the south-east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: In the 12 months to January 1989, the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the south-east including London fell by 157,400 or 27·9 per cent. Unemployment in the south-east is now at its lowest level for eight years.

Mr. Speed: I welcome those figures, and my right hon. Friend confirms that the labour force survey showed that employment in the region rose by 800,000 up to June last year, more than offsetting the fall of 400,000 or 500,000 in the claimant count. Is not the real problem now to find the skills for the 150,000 vacancies in the south-east?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, Sir. The labour force survey shows a real growth in employment. In the past 12 months, there has been an increase of more than 600,000 in the number of employees. As my hon. Friend says, we now need to improve the nation's skills base. That is why we have introduced the employment training programme and are in the process of setting up the new training and enterprise councils.

Ms. Short *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it about the south-east?

Ms. Short: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that in the south-east and elsewhere the labour force survey and other evidence show that the new jobs being created in Britain are overwhelmingly low paid and part time, which is a real worry for the future of our economy? There is no future for Britain in low pay, low investment, low training and a slow economy, but those jobs mean that that is the road that we are on.

Mr. Fowler: Uncharacteristically, the hon. Lady has apparently not read the labour force survey. One point that emerges clearly from the survey is that the overwhelming number of jobs that have been created in the past 12 months are not part-time, but full-time. The fact that 86 per cent. of those jobs were full-time entirely demolishes the hon. Lady's case.

4. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the rate of fall in unemployment in the United Kingdom and in other developed countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: Over the past year, the rate of unemployment has fallen faster in the United Kingdom than in any other major industrialised country. The rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom is below the average for the European Community and now stands below that of France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and Ireland.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government's step by step approach to the reform of industrial relations has made a significant contribution towards reducing unemployment? In the light of that, will he undertake to introduce further measures of industrial relations reform, including the abolition of what remains of the closed shop, so as to achieve a further reduction in unemployment?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that bad industrial relations, particularly in the middle and late 1970s exported many British jobs overseas. The closed shop puts unacceptable limits on people's freedom to choose for themselves whether or not to belong to a trade union. I made the position clear in the White Paper that I published before Christmas, and I repeat that we shall not hesitate to take any further legislative measures that may be necessary.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Secretary of State accept that whereas the rate of decrease may be acceptable in south-east England, where the rate of unemployment is 2 or 3 per cent. in many of the home counties, in Wales and elsewhere in these islands, where unemployment is running at between 15 and 20 per cent., it is totally unacceptable? When will he take an initiative to do something about that?

Mr. Fowler: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that, after the west midlands, Wales is one part of the country where the rate of unemployment has come down most steeply. We shall do all that we can to improve on that. I hope, however, that the hon. Gentleman will concede what has been done already.

Mr. Holt: Unemployment in my constituency has fallen from its peak by 40 per cent. and stands today at lower than the national average. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Teesside chamber of commerce has just put out a press release which says that the

"Teesside economy continues to boom"

and shows that more than 28 per cent. of the firms on Teesside expect to be employing more labour in the next three months?

Mr. Fowler: I am sure that what my hon. Friend says is right. The Prime Minister and I were in the north-east on Friday, as my hon. Friend knows, and there was no doubting the new confidence that exists there. It is important for the House to appreciate that in the past two years this country has shown the fastest employment growth since 1945.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Secretary of State really crowing at the fact that unemployment is still twice as high as it was in 1979? How does he explain the fact that 40 per cent. of the money that the EEC is paying to member states this year to arrest industrial decline and job losses is coming to Britain—twice as much as to any other EEC state? Will he admit that he has been telling only half the story about the labour force survey in that employment has been growing in the last year at only half the rate at which it grew the year before and that 110,000 more people were knocked off benefit than went into jobs?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is becoming more and more muddled. The labour force survey reveals that for months past the hon. Gentleman has been fiddling the figures upwards. The House expects him to do the honourable thing and give up his job.

5. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people currently in employment in the north-west of England.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): In September 1988, in the north-west region, the civilian work force in employment was 2,661,000—an increase of 80,000 or 3 per cent. in the past two years.

Mr. Butler: Does my hon. Friend agree that employment seems to have risen in those areas of the north-west where the work force is co-operative and skilled, in contrast with other areas of the north-west where the unions are bloody-minded and Luddite?

Mr. Lee: I think that my hon. Friend is getting at the situation on Merseyside. I have no wish to denigrate the work force on Merseyside, but in many cases they are being let down by some very extreme shop stewards.

Mr. James Lamond: Why does not the Minister, who knows something about the north-west, tell the Secretary of State that he is talking nonsense when he says that jobs are being exported because of trade union activity? The textile workers are struggling to obtain a £100 basic wage for a 39-hour week, while closures in the north-west are taking thousands of jobs, including 250 in Oldham just a fortnight ago.

Mr. Lee: It is true that there have been some textile losses recently, but in the past three or four years the textile industry has improved dramatically. Indeed, it was a shade churlish of the hon. Gentleman not to acknowledge that in the past two years unemployment has fallen by 31 per cent. in his own constituency.

Mr. Sumberg: Does my hon. Friend agree that if there is a north-south divide, it is to the advantage of the north-west? Opposition Members who spend their time doing the region down should open their eyes and ears and acknowledge the fact that Lancashire's best friend is the Government.

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Opposition do the north-west a disservice by failing to acknowledge the buoyancy, optimism and pride that most people in the region now have.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: While the Opposition welcome every job that is created, we deplore the fact that there are still record unemployment rates. If the Minister is so confident about the north-west in particular and the north of England in general, will he say why—according to the labour force survey—the rate of increase in jobs in the south-east over the past five years has been more than 10 per cent. while in the north-west it has been less than 1 per cent.? That illustrates the north-south divide.

Mr. Lee: Why will the hon. Gentleman not acknowledge that in his own constituency unemployment has fallen by 30 per cent. in the past two years?

Skill Training

6. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to increase the range of skills available and the number of people seeking work in the south-east.

Mr. Fowler: I am taking a number of steps to increase the range of skills available in the south-east and other regions. They include the setting up of training and enterprise councils to help employers to define and meet local skill needs. We are also helping young people and the unemployed to learn new skills through YTS and employment training.

Mr. Wilshire: As the labour force survey shows that there are now more than a million more people in work than when Labour was booted out of office, does my right hon. Friend accept that such an increase creates new problems of skill shortages and unfilled vacancies in areas such as Spelthorne? Does he believe that the new training and enterprise councils will enable local employers to focus training on local skill shortages and unfilled vacancies?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, Sir, I agree entirely. The purpose of, and the concept behind, such councils is that they should be employer-led local bodies which assess the training and labour needs in their own particular areas. This is something that many employers have urged for a long time. I am glad to say that although we introduced the prospectus only on Friday there has already been a tremendous amount of interest—including interest from 20 or 30 areas where plans for training and enterprise councils are well in hand.

Mr. Beggs: Will the Secretary of State use every opportunity available to him to inform industrialists here that in Northern Ireland, where there is high unemployment, there are already highly skilled and well-educated people——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about the south-east of England, not the south-east of Ulster.

Mr. Beggs: I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for making that point. I wanted to draw attention to the absence of skilled people in the south-east and to the fact that we in Northern Ireland could assist the Minister to relocate or even set up small subsidiaries to provide employment and meet the needs that exist in the south-east.

Mr. Fowler: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman. If I meet employers in the south-east who complain of skill shortages and are looking for somewhere to set up or perhaps expand their businesses, I shall certainly say that for all the reasons set out by the hon. Gentleman Northern Ireland seems to be an extremely good place to do so.

Mr. Rathbone: On that same point, does my right hon. Friend liaise with his right hon. Friends to ensure that jobs are created outside the south-east, thus relieving the congestion and strain on housing there in the way that everyone in the south-east wishes?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, Sir. As my hon. Friend says, it is not just a matter of private industry—it is a matter of the public sector, too. A major part of my Department, the Training Agency, is in Sheffield. It was announced only last week that a further part of the Ministry of Defence was to move to the north-east. That seems an altogether sensible move of the kind that ought to be encouraged.

Wages Inspectorate

7. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the west midlands.

Mr. Cope: The inspectorate targets its visits towards establishments most likely to be in breach. In 1988 in midlands division, which covers both east and west midlands, 2,609 establishments were visited and 747 were found to be paying below the statutory minimum in some respect.

Mrs. Golding: According to the Government's statistics, there was only one prosecution in the midlands in 1988. Given that during the 10 years of this Government more than 89,000 establishments have been found to be paying illegally low wages, why have there been only 51 prosecutions? Why are the Government so little interested in the low paid?

Mr. Cope: The hon. Lady's figure for prosecutions is right. In fact, the ratio of prosecutions to underpaying employers is higher now than under the Labour Government. Prosecutions are not the only way in which to achieve the desired aim.

Mr. Marlow: Why do we need these secret policemen? What do they do for the buoyancy and competitiveness of our economy?

Mr. Cope: Frequent studies have shown in the past that wages councils tend to decrease employment. That is why we are considering whether to continue with them.

Mr. Meacher: If the Government believe in law and order, why have fewer than one in 1,000 establishments paying illegally low wages been prosecuted? Is it not ludicrous that, with half the number of wages inspectors, the right hon. Gentleman's Department is sending out postal questionnaires asking employers whether they are committing the criminal offence of paying illegally low wages? Will the Minister confirm that the next step will be to invite employers to write in and announce to the Department that they are committing this criminal offence?

Mr. Cope: As it happens, the questionnaire method about which the hon. Gentleman complains was introduced by the Labour Government of which he was a member. We have continued to use it and we have increased the prosecution ratio. There are many more ways than one of securing the objects that we both have in mind. We have reduced the number of inspectors because we have simplified the system.

National Dock Labour Scheme

9. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost to registered port employers of the 1988 levy to finance the cost of the National Dock Labour Board.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): The 1988 levy to finance the National Dock Labour Board cost registered port employers £4,690,607.

Mr. Amos: In view of the very high cost to the nation of the national dock labour scheme, and as it is archaic, anti-democratic and anti-competitive, will my hon. Friend consider abolishing it as soon as possible?

Mr. Nicholls: Matters covered by the levy include issues relating, for instance, to training, welfare and medical services, which must be provided for. The Government's position on the scheme remains unchanged. There are no plans to change or abolish it.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Will the Minister confirm that before the introduction of the national dock labour scheme the men in the docks were treated like cattle, and that only since the introduction of the scheme have the ports enjoyed peace and working conditions fit for human beings?

Mr. Nicholls: If one goes far enough back in history, one can always find something to justify one's views, but the position remains as I have set it out.

Mr. Janman: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Port of London Authority is interested in developing land immediately adjacent to the port of Tilbury but that it is experiencing extreme difficulty in finding people to take up this opportunity because of the existence of the dock labour scheme? Does my hon. Friend agree that the dock labour scheme costs not only money but jobs?

Mr. Nicholls: I hear what my hon. Friend says. Obviously, he makes his analysis in his own way, but I do not think that I can fruitfully comment on that analysis at the Dispatch Box.

Employee Participation

10. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage employers to increase employee participation through schemes such as employee share ownership plans.

Mr. Cope: We encourage employers to develop their employee involvement arrangements by whatever means are best suited to their particular needs and circumstances.

Mr. Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that the validity of the slogan "Owners try harder" is shown by the success of employee share ownership arrangements in the

United States, which now cover 10 million workers? Does he accept that they have broken down the "us versus them" attitudes in the States and have spread capital? Will he do some research to see how those schemes and those benefits could be applied in this country? By the way, does he have any recent information as to the Treasury view on this matter?

Mr. Cope: I do not think that I should make any comment on Treasury views at this time of the year. I am well aware of the American experience in the field of employee share option schemes, not least as a result of reading my hon. Friend's articles on the subject. As he knows, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is also looking at this matter in connection with the Companies Bill.

Mr. Dykes: Is it not important to try to get the Treasury view? There is still time before the Budget statement this afternoon. One of the important things to do in the future is to get Treasury approval for an increased maximum number of shares held under employee share option schemes.

Mr. Cope: Treasury views are always important.

National Dock Labour Scheme

11. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his proposals for the future of the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government's position on the scheme remains unchanged, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister confirmed in the House on 19 January 1989 at columns 481-82 of the *Official Report*.

Mr Townend: My right hon. Friend will not be surprised that I am very disappointed with his reply. Does he agree that the national dock labour scheme is one of the few remaining relics of the corporate state established by the post-war Labour Government, which has been demolished by this Government? Does he accept that northern ports, like Hull and Liverpool, are able to prosper and compete, that, with the opening of the Channel tunnel, it is essential that they be able to operate in a free market without restrictive practices, and that that will not be possible unless he abolishes the scheme?

Mr. Nicholls: Again I hear what my hon. Friend says, but I am afraid that I cannot do anything about having disappointed him. I have announced what the Government position is, and I confirm that it has not changed.

Mr. Moate: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that, as has already been said, jobs are being lost and that industrial investment in waterside-related schemes is being positively discouraged? He has said that the Government position is unchanged. In view of the overwhelming arguments for abolition of this archaic dock labour scheme can he do the House the courtesy of explaining why that position is unchanged?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend describes the argument as overwhelming. That is his analysis, but I think that he will agree that there are very few situations in which the arguments are that easy.

Wages

12. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: There is no such thing as a Council of Europe decency threshold for a minimum acceptable level of earnings.

Mrs. Mahon: In that case, will the Minister say how many, and what percentage of, full-time male workers earn less than the decency threshold decided by the committee of expert advisers advising on the European social charter? In case the Minister has forgotten, let me remind him that it is 68 per cent. of all full-time average earnings.

Mr. Nicholls: I am not sure that the hon. Lady can have been listening to the answer that I have just given. She asked me about the Council of Europe decency threshold for a minimum acceptable level of earnings. Let me repeat that there is no such thing. Obviously, what she is thinking about is a recommendation of the Council of Europe expert advisory committee as to 68 per cent. of national average earnings. I repeat that there is no such thing as a decency threshold. It would be a good idea if the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends were to get a grasp of that fact.

Mr. Paice: Does my hon. Friend agree that any threshold relating to average earning is bogus because it is self-perpetuating; as wages increase, so does the average, so there will always be, per se, people below that figure. Any such proposal is designed to give credence to those who want to criticise and abuse, such as the Opposition.

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is right, but I am sure that the point will be lost on Opposition Members. One cannot talk of 68, 78 or 88 per cent. without considering the 100 per cent. figure.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Minister agree that low-paid people would be helped enormously if the national insurance system were changed to allow a threshold rather than an allowance, so that if one earns an extra pound one does not have to pay £2 as a national insurance contribution?

Mr. Nicholls: That does not arise from this question, and this is not the time to speculate about it.

Mr. Strang: Does the Minister acknowledge that 500,000 male employees and 2·3 million female employees will not benefit from any increases in allowances that might be announced this afternoon because they do not earn enough to pay tax? Do not Government proposals to abolish wages councils make it clear that the Government are pursuing policies to make the rich richer and the poor poorer?

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman talks about deductions from those who are in work, but if he had his way and followed the policies advocated by his party, fewer people would have the opportunity to work.

Tourism

13. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the tourism industry in Bristol.

Mr. Lee: The estimated annual 1 million visitors to Bristol and the high levels of investment in tourism projects show clearly that Bristol is sharing in the general prosperity and expansion of our domestic tourism industry.

Mr. Sayeed: I welcome my hon. Friend's reply, but is he aware that most tourists get no further west than Bath and appear unaware of the historic and architectural merit of Bristol? What are the employment implications of Avon county council's failure to take part in the West Country tourist board and Bristol city council's antagonistic and contemptuous attitude to tourism?

Mr. Lee: I am sorry that Avon county council is the only council that is not a member of its regional tourist board. I am happy to say that, despite that, about £34 million worth of investment has been made in Bristol. Exciting developments are under way in the harbour and waterfront area, a number of which I have seen.

Mr. Douglas: When the Minister goes to Bristol, he will no doubt visit the SS Great Britain, which is a monument to the British merchant fleet. Will he acknowledge that we have other monuments under this Government, such as our merchant shipbuilding capacity? What will the Government do about that?

Mr. Lee: I recollect that when I was a Minister at the Ministry of Defence I heard similar speeches from the hon. Gentleman. I suggest that he puts that question during Defence Question Time rather than at Employment Question Time.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

14. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the loan guarantee scheme.

Mr. Cope: Over 21,000 guarantees to a value in excess of £690 million have been issued since the loan guarantee scheme was introduced in 1981. Applications are currently running at nearly 200 a month.

Mr. Batiste: Does my hon. Friend agree that the loan guarantee scheme has been an essential ingredient in the spectacular job creation success among small businesses of the Yorkshire and Humberside region? Will he confirm that it is one of the most cost-effective job creation schemes that the Government have introduced and that it has a secure future?

Mr. Cope: Yes, I confirm all that. The scheme has an estimated net job cost of about £450 per job. It contributes much to the creation of small businesses and successful businesses that have grown much, such as the Sock Shop.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Minister have a further look at the regional imbalance in the loan guarantee scheme and tell us what justice there is in the fact that the south-east receives considerably more than Yorkshire and Humberside?

Mr. Cope: Obviously, we respond to requests from individuals, from companies and from the banks. To a certain extent, the take-up achieved by the guarantee scheme in the different regions is a result of demand from interested parties, rather than action on our part to steer the scheme in a particular direction. The only thing that we do in that regard is to offer better terms for those in the inner cities.

Mr. Tim Smith: Is not the loan guarantee scheme just a rather expensive way in which to train bank managers? My hon. Friend should try to persuade bank managers to put less emphasis on the security on offer and more on the viability of the business plans.

Mr. Cope: I certainly do my best to try to persuade them of that important aspect of banking science. It is an important scheme because of its educational effect on some bank managers. At the same time, banks use it quite a lot and that is greatly to be desired.

Wages Inspectorate

15. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers were found to be illegally underpaying and how many of them were prosecuted in the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the east midlands.

Mr. Cope: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding).

Mr. Allen: Is the Minister aware that the midlands inspectorate is based in my constituency and that when the Government came to power there were 26 inspectors, but now there are only 10? Will he visit that establishment and explain to the people why there has been a reduction in the numbers of inspectors when more than 4,000 cases of underpayment have been reported, but only nine have been prosecuted? When will the Government start to prosecute those people instead of harbouring them?

Mr. Cope: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman was listening to the reply that I gave earlier about the increase in the ratio of prosecutions to underpaying employers since the Labour Government left office. The level of compliance in the midlands has not varied significantly over the years.

Mr. Tredinnick: Is my hon. Friend aware that in my midlands constituency employers are offering wages above the average because of severe skill shortages?

Mr. Cope: Yes. About 97 per cent. of workers are now paid at least the minumum due.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Can I have an honest answer to my simple question? A large number of households in my constituency—families with children—have incomes of less than £100 a week. If I were an elector in my constituency I could not live on that sum. Could the Minister?

Mr. Cope: In the past I have lived on a good deal less than the hon. Gentleman.

National Dock Labour Board

16. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last attended a meeting of the National Dock Labour Board; and what was discussed.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has never attended a meeting of the National Dock Labour Board.

Mr. Wood: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is it not clear that the national dock labour scheme acts against the interests of the docks concerned and against the work force in those docks? Surely we should be persuading people working in those docks that it is in their interests to see a change in the scheme or, indeed, its removal.

Mr. Nicholls: I hear what my hon. Friend says and obviously he is supported by a great many of our hon. Friends. The question was about a meeting with the National Dock Labour Board and I doubt that there is much that I can add to that or to the points that my hon. Friend has just put.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Will the Minister reflect on the fact that the national dock labour scheme has brought great stability to the docks and it has also allowed— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ross: —and it has also allowed the docks to plan their work properly? All the attacks from the Conservative Benches do not help those trying to have discussions within the dock labour scheme about how it can be improved in the best interests of the country and the economy.

Mr. Nicholls: That analysis was so patently absurd that it was hardly supported by any of the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: May I observe to my hon. Friend that, on this issue, he is beginning to resemble President Botha of South Africa? Nobody in his own party supports him.

Mr. Nicholls: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and if the great wheel ever goes full circle I shall give him my support as well.

Wages Inspectorate

17. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the United Kingdom in the latest available year.

Mr. Cope: A total of 8·7 per cent. of the establishments on the wages inspectorate register covering 329,591 workers, which is an estimated 13·1 per cent, were inspected in 1988.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Minister explain to the House the standards which this Government apply to the question of law-breaking? On the one hand, the Government put in place a very severe system of penalties, fines and surcharges for those who cannot afford to pay the poll tax; on the other hand, the Government virtually ignore employers who break the law and illegally enforce low wages on workers who are already exploited. Is it a case of no law for the rich and vicious laws for the poor?

Mr. Cope: On the contrary, we have improved the position. I have already said that 97 per cent. of workers are now paid at least the minimum due, and that is a higher percentage than a few years ago.

Training and Enterprise Councils

18. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the formation of training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: Last Friday I published a prospectus inviting local groups of employers to submit proposals for forming training and enterprise councils in their areas. TECs will represent a fundamental change in the way training and enterprise activities are managed and developed. I have invited the first formal applications for development funding by the end of April. I expect the first TECs to be in operation by early next year.

Mr. Moss: I congratulate the Minister on this imaginative initiative, which has been warmly welcomed in my constituency and the country as a whole. Does he agree that unfilled job vacancies are more likely to be filled in the future if local industrialists have a direct input into the training of local people for local jobs?

Mr. Fowler: What my hon. Friend says is absolutely right. The training and enterprise councils will be locally based and led by employers who have a knowledge of their local area. That will be good for jobs in all the areas in which they are set up.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q.1 **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Prime Minister is she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March 1989.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided over a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the Prime Minister think that people suffering from Alzheimer's disease should have to pay the poll tax?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady is aware, those who fall into the definition of severe mental handicap are exempt. It has not been possible to have a particular definition at the time at which that occurs for Alzheimer's disease to bring everyone automatically into that definition.

Q.2 **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March 1989.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Patnick: My right hon. Friend drew attention during a recent visit to the north-east to the region's confidence. Does she agree that that confidence has shown an upswing in the whole of the area, and does it not demonstrate the hollowness of the so-called north-south divide?

The Prime Minister: I totally agree with my hon. Friend. In a visit to both the north-east and north-west last week one found that business is flourishing, business men are optimistic, unemployment is falling and the amount of reconstruction under the urban development corporation, particularly on the river front, is going excellently. I agree that the north-south divide has gone.

Mr. Kinnock: Following the comments by the Secretary of State for Health at the weekend, will the Prime Minister now assure the House that when she next needs the services of a doctor she will not follow her usual practice of reaching for her wallet?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is referring to the average receipts for the general practitioner in the Health Service. My right hon. and learned Friend is absolutely correct in giving the figure for the average receipts.

Q3. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March 1989.

The Prime Minister: I refer to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Waller: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the very considerable concern which exists, for instance, in the Yorkshire area about river pollution and about the fact that the water authorities, which are themselves sometimes the guilty parties, have responsibility for the enforcement of pollution control? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, when ecological issues rightly have priority, it is important that we get rid of these anomalies as soon as we can?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. When water is privatised, the duty of regulation and policing the standards of water and of rivers will come either under the National Rivers Authority or under the Director General of Water Services who will also be able to control the prices. That will be a great advance in addition to the extra efficiency that we will get from privatisation. It will be a good deal for the consumer.

Mr. Heffer: Following the right hon. Lady's visit to Liverpool last Friday when she attacked the workers at Birds Eye—1,000 of whom have now been put out of work—and the city council which is collaborating with all the interests in the area, will she now apologise to the people of Liverpool and Merseyside and understand that the people in my area put compassion before profit, which is something which the right hon. Lady does not understand?

The Prime Minister: Apparently the hon. Gentleman does not understand that to satisfy the consumer—we are all consumers—companies must stay competitive and efficient. If workers in his area refuse to be competitive, efficient, or to accept high productivity, the investment will go to those many workers who are prepared to be just that.

Q4. **Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: In the short time which remains before my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer unveils his Budget proposals to the House, will my right hon. Friend reflect on the growing strength of the British economy? Will she confirm that in the past two years the growth in jobs has been greater than at any time since the end of the second world war? Does she agree that it is very gratifying to note that, to the end of last September, 60,000 of those jobs were created in manufacturing industry? Is it not, therefore, clear that those are the outward and visible signs of an industry which has now regained its competitiveness and the outlook for the economy is excellent?

The Prime Minister: The standard of living is higher than it has ever been. The number of people in work is higher than ever before and there are 1 million more people in work than in 1979. The number of people at work in manufacturing industry is growing. That is a very good record and the prospects for the future are good.

Mr. McGrady: Is the Prime Minister aware of the distress, hardship and injustice which is often caused in Northern Ireland when the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland issues an order under section 42 in the national interest whereby companies are deprived of their contracts and employees of their jobs? Does she agree that natural justice demands that the accused know the accusation and have the chance to defend themselves? Will she make arrangements for an appeal procedure to enable those injustices to be eradicated?

The Prime Minister: I shall refer that point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who does a superb job in respect of his duties in Northern Ireland, as in all others.

Q5. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Rathbone: With the Government's commitment to fundamental change in South Africa, will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister endorse the recommendations of the judicial commission set up by the South African Government for the banning of apartheid, the abolition of all apartheid legislation, the adoption of a Bill of Rights and a national franchise to re-establish human rights in that country?

The Prime Minister: As I understand it, that particular commission—which we would agree with—insisted that apartheid must end by a process of negotiation and we fully support that. Some encouraging changes are taking place, not least with the independence of Namibia which is a great step forward. We are also doing our level best to help the further education of black South Africans and we are now spending some £10 million on assisting them to get a better education. There is a great deal of room for hope for South Africa.

Mr. Foulkes: Would the Prime Minister, for once, like the unusual opportunity of uniting the House behind her and join me in sending good wishes to the only football team left in Europe, Heart of Midlothian, in the fourth round tie against Bayern Munich this evening?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir.

Q6. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. King: Does my right hon. Friend agree that not only is British business creating more jobs than ever before within the United Kingdom economy but it is investing in and taking over four times as many overseas companies as any other western country? Does she agree with me that this indicates that our economy is very strong indeed?

The Prime Minister: Yes. As far as this country is concerned, business investment as a proportion of GDP is at an all-time high, in addition to which, being a very internationally minded country, we are investing heavily overseas—more than any other European country. We are in the lead by a long way; we are way ahead of the second country, which is France.

Mr. Madden: Does the Prime Minister believe that the shameful decision of Judge Pickles to sentence my constituent—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member knows that the Prime Minister cannot answer questions such as that.

Q7. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martin: Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the reports that I have seen in the newspapers about delays that may take place in the reform of the legal profession are not right and that we shall get on as soon as possible in the next Session with the excellent reforms proposed by the Lord Chancellor and put them into practice as soon as possible?

The Prime Minister: The measures have been proposed in Green Papers which will be thoroughly debated. Then I hope that we shall be able to bring forward legislation as soon as possible, most likely next year.

Mr. James Lamond: Is the Prime Minister's interest in human rights deep enough for her to place on the agenda of the conference on human rights in Paris under the Vienna talks the question of the treatment of political prisoners in Turkey, our NATO ally?

The Prime Minister: We have raised the question of human rights in Turkey with Ministers who have come here. They have replied that they are doing everything possible to restore full human rights in Turkey and that the cases which are frequently raised date back some considerable time.

Q8. **Mr. Batiste:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Batiste: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that where a monopoly does not reflect the realities of the market place it is not only the consumer but the supplier who suffers, because sooner or later the market place will reassert itself and if the supplier has not adjusted his services to meet that it will be unable to adapt? In those circumstances, will she give an assurance to those in the legal profession who seek its urgent reform that she is fully behind them?

The Prime Minister: Most people, I think, who have studied the Green Papers of my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor about the reform of the legal profession are behind the overwhelming majority of his reforms. There are still some dissentient voices, particularly in the legal profession, but I think that, broadly speaking, what he proposes is right. We shall consider what is said in the debate very carefully and I hope that we shall be in a position to bring forward legislation.

Mr. Alton: Notwithstanding the resilience and sense of optimism which the Prime Minister will have found during her visit to the Albert dock in Liverpool and the housing co-operatives that she visited last Friday, does she agree that in an area in which 98,000 people are out of work, and some 18,000 have been out of work for the last five years, there is no point in just blaming the victims and that the Merseyside economy cannot stand to lose another 1,000 jobs? Will she personally do what she can to try to save those jobs?

The Prime Minister: I was questioned about that particular loss of jobs, and I indicated that it was because the company could not achieve competitiveness, could not get rid of some restrictive practices, and could not increase productivity in that particular factory. So it chose to invest in a factory where it could do so. The company is still investing, but not at that factory. I was questioned about that matter at a spot where it is proposed to create another 5,000 jobs, arising from some of the reconstruction that is being undertaken at the docks as an extension of the work of the urban development corporation. It seems to me that there are fresh opportunities there. The hon. Gentleman will know that the company is delaying the close-down, to enable its workers to obtain other jobs and other training before closure occurs.—*[Interruption.]* The company must be competitive, and if the hon. Gentleman does not understand that, he is against the consumer and against every single worker.

Q9. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagement for Tuesday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is present.

Q10. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jack: Recently, my right hon. Friend sponsored an excellent conference in London, on the preservation of the ozone layer. Will she consider sponsoring a similar event to help ensure the preservation of the world's rain forests?

The Prime Minister: That aspect was, of course, mentioned at the conference on the preservation of the ozone layer. If my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) consults my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas development, he will learn that a considerable number of our grants and aid are already given with the preservation of the rain forests in mind, because that is very important to the preservation of the ozone layer as a whole.

Points of Order

Mr. Speaker: Private notice question. Mr. Neil Kinnock.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn) *rose*——

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take any points of order after the private notice question.

Mr. Sillars: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman resume his seat? He knows perfectly well that I take points of order after questions, and I have called a private notice question.

Mr. Kinnock *rose*——

Mr. Sillars: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows very well that points of order are taken at their proper time, after private notice questions. I repeat that I have called a private notice question. Mr. Neil Kinnock.

Mr. Kinnock: May I ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer a question——

Mr. Sillars: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman persists, I shall have to take action that I would very much regret having to take.

Mr. Sillars *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am on my feet.

Mr. Sillars: My point of order relates to this question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the hon. Gentleman for the final time that I will take his point of order after the private notice question.

Mr. Sillars: My point of order relates to the question.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat.

Mr. Sillars *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Speaker: I give the hon. Gentleman one more chance.

Mr. Sillars *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will leave the Chamber for the remainder of today's sitting.

Mr. Sillars *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman refusing to do that?

Mr. Sillars *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman refuses, I shall be forced to name him. I give the hon. Gentleman one more chance to leave the Chamber.

Mr. Sillars *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Speaker: I name Mr. James Sillars.
Question put,

That Mr. James Sillars be suspended from the service of the House.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

The House proceeded to a Division:—

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the time that has been wasted, if there should be occasion for a similar Division, will you use the powers vested in you under Standing Orders to allow us to vote by standing in our places?

Mr. Speaker: That is hypothetical at the moment.
The House having divided: Ayes 376, Noes 16.

Division No. 120] **[3.33 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boateng, Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gardiner, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa

Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Doug
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Holt, Richard
Hood, Jimmy
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamond, James
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
McNamara, Kevin
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Beggs, Roy
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Douglas, Dick
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Heffer, Eric S.
McGrady, Eddie
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Margaret Ewing and
Mr. Andrew Welsh

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

The the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan withdraw from the House.

Mr. Kinnock *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Govan must now leave the Chamber.

The hon. Member withdrew accordingly.

WAYS AND MEANS

Budget Statement

3.45 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn) *(by private notice):* To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he will make a financial statement.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I am happy to respond to the right hon. Gentleman's question.

INTRODUCTION

The background to this year's Budget is the unprecedented strength of the British economy, coupled with the continuing and overriding need to combat inflation, at a time when, throughout the world, it is unmistakably edging up again.

I shall begin with an account of the performance of the economy in 1988 and the prospects for 1989, set in the context of the past 10 years. I shall then deal with monetary policy and the public sector finances. Finally, I shall propose a number of measures to carry forward the process of tax reform.

As usual, the Financial Statement and Budget Report, together with a number of press releases filling out the details of my proposals, will be available from the Vote Office as soon as I have sat down.

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE AND PROSPECTS

The Government's first 10 years in office have seen a transformation both in the way in which economic policy is conducted, and in the results that have been achieved.

For the first time, economic policy has been set firmly and explicitly in a medium-term context. We have been guided by the basic philosophy that the Government should set a sound medium-term financial framework and leave the private sector free to operate with confidence within it.

The Government came to office with two central objectives—to defeat inflation, and to breathe new life into a moribund economy—and a clear idea of how to achieve those objectives. Inflation is a disease of money; and monetary policy is the cure. The role of fiscal policy is to bring the public accounts into balance and to keep them there, and thus underpin the process of re-establishing sound money.

Strong sustainable growth is achieved, not through any artificial stimulus, but by allowing markets to work again and restoring the enterprise culture; by removing unnecessary restrictions and controls and rolling back the frontiers of the State; by reforming trade union law and promoting all forms of capital ownership; and by reforming and reducing taxation.

The first and most urgent task we faced was to damp down the inflationary fires that had raged in the 1970s, and wrought so much economic and social havoc; and we succeeded. Between 1974 and 1979, inflation had averaged more than 15 per cent. Over the past six years it has averaged 5 per cent.—still not good enough, but a massive improvement.

Once business and industry recognised the fundamental changes that were taking place, they responded to the new economic climate with vigour and confidence. As a result, we have experienced the longest period of strong and steady growth since the war. Output in the United Kingdom has grown faster than in all the other main European nations during the 1980s—a marked contrast to the previous two decades, when we were bottom of the league—and this growth has been based on a dramatic and sustained improvement in productivity.

For the economy as a whole, our productivity growth has been second only to that of Japan among all the major nations during the 1980s, and our productivity growth in manufacturing has exceeded even that of Japan.

In Britain today we have more people in work than ever before in our history; they are better motivated than ever before, and their living standards have improved beyond recognition. But it is not just our economic performance that has been transformed: so have our prospects for the future.

Over the past seven years, investment has grown more than twice as fast as consumption, creating the increased capacity necessary to meet future demand. Total business investment is now a higher proportion of national income than ever before, and its quality has improved immeasurably, too; as has the quality of British management. We have seen a dramatic and long overdue improvement in company profits and a remarkable growth in the total number of businesses, last year at the rate of more than 1,000 a week.

Provided we stand firm in our resolve to get on top of inflation, the prospects before us are excellent. At least on this side of the House, we do stand firm.

A year ago, in the aftermath of the worldwide stock market crash, it looked as if there would be some slowing down from the rapid growth of 1987. In fact that was not to be.

As the House knows, the state of the national income statistics leaves much to be desired, but it now appears that we had in 1988 a second successive year of growth at 4·5 per cent., with unemployment falling by over half a million, to well below the European average. Manufacturing output grew particularly rapidly, by more than 7 per cent., to a level well above the previous peak.

But total spending also grew by getting on for 7 per cent., mainly because of the boom in industrial investment, in itself a welcome event, but also because of continued strong growth in consumer spending. This last was financed to an unprecedented degree by borrowing, overwhelmingly mortgage borrowing.

Inevitably, the rapid growth of total spending led to renewed inflationary pressure. To some extent this was diverted into a sharp rise in imports, and hence into the deficit on the current account of the balance of payments. The published figures put this at £14·5 billion in 1988, although, given the £15 billion positive balancing item—another name for errors and omissions—the true figure is almost certainly less than this. But whatever the true figure, it is undoubtedly large, and a sharp increase on the deficit recorded in 1987 after seven successive years of surplus. Given sound policies, however, it can readily be financed.

Moreover, unlike previous current account deficits we have known in this country, it reflects not excessive Government borrowing, but rather an upsurge of private investment unmatched by private savings, and this imbalance is something that will in due course correct itself.

The real threat is posed by the increase in inflation itself. Excluding the distorting effect of mortgage interest

payments, the RPI rose by 4·5 per cent. last year, much the same as the average over the previous five years, but this underlying rate increased significantly through the year, and now stands at 5·5 per cent.

Moreover, the increase in inflation appears to be a worldwide trend. Taking the seven major industrial nations as a whole, inflation is now at its highest level for three and a half years.

In the United Kingdom, as in a number of other countries, it became clear that it was necessary to tighten monetary policy sharply. That meant raising short-term interest rates, which I duly did, starting last June.

I am, of course, keenly conscious of the difficulties many borrowers, particularly home owners, are now experiencing. But however unwelcome high interest rates may be, they are infinitely preferable to the damage that would be done by high inflation.

There are now increasing signs that the determined action that I have taken is having the desired effect. The housing boom that played such a large part in the events of last year has subsided. Monetary growth has slowed down appreciably, and retail sales, too, seem to have levelled off over the past four months, presaging a gradual recovery in the personal savings ratio.

The outlook for 1989 is for inflation to rise a little further over the next few months, from 7·5 per cent. including mortgage interest payments, to about 8 per cent., before falling back in the second half of the year to 5·5 per cent. in the fourth quarter and perhaps 4·5 per cent. in the second quarter of 1990.

Some slowdown in real growth is inevitable as we get inflation back on to a downward path—indeed, it has almost certainly already begun to happen. Overall growth is forecast to fall from the 4·5 per cent. recorded last year to 2·5 per cent. this year, with growth through the year at 2 per cent.

Domestic demand is forecast to slow down even more markedly. But within this, investment, which is holding up well, is once again forecast to grow faster than consumption. The current account deficit is forecast to remain at the same level as last year.

But the question of just how "soft" or "hard" the so-called landing will be is not in the hands of Government alone. The Government's task is to reduce inflation by acting, through monetary policy, to bring down the growth of national income in money terms. The task of business and industry is to control their pay and other costs. The more successfully they do so, the less costly in terms of output and employment the necessary adjustment will be.

Over the medium term, however, it is clear from our experience over the past 10 years that the policy we are pursuing will bring inflation down, and steady growth will resume. The best contribution the Government can make to this is to carry forward the process of supply side reform, to help make the economy work better. That is the objective of the specific measures to which I shall turn in the second part of my statement.

MONETARY POLICY

As I said at the outset, monetary policy plays, and must always play, the central role in the battle against inflation. It is at the very heart of the medium-term financial strategy, the 10th edition of which I am publishing today.

I have described the monetary tightening that has taken place over the past nine months. This has already led to a sharp fall in the rate of growth of the target aggregate, narrow money, or M0.

For 1989-90, the target range for M0 will be 1 to 5 per cent., as envisaged in last year's MTFS. Although it will start the year above the top of that range, its very low growth over the past six months—below 3 per cent. at an annualised rate—suggests that it will fairly soon come back within the range. As in the past two years, there is no target for the growth of broad money, or liquidity, but I will continue to take it into account in assessing monetary conditions.

The exchange rate is of particular importance in the conduct of monetary policy. The Government's clear commitment not to accommodate increases in domestic costs by exchange rate depreciation remains a key safeguard against inflation. In this context, we will continue to work with our G7 partners to maintain the greater exchange rate stability that has been a feature of the past two years.

Short-term interest rates remain the essential instrument of monetary policy. I repeat now what I have stated clearly on a number of previous occasions: interest rates will stay as high as is needed for as long as is needed, for there will be no letting up in our determination to get on top of inflation.

PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCES

I now turn to fiscal policy. When we first took office, the public sector borrowing requirement was over 5 per cent. of GDP—equivalent to £25 billion in today's terms.

This we steadily reduced over the years as a deliberate act of policy, until, by 1987-88, the PSBR had been eliminated altogether, and we started to repay the public debt.

Accordingly, last year I budgeted for a further public sector debt repayment, or PSDR, of some £3 billion. In the event, it looks like turning out between four and five times as large, at £14 billion, or 3 per cent. of GDP.

Even if there had been no privatisation proceeds at all, the public finances would still be in surplus, to the tune of some £7 billion. Nothing like this has ever been achieved in the past 40 years. Indeed, Government debt as a proportion of GDP is now lower than at any time since the first world war, and no other major country enjoys a comparable budget surplus. It has not been easy, even though we have been assisted this year by the exceptional buoyancy of the economy, which both boosted tax receipts and reduced public expenditure.

Moreover, the substantial net repayment of public debt over the past two years has permanently reduced the burden of debt servicing, both now and for future generations. For the coming year, for example, the debt repayments of the last two years mean that net debt interest costs will be lower by over £1·5 billion a year. This saving is being put to good use, allowing extra spending on departmental programmes within our overall public expenditure constraints.

The dramatic improvement in the United Kingdom's public finances has also provided a welcome opportunity to devote more attention to the structure of the debt that remains. We will continue to seek both to minimise the

cost of servicing the Government's domestic debt and to improve its quality by relying less on the more liquid borrowing instruments.

We have also been able to restructure part of the Government's foreign currency debt, launching an innovative and cost-effective programme of Treasury bills denominated and payable in ECU.

The first series of six-monthly tenders for these bills has proved a highly successful innovation. We plan to continue the programme at around the current level.

Meanwhile, I am today adding one more entry to the long list of financial controls which we have swept away during our term of office. The last surviving relic of the post-war apparatus for the direction of capital by the state is the Control of Borrowing Order, which, since 1946, has involved, first, the Treasury and, then, the Bank of England in giving consents for equity and bond issues in the capital markets.

As from today, it will no longer be necessary for companies wishing to make capital market issues to obtain the Bank of England's consent to the timing of such issues. The new issue queue will be a thing of the past. As soon as practicable, we will revoke the order itself and repeal the 1946 Act from which it stems.

The sterling capital market has in recent times been going through a period of considerable adjustment, as the Government have changed from being a large issuer to a large purchaser of their own debt. The abolition of the Control of Borrowing Order will remove an unnecessary and bureaucratic restriction on issuers of capital as they move into the space formerly occupied by the Government when they were a borrower.

This new freedom will be enhanced by a further, important set of deregulatory measures for the sterling capital market which are being promulgated today in notices issued by the Bank of England. These measures will open up the market for sterling paper of less than five years' maturity by extending the range of institutions which can make such issues; and they will create a unified regime for all these issues.

Taken together, the changes I have described constitute a major liberalisation of the arrangements for London's capital markets. They will give greater flexibility to issuers and wider choice to investors.

In last year's Budget speech, I set out the principle of a balanced budget as the proper objective of fiscal policy, in these terms:

"A balanced Budget is a valuable discipline for the medium term. It represents security for the present and an investment for the future. Having achieved it, I intend to stick to it. In other words, henceforth a zero PSBR will be the norm. This provides a clear and simple rule, with a good historical pedigree".—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 996.]

It is a rule that ensures that, as national income continues to rise, the ratio of public debt to national income continues to fall, and with it the burden of debt interest. It ensures, too, that the state makes no claim either on the savings of the private sector or on flows of finance from overseas.

To go further than this, and seek to achieve the maximum possible repayment of public debt, would not be consistent with the Government's policy, as it would mean deferring for a very long time the benefits of a reduction in the burden of taxation, so I reaffirm the principle of the balanced Budget. However, given the substantial surplus we now have, the path of prudence and caution must be to return to balance not overnight, but gradually, over a period of years. Thus, we can expect further years of debt repayment ahead of us.

Moreover, given the particular uncertainties there are at the present time, I believe it would be right to budget for 1989-90 for a surplus similar to that secured in the year now ending; in other words, a further public sector debt repayment, or PSDR, of some £14 billion.

This means that, in the space of three years, we shall have repaid roughly a sixth of the public debt that has accumulated over more than two centuries, but it also means that it will not be possible in this year's Budget to reduce the burden of taxation; that is to say, to reduce taxation as a share of national income.

TAXPAYER CONFIDENTIALITY

Before I turn to my proposals for changes in taxation, I have one other change of a specific nature to announce.

As the House knows, the new official secrets legislation currently passing through Parliament is very much narrower in scope than the present Official Secrets Act. In particular, it does not cover information in the possession of either the Inland Revenue or Customs and Excise concerning the private affairs of specific taxpayers. I am sure that the whole House will agree that it is essential for taxpayer confidentiality to be properly protected.

I therefore propose to introduce provisions in this year's Finance Bill to ensure that it will continue to be a criminal offence for officials or former officials of either of the Revenue Departments to reveal information about the private affairs of a specific taxpayer.

I would only add that the need for this protection is in no sense a reflection on the probity and integrity of the members of those two Departments.

Indeed, after nearly six years as Chancellor and more than eight years as a Treasury Minister, I would like to take this opportuntiy to pay public tribute to the outstanding service I have consistently received from the officials of both Departments.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

BUSINESS TAXATION

Mr. Lawson: I now turn to taxation. As I have done on a number of previous occasions, I propose to divide this into three broad sections: the taxation of business, the taxation of savings, and the taxation of personal income and spending.

First, taxes on business. Ever since the corporation tax reform I introduced in 1984, the rate of corporation tax for small companies, defined for this purpose as those with annual profits of less than £100,000, has been set at the basic rate of income tax, currently 25 per cent.

Large companies, defined as those with profits of £500,000 or more, pay the main rate of corporation tax of 35 per cent., one of the lowest rates of tax on company profits in the world. Between £100,000 and £500,000, the averge rate of tax gradually rises from 25 to 35 per cent.

I propose to keep the small companies rate in line with the basic rate of income tax for 1989-90 and to leave the main corporation tax rate unchanged, but I propose to increase the small companies' rate band substantially, by 50 per cent.

[Mr. Lawson]

Thus, the small companies' rate will apply to companies with profits of less than £150,000, and the 35 per cent. rate will be reached only at profits of £750,000. These changes will reduce the corporation tax burden for more than half of all those companies that do not already enjoy the benefit of the small companies rate.

I propose to increase the VAT threshold to £23,600, the maximum permitted under European Community law.

I also have to set the scales for the private use of company cars. This remains far and away the most widespread benefit in kind. When I doubled the car scales in last year's Budget, I made it clear that this still left this benefit significantly undertaxed. Accordingly, I propose to increase the car scales by one third for 1989-90. The yield from this will be £160 million in 1989-90 and £200 million in 1990-91. There will be no change in the fuel scales.

Over the years, I have received a number of representations from business complaining about the long-standing tax treatment of foreign exchange gains and losses. I recognise that, as business becomes more global, this subject becomes increasingly important. However, I have to say that I find it one of the most intractable I have encountered. Certainly, there can be no question of any change in the present system until a number of crucial and complex issues have been satisfactorily resolved. I have therefore authorised the Inland Revenue to publish today a consultative document which explores those issues and examines the scope for reform.

Finally, on business taxation, I have two major simplifications to propose, both of which follow from the income tax reforms that I introduced in last year's Budget.

One of the many undesirable features of an income tax system with several higher rates was that, since a taxpayer's marginal rate could well be very different in different years, the question of which year income related to made a great deal of difference. This was true of schedule E, where the strict rule is that income is taxed in the year to which it relates, on an accruals basis.

For the vast majority of employees, this basis of assessment for schedule E poses no problem, but for about half a million people, mainly directors, who do not receive all their income in the year to which it relates, it causes complications and often needless assessments and correspondence long after the tax year is over. It is also open to manipulation.

I therefore propose that income tax under schedule E should in future be assessed on a receipts basis, with the simple principle that one pays the tax when one receives the income. This will have a transitional cost of £80 million in 1989-90 and £60 million in 1990-91, but in the long term it will yield both extra revenue and a significant saving in both taxpayers' time and Inland Revenue staff.

The reduction in the top rate of income tax to 40 per cent. in last year's Budget also enables me to make a major simplification of the tax regime for the vast bulk of the incorporated sector of small businesses: those known as close companies—generally speaking, unquoted companies that are controlled by five or fewer people.

The rules for the so-called apportionment of close companies' income are notoriously complex, taking up some twenty pages of impenetrable legislation. These rules are no longer needed, and I propose to abolish them. I believe that family businesses in particular will welcome this substantial simplification.

I do, however, have to guard against the avoidance of tax on investment income by channelling it through a closely controlled investment company. Any such company which does not distribute the bulk of its profits and other investment income will therefore be taxed at 40 per cent., equivalent to the higher rate of income tax.

TAXES ON SAVING

I now turn to the taxation of saving.

The sharp decline in the ratio of personal saving to personal income, over the past two years in particular, has led to even more discussion than usual of the merits of providing greater tax incentives for personal saving.

Certainly it is desirable that, over the medium term, we generate as a nation a level of saving sufficient to finance a high level of investment, but what matters for that is not personal saving alone, but corporate saving too, which is running at a historically high level, and public sector saving, which has been boosted by the move to budget surplus.

Moreover, the personal saving ratio is measured in terms of gross saving net of borrowing, and it has fallen not because of a decline in gross saving but as a result of the sharp increase in personal borrowing. The appropriate remedy for that is to raise the cost of borrowing, and with it the return on savings, as we have done.

Above all, the role of tax reform is to encourage enterprise and improve economic performance in the medium term. It is wholly inappropriate as a response to short-term or cyclical phenomena. So for the taxation of savings, the Government's policy is clear: it is to strengthen and deepen popular capitalism in Britain, by encouraging, in particular, wider share ownership. I have a number of specific tax measures to announce today to that end.

Personal equity plans, or PEPs, were first announced in my 1986 Budget, and started up in January 1987. As the House knows, those who invest in these plans pay no further tax at all, either on the dividends they receive or on any capital gains they may make—indeed, there is no need for them to get involved with the Inland Revenue at all.

Personal equity plans got off to a good start, with over a quarter of a million investors, many of whom had never owned shares before, subscribing almost £500 million between them in 1987.

Since then, however, the take-up of new PEPs has slowed down, not least as a result of the changed climate in the equity market which followed the October 1987 stock exchange crash. So the time has come to improve and simplify PEPs and give them a new boost.

First, I propose to raise the annual limit on the overall amount that can be invested in a PEP from £3,000 to £4,800. Secondly, within that, I propose to raise substantially the amount that can be invested in unit trusts or investment trusts. For many small savers, these provide an excellent introduction to shareholding.

At present, PEP investors are limited to £540 a year, or a quarter of their PEP, whichever is the greater, in unit or investment trusts. I propose to increase this limit very substantially, to £2,400 a year; and the whole of a PEP will be able to be invested in unit or investment trusts, up to

this limit. To qualify for tax relief, the unit or investment trusts will be required to invest wholly or mainly in United Kingdom equities.

Thirdly, at present, only cash may be paid into a PEP. I propose that investors should also be permitted to place directly into a PEP shares obtained by subscribing to new equity issues, including privatisation issues.

Finally, I propose to make a number of important simplifications to the PEP rules so as to make the scheme more flexible, better directed to the needs of small and new investors, and, above all, cheaper to administer.

I am confident that the changes that I have announced today will enable personal equity plans to play an important part in stimulating the spread of ownership of British equities in the years ahead.

I also have a number of improvements to announce specifically designed to encourage employee share ownership.

It is a striking fact that the number of approved all-employee share schemes has risen from a mere 30 in 1979 to almost 1,600 today, benefiting some 1·75 million employees. At present, the annual limits on the value of shares which can be given under all-employee profit-sharing schemes are £1,250 or 10 per cent. of salary up to a ceiling of £5,000. I propose to raise these cash limits to £2,000 and £6,000 respectively.

Secondly, I propose to increase the monthly limit on contributions to all-employee save-as-you-earn share option schemes from £100 to £150, and at the same time double the maximum discount from market value at which options may be granted from 10 per cent. to 20 per cent.

Thirdly, a number of my hon. Friends have been concerned that current tax law may be inhibiting the development of employee share ownership plans, otherwise known as ESOPs. These are distinguished from ordinary approved employee share schemes by the fact that they use a wider variety of finance, acquire more shares and tend to operate on a longer time scale.

I propose to make it clear that companies' contributions to ESOPs qualify for corporation tax relief, provided only that they meet certain requirements designed to ensure that the employees acquire direct ownership of the shares within a reasonable time. I hope that this will encourage more British companies, particularly in the unquoted sector, to consider setting up ESOPs.

Those firms with employee share ownership schemes have no doubt that giving the work force a direct personal interest in their profitability and success improves the company's performance. The same benefits flow from profit-related pay. That was one of the reasons why, in my 1987 Budget, I introduced a tax relief to encourage its development. I have some improvements to make to this scheme, too.

First, as I have previously announced, I propose to abolish the restriction that, to qualify for the tax relief, prospective profit-related pay must equal at least 5 per cent. of total pay. Secondly, I propose to raise the limit on the annual amount of profit-related pay which can attract relief from £3,000 to £4,000.

Thirdly, I propose to enable employers to set up schemes for headquarters and other central units using the profits of the whole company or group for their profit calculations. Fourthly, to help share schemes and ESOPs as well as profit-related pay, I propose to change the so-called material interest rules which may at present unnecessarily exclude employees from schemes where they can already benefit from a trust set up for employees.

Taken together, the package of measures I have announced to encourage wider share ownership in general, and employee share ownership in particular, will help to ensure that the idea of a share-owning democracy becomes ever more entrenched as a part of the British way of life.

I now turn to life assurance. Last June, the Inland Revenue issued with my authority a major consultative document on the taxation of life assurance. The tax regime for life assurance is unique. The present system dates back to the first world war and has developed over the years in a piecemeal way, leading to a state of affairs in which the incidence of tax is extremely uneven, with some life offices paying no tax at all.

There is clearly a powerful case for reform, with a view to securing a tax regime which is more equitable both within the industry and as between life assurance and most other forms of savings.

I have considered very carefully the representations that the industry has made, and taken full account both of the changes to the regulation of life assurance proposed by the Securities and Investment Board under the Financial Services Act 1986 and the prospects for increased competition within the European Community after 1992. In the light of these factors, I have decided not to proceed with the more radical reforms canvassed in the consultative document, but I do have number of important changes to propose, based for the most part on the general tax reform principle of seeking lower rates on a broader base.

First, many life offices write pension business as well as life assurance, and they are not required to keep the two businesses entirely separate for tax purposes. This enables them to set the unrelieved expenses of the pensions business against the income and gains of their life business, thus giving their life profits unduly favourable tax treatment. The life offices themselves have accepted that this treatment is anomalous, and I propose to end it.

This change will come into force on 1 January 1990. Together with some related measures to put the taxation of life offices' pension business on to a proper footing, it will yield some £150 million in 1990-91.

The remainder of the changes that I have to propose constitute a broadly balanced package which, because of the transitional provisions, will reduce the taxation of life assurance in 1990-91 by some £100 million.

I propose that the expenses incurred by life offices in attracting new business should continue to be fully deductable for tax purposes from the income and gains of life funds, but should in future be spread over a period of seven years. To give the industry time to adjust, this change will be phased in gradually over the next four years, starting on 1 January, 1990.

There are certain other, more technical, matters raised in the consultative document which will require further discussion with the industry, and any legislative changes on these issues will have to wait for next year's Finance Bill. But I can say here and now that I propose, as from 1 January 1990, to abolish life assurance policy duty. I also propose, from the same date, that the rate of tax payable on the policyholders' share of the income and gains of life offices, which at present stands at 35 per cent. on

unfranked investment income and 30 per cent. on realised capital gains, should be reduced to the basic rate of income tax.

The net effect of all these changes to the taxation of life assurance will be a cost of £20 million in 1989-90 and a yield of £45 million in 1990-91, rising somewhat in subsequent years. But above all, it will provide a more efficient and equitable tax regime for this most important industry.

Later this year, United Kingdom unit trusts will be able to compete freely in Europe and will face competition from analogous Community investment schemes here. At present, trusts investing in gilt-edged securities or other bonds face a tax disadvantage. They pay corporation tax at 35 per cent. on their income but can pass on a credit of only the basic rate of income tax to their investors. I therefore propose that from 1 January 1990, as for life assurance companies, the corporation tax rate on unit trusts that come within the new European Community rules will be equal to the basic rate of income tax. Their investors will then get full credit for all the United Kingdom tax the trusts pay.

I turn now to pensions. The tax treatment accorded to occupational pension schemes is particularly favourable; and the extent of this privilege has to be circumscribed by Inland Revenue rules. Thus, pension, schemes qualify for tax relief only if they meet certain conditions, notably that the pension paid may not exceed two thirds of final salary: and if they fall foul of any of these rules, they lose all relief.

This has the perverse result that tax law effectively constrains the overall pension an employer can pay his employee. This is neither desirable nor necessary. Accordingly, I propose to make it possible for employers to provide whatever pensions package they believe necessary to recruit and reward their employees.

However, while it is clearly right that employers should be free to provide whatever pension they see fit, it would not be right to make the present generous tax treatment open-ended. I therefore propose to set a limit on the pensions which may be paid from tax-approved occupational schemes, based on a final salary of £60,000 a year.

I have deliberately set the ceiling at a level which will leave the vast majority of employees unaffected, and it will be subject to annual uprating in line with inflation. It will still be possible for a tax-approved occupational scheme to pay a pension of as much as £40,000 a year, of which up to £90,000 may be commuted for a tax-free lump sum.

The new ceiling will apply only to pension schemes set up on or after today, or to new members joining existing schemes after 1 June. Public sector schemes, too, will be amended to comply with this. As I have already said, there will now be complete freedom to provide benefits above the Inland Revenue limits, though without the tax relief.

The introduction of this ceiling on tax relief also enables me to simplify and improve the rules for the majority of pension scheme members, in partcular to ease the conditions under which people can take early retirement.

I also propose to simplify very substantially the rules concerning additional voluntary contributions to pension schemes, or AVCs. In particular, the present requirements for free-standing AVCs place a heavy administrative burden on employers. These requirements will be greatly reduced. Indeed, in many cases employers will not need to be involved at all.

Furthermore, if AVC investments perform very well, occupational pensions may at present have to be reduced to keep total benefits within the permitted limits. I propose that, in future, any surplus AVC funds should be returned to employees, subject to a special tax charge. This will remove the penalty that at present exists on good investment performance.

The most important development in pensions in recent years has undoubtedly been the introduction and success of personal pensions. Since July last year, 1 million people have already taken advantage of the new flexibility and opportunities these offer. I have two proposals today to make personal pensions still more attractive.

First, I propose to make it easier for people in personal pension schemes to manage their own investments. Second, I propose to increase substantially the annual limits, as a percentage of earnings, on contributions to personal pensions by those over the age of 35.

This will be of particular value to those running their own businesses, who are often unable to make contributions until later on in their working life. It will also improve the position of personal pensions in relation to occupational schemes. The new limits will be subject to an overall cash ceiling based on earnings of £60,000, corresponding to the new ceiling for occupational pensions, and similarly indexed.

These changes build on, and complete, the pension measures I introduced in my 1987 Budget. They represent a significant deregulation which will allow more flexibility, while setting for the first time a reasonable cash limit on the tax relief available to any individual. They should give a boost, in particular, to saving through personal pensions and through AVCs.

Coupled with the changes I made in 1987, this is as far as I wish to go in amending the tax treatment of pensions.

Finally, on the taxation of saving, it should not be overlooked that a far-reaching reform which I announced in last year's Budget, to come into effect in April 1990, is relevant in this context. I refer to independent taxation, about which three new explanatory leaflets are now available from all tax offices.

There can be little doubt that one of the greatest disincentives to saving in the present tax system is the treatment of the savings of married women. At present a wife's income from savings has to be disclosed to her husband, and taxed at his marginal rate.

Independent taxation will change all that. In particular, those married women who have little or no earnings will in future have their own personal allowance to set against their savings income. Independent taxation may well do much to encourage the growth of personal saving in this country.

TAXES ON SPENDING

I now turn to taxes on personal income and spending. As the House knows, Her Majesty's Government are obliged to implement the European Court's judgment that certain of our zero rates of VAT on supplies to business, notably on non-residential construction, but also on fuel and power and on water, are not lawful. This derives from the court's interpretation of the Community's sixth VAT directive, to which the United Kingdom agreed in 1977. The necessary changes will be introduced in this year's Finance Bill, and draft clauses have already been published.

In implementing the judgment, I have sought to do as much as possible to minimise the burden. From 1 April, VAT will be payable in respect of all non-residential construction, unless carried out under agreements entered into before the court ruling. As from 1 August, landlords will have the option to tax rents, which means, in practice, that in most cases no extra VAT will be paid at all.

These measures will reduce the burden of VAT on construction, so far as the private sector is concerned, to just £35 million in 1989-90, rising to £110 million in 1992-93. Without them, the yield from VAT on construction in the private sector would have risen to £450 million. There will also be a first-year yield of £250 million from construction carried out for the public sector, and the public sector programmes concerned have already been protected by compensatory adjustments where necessary.

So far as water for industry and fuel and power for business use are concerned, VAT will not be payable until July 1990. VAT on fuel and power will apply to business users above a specified threshold. Private households will remain zero-rated.

I have been particularly concerned about the impact of the European Court's ruling on charities. Unfortunately, charities' business activities cannot lawfully be shielded from the effects of the ruling, but I have been able to retain zero rates for construction, water, fuel and power for all charities' non-business activities, for churches, and for residential accommodation such as hospices, students' hostels and old people's homes.

I have considered whether there is anything further I can sensibly do to assist charities with their VAT bills in these special circumstances. I propose to relieve charities from VAT on fund-raising events, on sterilisng equipment for medical use, and on classified advertising.

I also propose to relieve from car tax cars leased to the disabled. This is equivalent to an overall saving of about £400 on each vehicle leased to a disabled person. However, in general, I continue to believe that the best way of helping charitable causes through the tax system is by directly encouraging the act of charitable giving. The payroll giving scheme, which I introduced in my 1986 Budget, has been growing steadily. Some 3,400 schemes have now been set up, and over 100,000 employees are already participating, quite a few of them giving the full £240 annual limit for tax relief. I now propose to double that limit to £480, or £40 a month.

I now turn to the excise duties. For some years now, the potential damage to the environment in general, and the risk to child health in particular, from excessive lead in the atmosphere has been a matter for concern. Lead in petrol accounts for 80 per cent. of lead in the atmosphere. The Government are firmly committed to phasing out leaded petrol, and in successive Budgets I have sought to assist this.

I first introduced a tax differential in favour of unleaded petrol in 1987, and I increased it last year, but, although sales are undoubtedly rising, unleaded petrol still accounts for only some 5 per cent. of total petrol sales, even though two-thirds of the cars now on the road could use it, either without any modification, or else with only a minor modification, which should not usually cost more than £20 and, in many cases, will be carried out free.

One of the problems is ignorance of the facts. Many motorists do not realise that their cars can already use unleaded petrol. Othes are unaware of how modest the modification cost usually is, and many are under the false impression that if they do switch to unleaded petrol, their cars will no longer be able to use leaded petrol.

It is clearly essential that these myths are rapidly dispelled. Meanwhile, I propose to take the opportunity of this Budget to increase still further the tax differential in favour of unleaded petrol, by nearly 4p a gallon. This means that, at a shade over 14p a gallon, or more than 3p a litre, our tax differential in favour of unleaded petrol will be greater than that of any other country in the European Community, with the solitary exception of Denmark.

If the benefit of today's change is fully passed on to the customer—and I look to the oil companies to see that it is—it means that the price of unleaded petrol at the pump will generally be getting on for 10p a gallon, or just over 2p a litre, cheaper than four-star leaded petrol.

But I do not intend to stop there. I also propose to raise the tax on two and three-star petrol, so that the pump price of these grades will be at least as high as that of four-star.

This should encourage garages to phase out two-star petrol, which is already down to about 6 per cent. of the total market, thus enabling them to switch storage capacity, and in some cases pumps too, to unleaded petrol—quite apart from the incentive to the remaining two-star users to switch to unleaded fuel.

I am confident that the duty changes I have announced, which will take effect from six o'clock this evening, will contribute to a marked increase in the use of unleaded petrol over the next 12 months. They will also lead to a loss of revenue of some £40 million in 1989-90. I propose to recoup this from vehicle excise duty.

At the present time, a bus or a coach has to have 66 seats before it pays as much in vehicle excise duty as a family car. I propose to rectify this anomaly by increasing the tax rates of this group of vehicles so that they cover their track costs. I also propose to increase the rates of duty for the heaviest non-articulated lorries, to put them on a more equal footing with articulated lorries. At the same time, I propose to simplify the system, greatly reducing the number of separate rates of vehicle excise duty.

I have no further changes to propose this year in the rates of excise duty.

INCOME TAX

Nor do I propose any change this year to either the basic or higher rate of income tax.

Since I aligned the rates of income and capital gains tax in last year's Budget, it follows that I also propose no change this year in the capital gains tax rates. However, I do have a few announcements to make concerning capital gains tax.

With the advent of independent taxation from April 1990, married women will acquire their own capital gains tax threshold, so that a married couple will enjoy two such exemptions. In the light of this, I propose to maintain the capital gains tax threshold at £5,000 for 1989-90.

Secondly, I propose to abolish the general holdover relief for gifts. This was introduced by my predecessor in 1980, when there was still capital transfer tax on lifetime gifts, in order to avoid a form of double taxation, but the tax on lifetime giving has since been abolished, and the relief is increasingly used as a simple form of tax avoidance. However, while the general holdover relief will

go, I propose to retain it for gifts of business, farm and heritage assets; and, of course, gifts between husband and wife will continue to be exempt.

Moreover, I propose to extend the existing relief for all gifts to charities and to gifts of land and buildings to housing associations. Where, instead of being given away, the land is sold at less than market value, any capital gains tax will be based on the actual proceeds rather than, as now, on the market value. I also propose that such gifts and concessionary sales be normally exempt from inheritance tax.

In the case of gifts of personal belongings, these benefit from chattels relief, under which any items worth less than £3,000 on disposal are entirely exempt from capital gains tax. I propose to double the chattels exemption limit to £6,000.

Thirdly, I propose to change the tax treatment of certain bonds so as to simplify the tax rules and prevent a loss of yield by the use of indexation to create losses and the conversion of income into capital gains.

To return to income tax, I propose to raise all the main income tax thresholds and allowances by the statutory indexation factor of 6·8 per cent., rounded up. Thus, the single person's allowance will rise by £180 to £2,785, and the married man's allowance will rise by £280 to £4,375. The basic rate limit will rise by £1,400 to £20,700. The single age allowance will rise by £220 to £3,400, and the married age allowance by £350 to £5,385. The higher level of age allowance will rise by £230 to £3,540 for a single person, and by £360 to £5,565 for a married couple.

I have a number of measures to help the elderly. In 1987 I introduced a new and more generous age allowance for those aged 80 and over. I now propose to extend it to include all those aged 75 and over. This will take an additional 15,000 elderly single people and married couples out of tax altogether. Three quarters of all those aged 75 and over will not be liable to income tax at all.

The income limit for the age allowance will rise by £800 to £11,400, again in line with indexation. However, I propose to reduce the rate at which age allowance is withdrawn above this income limit. I propose that, in future, it should be withdrawn at the rate of £1 of allowance for each £2 of income above the limit, instead of the present rate of £2 for every £3. This means that the marginal tax rate for those in the withdrawal band will be reduced to well below 40 per cent., thus meeting a large number of representations I have received over the past year.

The Finance Bill will also include the provisions to establish the new tax relief for the over-60s' health insurance premiums, which I announced to the House in January, and which will take effect from April next year, at a cost of £40 million in 1990-91.

I have one further change to make to help pensioners. Under the earnings rule, any pensioner who decides to continue to work after reaching the statutory retirement age sees his or her pension docked at a rate of 50 per cent. on every £1 earned between £75 and £79 a week, rising to 100 per cent. for every £1 earned over £79 a week. This rule applies until he or she has reached five years beyond the state pension age.

The manifesto on which we were first elected in 1979 acknowledged that it was wrong to discourage people who wished to work beyond retirement age in this way, and we pledged that we would abolish the earnings rule. That is precisely what we shall do. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security and I have agreed that the pensioners' earnings rule should be abolished from the beginning of October, the earliest practicable date. The necessary legislation will be included in the Social Security Bill currently before the House.

The cost to public expenditure will be £190 million in 1989-90, which will be entirely met from the Reserve, but the net cost of this measure will be significantly reduced by the income tax payable on the increased pensions.

Those who wish to defer taking their pension will remain entirely free to do so, and will continue to earn a higher pension in return. I am sure the whole House will welcome this long-overdue reform.

If I were to adopt the so-called "duck test" now in vogue across the Atlantic, the pensioners' earnings rule would probably qualify as a tax, and I would now be able to claim to have abolished a sixth tax, but sound tax principles, coupled with my innate modesty and natural reticence, prevent me from doing so.

NATIONAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS

I have one further measure to propose. It has long been a feature of the national insurance system that, once people earn more than the lower earnings limit, which in 1989-90 will be £43, they have to pay national insurance contributions at the same rate on the whole of their earnings up to the upper earnings limit. There are currently three different rates—5 per cent. and 7 per cent. for those on lower pay, and the standard rate of 9 per cent. The two reduced rates, which I introduced for both employers and employees in my 1985 Budget, cut the cost of employing the young and unskilled, among whom unemployment was then high and rising, and cut the burden of national insurance contributions on the low paid.

However, the highly desirable reduction in the steep step at the lower earnings limit was achieved at the expense of creating two small steps further up the earnings scale. This is not a real problem so far as employers' contributions are concerned, but it is for employees. For it inevitably means that, at certain points on the income scale, people can still be worse off if they earn more. Their extra earnings take them from a lower rate band to a higher one, and they therefore lose more in national insurance contributions than they gain in extra pay.

In agreement with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, I now propose to build on my 1985 reform. For pretty well everyone who pays employee national insurance contributions, I propose to reduce to only 2 per cent. the rate of contributions on their earnings up to and including the lower earnings limit. On their earnings above that limit, there will be a single rate of 9 per cent., up to the upper earnings limit, which has already been set for 1989-90 at £325 a week. This will abolish altogether the steps which at present exist at earnings, for 1989-90, of £75 and £115 a week, and thus remove a serious work disincentive from the system.

The step, which has always existed at the lower earnings limit, where people first come into the national insurance system, is the entry ticket to the full array of contributory benefits—as such, it is an essential feature of the contributory principle—but my proposals will more than halve this step, to only 86p a week in 1989-90. There will be no change in the contributions payable by employers.

This reform will significantly reduce the burden of employees' national insurance contributions across the board. For the lowest paid, that burden is now heavier than the burden of income tax. This is the most effective measure I can take to lighten it. For everyone on just under half average earnings and above, it will leave them £3 a week more of their own money.

The new system will take effect from the beginning of October, the earliest practicable date. The cost will be £1 billion in 1989-90 and £2·8 billion in 1990-91. The necessary legislation will be included in the Social Security Bill currently before the House.

The total additional cost of all the measures in this Budget, on an indexed basis, is under £2 billion in 1989-90 and £3·5 billion in 1990-91.

CONCLUSION

In this Budget I have reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the defeat of inflation through the maintenance of prudent monetary and fiscal policies. I have budgeted for a debt repayment of £14 billion—the largest ever. I have announced a major reform of, and reduction in, employees' national insurance contributions; and I have honoured our pledge to abolish the earnings rule for pensioners.

I commend this Budget to the House.

Mr. Kinnock: I begin with customary felicitations and, on this occasion, thank the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his reply to my private notice question. I shall try to ensure that my supplementary is not as long as the answer he gave me.

I also take this opportunity to welcome the change that the right hon. Gentleman has announced in the excise duties, a change that will promote the use of lead-free petrol. That is an entirely sensible step for the Chancellor to take. On behalf of my hon. and right hon. Friends, I further welcome the belated achievement, after 10 years in government, of the Conservative pledge to abolish the earnings rule for pensioners. It is only a fortnight since my hon. Friends on the Social Security Bill Committee sought, not for the first time, to secure that abolition. It is a shame that the Government did not see fit, even at that juncture, to make the adjustment so that at least it could have been an act of consensus, which I am sure it will be.

This is not simply an annual Budget; the occasion is becoming marked by what can only be described as the custom of holding the annual nationalist games. I hope that that custom will not last very long because it is of no use to anybody, least of all the people of Scotland and Wales. In any case, we did not have to rely on the nationalists for entertainment when we had a professional juggler right in front of us.

After nearly six years as Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Gentleman was able to stand up this afternoon and say that inflation in the second half of this year will reach 8 per cent. and that then it is expected to dip. He is so afraid of what will actually happen that he dare not raise any excise duties. He announced that growth in the course of this year will be halved and that the balance of payments deficit will stay the same this year as it was last year—that is, around about £15 billion. He said that he expected interest rates to remain high. But still, after announcing all this wonderful record of his achievements, particularly in the past 12 months, the right hon. Gentleman produced again the lexicon of clichés about an unprecedented strength in the economy.

Yet again, in the next 12 months, we shall see just how much strength the right hon. Gentleman will produce in the economy. A year certainly does make a difference. Last year we had the boom budget that made the credits spree and the trade deficit and inflationary pressures worse than they otherwise would have been. This year we have had the bust Budget—a botched attempt to make up for the Chancellor's excesses and messes in last year's Budget.

Last year, in his Budget forecasts, the Chancellor told us that, in 1988, inflation would be 4 per cent., but he said that that was still too high. It was 6·8 per cent. in 1988 and it is now 7·5 per cent. and he has just told us that it will rise further. Of course, it might dip a little towards the back end of the year, perhaps even as early as July, because of the arithmetic of the year-on-year calculation of inflation. The fact remains, however, that without any excuse of any major move in commodity prices and without the pressure of any major movement in oil prices such as the previous Labour Government had to put up with, this is a Chancellor who is fast becoming Mr. Inflation.

Last year, the Chancellor, as usual, missed his monetary targets—missed them by billions. In his estimate of the Budget surplus at £3 billion, he showed that he had absolutely no idea of what was happening in the economy—he was out by a factor of five. Last year, the Chancellor proved that he is to economic forecasting what Eddie the Eagle is to ski jumping.

There will, as usual, be much comment on the Budget, but I warrant this: this year no one, neither the Chancellor's friends nor the Prime Minister—there is a distinction—will say that this Budget was

"quite the most brilliant we have seen"

After the experience of the past 12 months, perhaps the Prime Minister knows the difference between brilliance and flashiness, but the less lustrous Budget of 1989 cannot be blamed on any lack of advice. There has been no shortage in either the quantity or the quality of that advice.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has received advice from his right hon. Friends the Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), and for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) and had the benefit of advice from his right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Higgins)—whose advice is of high quality—and he has also had the benefit of advice from his right hon. Friend in the Cabinet, the Secretary of State for Wales, but he ignored that advice as well. He has also had high-quality advice from his right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup—the good old Member for Bexley and Sidcup, say we, because he tendered very high-quality advice to the Chancellor. However, the Chancellor has dismissed all his right hon. Friends as if they were a bunch of

"teenage scribblers".

The Chancellor was right about one thing last year; he was absolutely right to scorn the estimates offered in July by the City analysts that the balance of payments deficit for 1988 would be £10 billion. They were totally wrong about that; it was £14·7 billion, so the Chancellor was right to scorn them. Let us hope that he does not berate them quite so frequently this year because though they were far out, they were a great deal closer than the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

[Mr. Kinnock]

There was advice for the Chancellor from this side of the House too. Sadly, he neglected that. He told my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who presented a series of proposals for improving the situation, that there would be no change of policy. That was the Chancellor's absolutely unflinching announcement. He must have forgotten nine movements in the interest rate over a very short period, a kind of economic yo-yo, but he told my hon. Friend that there would be no change of policy. At all times, except when the Chancellor has faced the Prime Minister, his responses to demands and protests have been the same: "No change; I am standing firm. Read my blips." That has been the answer he has offered this 12 months.

Let us hope there will be different responses in the forthcoming months; otherwise there may be substance in the rumours percolating that the Prime Minister might be looking for a replacement for this Chancellor of the Exchequer. We understand that her gaze has fallen favourably upon the Secretary of State for the Environment. It is only a week since she was telling us that the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) is

"absolutely first-class in every way,"—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 751.]

whether in architecture, art, or civil engineering. Clearly, here we have a renaissance Cabinet Minister, with such an accumulation of talents as to make Leonardo da Vinci feel humble. So it might be that, in the course of the next 12 months, Michelangelo will replace Machiavelli. I do not know whether the country will be the better for it.

In this Budget the Chancellor did not offer anything to repair the damage done to ordinary families both as a result of last year's giddy, give-away Budget and so much else that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been doing. His failure to make that reparation will dismay many people in our country, but it will not surprise them. Because, for instance, of the briefing that did not take place and the tapes that do not exist, the people of Britain now know that child benefit hangs by a mere comma in the Conservative Manifesto. They also know that they have a Chancellor who believes that only a "tiny minority" of pensioners have "difficulty in making ends meet", even though there are 6 million retired people in this country either below or just on the official poverty line.

So it comes as no surprise to the people of Britain that they have a Government who take with one hand and then take more with the other. They are a Government who give income tax cuts and then wipe out any gains with mortgage and interest rate rises and rises in other taxes, who have imposed the highest tax burden in peacetime history on the people of this country.

This Budget will not lessen the burden either on the family or on the national income. I see the Chancellor disagreeing. The fact is that, even to get back to the burden as a proportion of national income and a weight on the average family that was reached under the last Labour Government, the Chancellor would today have had to cut the standard rate of income tax by another 6p. That demonstrates how much of an increase there has been in the tax burden under this Chancellor of the Exchequer.

However, not content with maintaining that record tax burden, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has ensured that the greatest burden falls on the average family. Since the right hon. Gentleman, the great tax reformer, entered 11 Downing street, the bottom 50 per cent. of British taxpayers, over 10 million people, have received £10 billion in income tax cuts; the top 1 per cent., just 200,000 people, have been given £16 billion in tax cuts. That cannot be just, efficient or right, and it will certainly not be right when that burden is increased by the Government-sponsored price rises in water and electricity and the poll tax—no tax was ever conceived or designed to fall more heavily on ordinary families throughout the country and less heavily upon the very rich.

Not content with being a high-tax party, the Conservative party, especially under the Prime Minister and the chancellorship of the right hon. Gentleman, is also spectacularly the high interest rate party. The average mortgage rate under this Government has been at an all-time record for an all-time record period. It is not an accident. The right hon. Gentleman told us last year, and he repeated it of course this year

"that interest rates remain the"—

not "an" but "the"—

"essential instrument of monetary policy"

[*Official Report*, 15 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 995.].

While even he cannot have thought, when he said last year, that the essential instrument would become a 13·75 per cent. bludgeon on home buyers and a huge cost burden added to the costs of industry, it is only really this Chancellor's usual performance.

After all, in the past six years this miracle worker has raised the mortgage rate to a level more than 35 per cent. above that which he inherited. Today, just before he sat down, the Chancellor claimed that the changes in national insurance contributions make this a budget for the low-paid. They certainly need it, because the great supply-side reform that this Government has achieved is to remove both rights and protections for the lowest paid workers in the land.

The right hon. Gentleman told us that he was going to claim credit for removing the steps in national insurance contributions. That is very interesting. We of course welcome it. We have made several demands over several Budgets for radical reform in national insurance contributions to alleviate the burden on the lowest paid workers. What has to be remembered, however, is that this man now removing the steps in national insurance contributions is the Chancellor who installed the steps in national insurance contributions and who increased the rate from 6·5 per cent. to 9 per cent.—a huge tax increase for those least able to afford it.

I wish this were a Budget for the low-paid. The truth is that the changes announced by the Chancellor today hardly touch the average family and its income, and they do not compare with the endless largesse that he was prepared to show last year to those on the very highest income. This is not a Budget for the low-paid worker; this is another con job from a low-down Chancellor.

True to form, again in this Budget, while the right hon. Gentleman was failing the majority he was favouring the minority. Even this modest Budget today brought in a few more of what are becoming known as Lawson's loopholes. We have had them before. We had the BES and enterprise zones. Those are just two examples; there are plenty more of them. We have had various kinds of tax relief, based on the hope that if the tax obligations of those on higher

incomes were reduced they would be more willing to commit their resources to investment. That has never worked, and it will not work now.

The Chancellor has announced with a little twist today that, through this Budget, he will allow previously purchased privatisation share issues to be placed in personal equity plans. It will be plain to everyone that he is doing that to give free and speculative gains on privatisation issues. That is the water privatisation bribe, and the Government will need all the bribes that they can get if they are going to make that flotation work.

Of course, trying to relieve of tax the people on top incomes to induce them to invest has not worked. After 10 years of giving away £26 billion to the richest 1 per cent. in our country, the proportion of total investment in GDP is lower than during any year under the last Labour Government. The savings ratio is also at rock bottom. It is historically at its lowest ever figure.

I used to think that it was the national debt which did not matter. It now appears to be the savings ratio which does not matter. That is extraordinary. If the savings ratio does not matter, why did the Chancellor put all that effort into trying to subsidise savings if it was not to try to pull up savings from the historically low level which he has managed to reach as further evidence of his brilliance?

The Chancellor's steps today, like so many of his other steps, show his incompetence and perversity. If the fact that we have 13 per cent. interest rates does not attract savers, why should subsidies attract them? In a country in which the Government refuse subsidies to meet the environmental costs of a rail link and in which they regard subsidies for training or research as the work of the devil, people rightly ask why subsidies are right for those with the money to save and wrong for those who use railways, carry out research or need training.

The Budget contains the most indefensible of all the Government's tax subsidies—the subsidy which they propose to give to people who buy private health insurance for the over-60s. If the Government want to give priority in the Budget to the health needs of the elderly, the answer is not tax relief on medical insurance premiums for the well-off. The answer is to provide proper funds to cut NHS waiting lists for the elderly, to increase district nursing, health visiting and chiropody and physiotherapy services. If the Prime Minister would only join the NHS queue instead of jumping it, she would know that I am telling the truth.

When I raised this matter with her, the Prime Minister said that she was surprised I was

"prepared to purchase a private house but not prepared to purchase private health care. [*Official Report*, 2 February 1989; Vol. 146, c. 424.]

That is what she said to me just a couple of weeks ago. The Prime Minister is so distant from reality that she equates housing with health. If she can do that, perhaps she can tell us what are the health equivalents to rent, mortgage arrears, housing, rises in mortgage rates, overcrowding and homelessness. If the Prime Minister believes that there is an equation between buying a house and buying private health insurance, she can tell us all about it. I might even get her to rise at the Dispatch Box to answer this, who knows?

The needs of the elderly, whether they are in the private sector or on the NHS, will not be met by subsidies of this kind. When we know that the Government, according to the Chancellor, are prepared to give over £40 million—it will be a lot more than that in reality—of taxpayers' money to the already well-off, when they are denying proper facilities to those who do not, cannot and will not pay, that is a grotesque sense of injustice.

We all know why that provision is in the Budget. It is not because the Chancellor is enthusiastic about it. It is not even, to do him credit, because the Secretary of State for Health is enthusiastic about it. That provision is in the Budget because it is one of the Prime Minister's pet obsessions. She deludes herself, or she wants to delude others, that private health subsidies for the over-60s will somehow ease pressure on the Health Service. It cannot and will not do that.

Apart from any other considerations, private health insurers do no cover pre-existing medical conditions such as arthritis, senile dementia, loss of mobility or many of the other most usual ailments of the very elderly. BUPA offers the advice that private health insurance does not exist to alleviate long-term illness, because that is not a suitable subject for insurers.

In the Finance Bill which will follow this Budget and in many other ways, it is important that people's attention is drawn to the basic ideology behind that proposition so that people can judge the Budget and the Government's White Paper on "Working for Accountants". The idea that the private medical sector can help with health needs is not the Prime Minister's only delusion. She believes, or says that she believes, that the

"trade deficit is being financed by people who are prepared to invest in Britain and who have full confidence in the country's economy."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1989, Vol. 148, c. 392.]

The Chancellor said something like that again today. However, the truth is that the brilliant Chancellor has made such a botch of his job that the only way in which he can get short-term money into this country to fund his record balance of payments deficit is to offer the highest interest rates in the industrial world.

At the same time that the Chancellor is making families and businesses bear the crushing interest rate burden, he is presiding over a huge and continuing net outflow of long-term capital. Last year, about £9 billion of long-term capital came into Britain and £24 billion of long-term capital went out. Some "full confidence" that shows in "the country's economy", to use the Prime Minister's words—a net long-term capital outflow of £15 billion to go with the deficit on the current account of £15 billion which will stay with us again this year.

However, against that background the Chancellor expects us to stand back and admire him for accumulating a Budget surplus. Against a background of huge household debt, a rock-bottom savings ratio, a massive trade deficit and a record tax burden, the Chancellor expects the people of Britain to become positively reverential at what he calls his "prudence and caution" in using that surplus to pay back the national debt.

Before anyone becomes too impressed with the Chancellor, a few factors should be taken into account. It is very difficult for the Chancellor to claim "prudence" for accumulating the surplus when he did not plan for it and when it is five times bigger than he expected. He was the most shocked man in the House of Commons. He must be the only person who still believes in Father Christmas.

Despite all the talk that we heard again this afternoon about "prudence and caution" in paying off the national debt to "lift the burdens of the future", the Chancellor

[Mr. Kinnock]

knows that he is not using the Budget surplus because he wants to. He is using it to repay the national debt because he thinks that he dare not do anything else with it.

The Chancellor has his bonanza budget surplus—a real windfall if there ever was one—which he believes that he cannot use in Britain without sucking in more imports and sending the markets haywire. He has all this money, but he dare not use it. He must feel like the robber who opens his swag and finds that all the banknotes are marked. The robber analogy is not entirely without meaning, especially when we bear in mind the remarks of the former Prime Minister, the late Lord Stockton, about selling the family silver.

We must remember that the surplus is not the Chancellor's. The headlines might read "Mr. Lawson's surplus", "The Government's surplus", "The Chancellor's surplus", "Mr. Fixit's surplus", "Wonderman's surplus" or even "The Brilliant Chancellor's Surplus". However, as the Chancellor and the Prime Minister repeatedly and rightly remind everyone, Governments do not have their own money. Governments only have the people's money. Governments only have the taxpayers' money. So Governments do not have their own surpluses: they have only the people's surpluses.

What are the people in Britain saying should be done with their surplus? In every measure of opinion, such as that in *The Daily Telegraph* 10 days ago and confirmed by every other source, people are not saying that the surplus should be used to repay the national debt or to spend on big tax handouts. In huge majorities, in all measures of opinion, the people who own that surplus are saying that their surplus should be used on health, education, transport, to protect the environment and to make the streets and railways safer and cleaner. The people are saying that their surplus should be used to prepare for their future and for their children's future. That comes through strongly from every measure of opinion, and this is a day on which the Chancellor should have trusted the people.

Some of the people want their surplus used in this way because of their instinct for social justice; others because of an innate understanding that this country's economic and social fabric has been run down and must be built up if we are to face the future. But most people, I suspect, will say that their surplus should be used for constructive reasons of the most enlightened and common-sense self-interest, because the people of Britain know that they need the National Health Service and the public education system; they need comfort and security and efficiency as they travel across the country. They know all that because, unlike the Prime Minister and most of the Cabinet, they use the public services in Great Britain.

This is the time that the Chancellor really should have trusted the people of this country, because the National Health Service lacks the resources to spend properly on its development needs. In this country, rivers, beaches and water supplies need cleansing. In this country, under this Government, local council house building has dropped by two thirds, private house building has fallen by one third and we have increased overcrowding, bad housing and homelessness. Under this Government it is a country that spends a fraction of what our competitors spend on skill training and in which investment in commercially viable research is still, despite all the oil, the tax burden and the Budget surplus, still spending 10 per cent. less on research than in 1979.

In this country, with all those needs, the Government would have to spend £14 billion in order to raise the proportion of GDP spent on public sector capital investment back to the level it was at under the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), or under my right hon. Friends Lords Wilson and Callaghan.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): He does not understand.

Mr. Kinnock: Oh, I understand only too well. One only has to walk out of this place and see the filth on the streets and the railways, the schools understaffed, the shortages of teachers and the under-funding of research to know that I understand only too well.

In this country, with all these needs for repair and renovation and to face the future, a Government that use their Budget surplus to pay the national debt are like a householder who insists on paying back the mortgage despite the fact that the roof is leaking, the damp is rising, the electric wiring is perilous and the windows are falling out. This decision is justified by the Chancellor and the Prime Minister by saying that we should be paying off the mortgage, paying off the national debt, because if the people do not use their resources for that they will leave a debt round their children's necks.

It is strange that the Prime Minister and the Government as a whole always say that they do not want to leave debts to our children. Yet they are always prepared to cut the taxes of the rich and to restrain public capital spending. They do not want to leave debts to our children, but they are always willing to preside over stagnation in manufacturing investment, always ready to leave a legacy of decay and danger because they will not undertake proper investment in the present or the future.

They leave debts, too—the debts of a Chancellor who, in his time in office, has seen exports rise by 21 per cent. and imports by 58 per cent. In the last 12 months alone, he has seen exports rise by 1·8 per cent. and imports by 13 per cent. Such a Chancellor leaves debts. Such a Chancellor runs up overdrafts. Does he think that there is some charity in the sky that will fund that huge deficit that he has run up?

That is not all the debt story. Under this Chancellor personal debts have risen, because of his fiscal and monetary incompetence, to a level which means that British households are more indebted than those of any other of the seven major industrialised nations. The Chancellor, who now uses his single instrument of record interest rates, punishes people for believing him on previous occasions. This Chancellor and this Government allow decay to increase, danger to spread, debt to rise and division to increase. The people will have to pay those debts now because they are without choice when they face their bills. The right hon. Gentleman and the Government will pay later because they will have to face the people without support.

Mr. Speaker: As the private notice question is fully debatable on the Ways and Means resolutions, I do not propose to take any further questions on the private notice question.

PROVISIONAL COLLECTION OF TAXES

Motion made, and Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 50 (Ways and Means motions).

That, pursuant to section 5 of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968, provisional statutory effect shall be given to the following motions:—

(a) Hydrocarbon oil (motion No. 2);

(b) Vehicles excise duty (rates) (motion No. 5);

(c) Special machines (vehicles excise duty and hydrocarbon oil) (motion No. 7).—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

Question agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I now call on the Chancellor to move the motion entitled "Amendment of the law". It is on this motion that the Budget debate will take place today and on the succeeding days. The remaining motions will not be put until the end of the Budget debate next week and they will then be decided without debate.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;

(b) for refunding any amount of tax, otherwise than in a case where the amount has been paid by reason of a mistake;

(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or

(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

[Relevant documents: European Community document No. 8887/88, Annual Economic Report 1988-89 and the unnumbered document, "Annual Economic Report 1988-89" (final version as adopted by the Council).]

5.29 pm

Mr. David Knox (Staffordshire, Moorlands): I should like to start by congratulating my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on this, his sixth Budget statement. Like all his previous Budget statements, his speech today was well constructed, to the point and commendably brief. I do not know how many more Budgets my right hon. Friend will introduce, but he has set his successors a very high standard to match, and of course his Budget speeches compare very favourably both in style and in content with those of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) between 1974 and 1979.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): But they are an awful lot denser.

Mr. Knox: I must thank the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition for his private notice question this afternoon. With the exception of one or two hon. Members, the entire House is very grateful to him for co-operating to stop an abuse of parliamentary procedure. As a result of the right hon. Gentleman's action, the House was able to proceed with the Budget debate in the usual way. I think that a Conservative Member ought to express the gratitude of this side of the House to the right hon. Gentleman for his action.

However, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, I welcome my right hon. Friend's cautious and prudent Budget. Given the balance of payments position and the current rate of inflation, he was right to be very cautious and to maintain the public sector debt repayment at the same level in the coming year as it has been in the past year. I strongly welcome a number of measures in my right hon. Friend's Budget. Chief among them is the fulfilment of the pledge made in our 1979 election manifesto that the earnings rule would be abolished. We have long waited for that to happen, and at last it has been implemented. Incidentally, another pledge made at the same time was that there would be rather less legislation under a Conservative Government than under the previous Labour Government. Perhaps that pledge also will be fulfilled in the coming years, who knows?

In the face of inflation and balance of payments difficulties, I am pleased that my right hon. Friend decided

[Mr. Knox]

to stick to increasing the thresholds by only the statutory amount. One expected him to do at least that, because he was one of the authors of the original Rooker-Wise-Lawson amendment back in the 1970s. Although he does not always receive as much credit as he should for this, he has as Chancellor fulfilled the spirit of that amendment in the past.

I am pleased also that my right hon. Friend has made the changes he has to national insurance contributions. The new arrangements will be much more satisfactory, because they remove the disincentive to people to earn more that obtains in the existing arrangements. I am pleased that my right hon. Friend has taken steps to increase long-term saving. I view the decline in saving over the past few years as a serious matter. I am glad that my right hon. Friend has taken the important measures that he has to try to increase the rate of long-term saving. Together with those, there are measures to increase wider share ownership, which is important if we are to create a capital-owning democracy—to use that great phrase of the late Iain Macleod.

I am pleased that my right hon. Friend has not increased duty on alcohol and tobacco. I warmly welcome the change in duty payable on unleaded petrol. Only 5 per cent. of petrol consumption is accounted for by unleaded petrol, and it is high time that its share was considerably increased. Yesterday, I took the precaution of asking my garage to convert my car to unleaded petrol, so clearly I shall benefit from that measure. I had no pre-knowledge of the Chancellor's decision.

Important though the measures announced by my right hon. Friend are, he will be judged on the economy's general performance during the next year rather than on his Budget. Two areas of the economy are of particular concern at present. They are the balance of payments and inflation. There is no doubt in my mind that the balance of payments is the more serious of them. In the early 1980s, we had—thanks to oil—very large surpluses on the current account of our balance of payments. They enabled us to build up massive overseas investment. Today, British people own much more capital abroad than foreigners own in this country. Britain has become one of the strongest creditor countries in the world. It can be argued that that is the only real advantage North sea oil has given us.

It was hoped that that advantage would be a lasting one and that the income from our overseas investments would help us to pay our way in the world when the oil was no longer there and we were compelled to import oil again. However, over the past three years we have moved from a position of having a substantial surplus on our balance of payments current account to having a substantial deficit. Last year, the deficit totalled £14·5 billion. This afternoon, my right hon. Friend announced that he expects a similar deficit in the coming year. We can pay for such deficits either by the sale of overseas investments or by borrowing.

So far, the deficits have been financed mainly by borrowing at excessively high rates of interest, which have attracted hot money into London. A combination of our strong net capital position and high interest rates has enabled us to avoid the kind of sterling crisis that we knew in the 1970s. If our current account deficit continues uncorrected for any length of time—and there is no sign that it will not do so—our net capital position will deteriorate, to the point where we shall eventually become a net debtor country. If that happens, apart from the devastating repercussions for our domestic economy, it will mean that oil had come and gone with no long-term advantage to the British economy.

I have none of the hang-ups about borrowing and debt that the Government have, but I find it difficult to understand how a Government who are so concerned about their own borrowing, and who are now so proud that they are paying back the national debt, can appear indifferent to the fact that we, as a nation, are deeply in debt, that we are enjoying a standard of living that we are not earning, and that that standard of living is financed in part by borrowing from foreigners.

The principal task facing my right hon. Friend in the immediate future is action to remedy the current account deficit. What should be done? Our deteriorating balance of payments probably owes something to increased inflation. Prices are rising faster in Britain than in many other countries, which makes us uncompetitive. Although action must be taken to control inflation, I do not attach great significance to rising inflation as a contributory factor to creating the deficit, because it appeared before inflation started rising.

Whatever view one may take, I hope that no one believes that controlling inflation will of itself remedy our balance of payments problem. Much more important as contributory factors to the deficit are the rise in consumer demand and the effects of high interest rates. Rising consumer demand has been fuelled by easy credit, a fall in personal savings, and the tax cuts of the past two Budgets. As to the latter, I am not being wise after the event, because in my speeches on the last two Budgets, I criticised tax cuts because of their possible effect on our balance of payments. I regret that it seems that I was right.

As to rising consumer demand, I am sorry that my right hon. Friend has not introduced some form of credit control in his Budget, but I am not terribly surprised that he did not do so. I welcome steps to encourage savings. It is important to remember that temporary increases in fluctuating interest rates are unlikely to act as an incentive to the kind of long-term saving that we need. My right hon. Friend's new measures will have a positive effect on increasing long-term savings—and it is those that we need.

I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend did not announce further tax cuts—not because I have any ideological objections to them, but because I believe that the money would have been spent at least in part on imported consumer goods, and we cannot afford that at present. I am sorry that my right hon. Friend did not divert some of the money he might otherwise have devoted to tax cuts to capital expenditure on the infrastructure with a low import potential. In that way domestic demand could have been maintained at such a level as to ensure that unemployment continued to fall.

In my view the greatest stumbling block to righting the balance of payments deficit is the policy of high interest rates. It is of course true that the current high interest rates policy will bring downward pressure on inflation and consumer demand—which will help the balance of payments—but it also has a serious adverse effect. High interest rates keep sterling at an artificially high level, which makes British exports dearer in overseas markets and hence more difficult to sell. It also makes foreign imports cheaper, so they are easier to sell.

As long as the high interest rates persist, I do not think that we can expect to reduce the deficit, far less eliminate it. If we are to eliminate it—and we must—there must be a reduction in the exchange rate of sterling against other currencies, and that means that interest rates must be allowed to fall. I am afraid that I heard no indications of such a policy this afternoon.

The other economic problem facing the Government is inflation. Although I do not consider it as serious a problem as the balance of payments deficit, the current position requires remedial action, particularly because of the political importance that the present Government have always attached to controlling inflation. Over the past year retail prices have risen by 7·5 per cent., and, as my right hon. Friend said this afternoon, they are likely to rise to 8 per cent. in the next few months. That is more than twice as fast as the annual rate of inflation 12 months ago.

The Government have reacted to rising inflation by increasing interest rates, and I have no doubt that if they persevere with that policy inflation will eventually be brought under control—but at a price. Apart from the effects on the balance of payments, to which I have already referred, the use of high interest rates has other adverse effects. If interest rates are used as the sole weapon against inflation, to be successful the policy must be pressed to the point at which there is a severe demand deflation. Output will stop rising and will probably start to fall; unemployment will stop falling and will probably start to rise again, although there are still far too many people out of work—despite the welcome fall of 1 million in unemployment over the past two years.

The cost of squeezing out inflation using interest rates on their own is very heavy for the balance of payments, output and jobs, and other measures should be used in addition to interest rates.

Of course alternative anti-inflationary weapons such as credit controls also have deficiencies and weaknesses, but surely there is a case for using a combination of measures. None need be pursued to its ultimate extreme, but the overall effect will be more likely to achieve the objective of controlling inflation without over serious side effects.

One aspect of our inflationary problem, which I think that the Government should consider again, is the effect of wage and salary increases on price rises. In recent years wages and salaries have continued to rise faster than output, and that rise has accelerated recently, thus contributing to the higher rate of inflation. The problem may well worsen in the current year, because the increase in the inflation rate will mean that the cost of living factor in wage and salary claims will be higher in 1989 than it was in 1988.

The excessive increase in earnings has happened because the labour market for wage and salary earners has been overheated, despite high levels of unemployment and the freeing of the labour market that has resulted from the trade union legislation and other measures introduced in recent years. Obviously that overheating has intensified as unemployment has fallen. It is, of course, absurd that the labour market should be overheated when 2 million people and more have been out of work, but it shows the importance of more and better training—the Government's actions in that regard are to be commended—and of further measures to improve the mobility of labour.

No matter what action is taken, however, it seems likely in the long term, and certain in the short and medium terms, that the labour market will continue to be prone to overheating, even at times of high unemployment. It seems to me that we are further away than ever from resolving the great unresolved economic problem of the post-war era—how to maintain high employment and at the same time control inflation, particularly wage and salary cost inflation.

Could it be that there is a case for an incomes policy after all? Of course incomes policies have their weaknesses and deficiencies, but so have all the alternatives. I hope that the Government will think again, and will not rule out some form of incomes policy in the future.

5.45 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Having erred considerably in the direction of carelessness in last year's Budget, the Chancellor has certainly chosen the path of caution this year. What worries me is that he has not sought to take measures that will improve the underlying competitiveness of British industry.

Like the hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox), I believe that the balance of payments deficit haunts the economy and is likely to do so for the next two to three years. Unless serious steps are taken to ensure that unit costs are kept down and our manufacturing competitive edge is maintained, we shall continue for the next few years to look apprehensively over our shoulder to see how much foreign confidence in the United Kingdom economy we are able to retain.

It appears to me from his overall Budget judgment that the Chancellor is more fearful than I had expected: this is a more cautious Budget. There are two possible interpretations of that caution. Perhaps, having been careless last year, the Chancellor is determined not to repeat his error this year, in which case his caution must to some extent be welcomed. A more cynical explanation, borne out by the cynical manner in which consumer spending has been pumped up before elections, is that the Chancellor has deliberately been over cautious this year so that he can be far more relaxed in the run-up to the next election, and that the old familiar electoral cycle is dictating Budget judgments.

How much credibility can we give the Chancellor's judgments? People have been pretty kind to him, but the fact is that in March last year he predicted a current account deficit of only £4 billion and an inflation rate of 4 per cent. For him to have been so grotesquely wrong about the balance of payments deficit figures, and now to admit that he expects inflation to rise to 8 per cent., is a mark of how seriously wrong last year's forecasting was.

The question is whether we can give much credence to the Chancellor's figure of 8 per cent. The worst decision that he has made in social terms, and in terms of equity and justice, is his decision to cut the retail price index by 0·5 per cent. In forgoing excise duty indexation, the Chancellor is forgoing some £290 million. I am worried about inflation and I want to see the Chancellor trying to massage the RPI down. Nevertheless, I find it immensely hard to understand how a Chancellor can raise charges for prescriptions, eye tests, water, gas and electricity—all of which are essential—yet forgo an increase which most people had expected on cigarettes, which kill and damage and cost the National Health Service substantial sums every year, and alcohol, the growing abuse of which is causing immense social problems.

[Dr. David Owen]

The Chancellor has a funny sense of social and economic priorities. In deciding to reduce the pressure on the retail price index, which I support, he opts for freezing the duty on cigarettes and alcohol, yet increases prescription charges and essential charges for water, electricity and gas, which every family in Britain cannot do without. If those are Lawson priorities, I do not want much of them.

There is a serious question about the essential issue of how to bring down the RPI, but there are also other problems. The Chancellor has produced some well-thought-out measures and, to be fair to him, it is very attractive that at long last the earnings rule has been abolished. That was a very brave decision. His decision on unleaded petrol is certainly a step in the right direction. I would have preferred a bigger margin of 20p, but provided that the oil companies do not cheat this time, a 10p margin will be most beneficial. We strongly support some of his other measures.

I am anxious, however, about the strategy behind the Budget. The fundamental objective is to improve our competitiveness. The Chancellor has decided to spend £14 billion on public sector debt repayment. He wisely decided not to reduce basic tax rates, as that would have sent all the wrong messages and would have fed through into consumer spending, but there is no inherent reason why we have to pay back our debt except to retain confidence. The Chancellor could have embarked on spending priorities to strengthen the underlying economy and retain confidence.

For example, the Chancellor inveighed against a devaluation in the currency to retain competitiveness because of his very reasonable fear that that would feed through in inflation. He stated that that would not be the case and that he would hold up interest rates to protect the pound because of his anxiety about inflation. Yet the Red Book states:

"manufacturing unit labour costs rose by 2½ per cent. in 1988, a little more than in 1987"

but were not offset by productivity.

"Unit labour costs in the other major countries fell slightly on average."

There is no sign that unit labour costs in Britain will fall.

We need devaluation without inflation. How do we achieve that? The Government could consider the national insurance contributions paid by employers. We have argued in the SDP many times that targeted reductions in employers' national insurance contributions should be part of a strategy to tackle unemployment and encourage industrial expansion. We have argued that those reductions should and could be targeted to be fully in effect by the end of 1992. If we were to phase out the national insurance contributions by employers, perhaps by a 15 per cent. reduction this year at a cost of £2 billion, we would have a strategy for retaining the competitivenes of British industry, provided that that relaxation was not simply passed on in pay rises. But no one can do anything about industry that pays over and above productivity. There are already ominous signs in the economy that some employers are beginning to allow pay rises that cannot be justified by productivity.

I was surprised that the Chancellor did not take the opportunity to link pay rises to share options, so that all company employees would have the tax-free share perk which was given to directors in the 1984 Budget. But it should be given only on pay rises, not on existing pay and would be taken in the form of share options. That would have exerted downward pressure on wage inflation and attracted more savings.

Almost all the measures that the Government have announced for savings are worth while, but they are very cautious and minimalist, and will not improve the personal savings ratio to the extent necessary to provide a little more room for manoeuvre on interest rates. Therefore, I fear that interest rates will remain high for some time, and that will damage industry and investment.

I believe that it was a mistake not to encourage more private investment into infrastructure. Infrastructure investment is difficult for private investors. There is a long pay-back time and a very high environmental cost which is not always justified by pure profit. The Government should consider the SDP's suggestion for infrastructure bonds, encouraging people to invest in infrastructure, which is an essential part of keeping British industry competitive. It is no use making the substantial and worthwhile investment in the Channel tunnel unless it is linked to all parts of the United Kingdom. That necessitates an improvement in road and rail links right up to Scotland.

There is no evidence yet that the Government realise the urgency of our transport links, and they are not producing the Victorian investment which made our present railway network and is needed to revive and renew it again. There is no dedicated freight line and no linkage to Liverpool to open up that port to Atlantic trade and enable it to compete with Rotterdam with a free flow rail link straight through to the Channel tunnel. That is an inspired investment. It is seen to be long-term and does not feed through to inflation and I believe that it would carry confidence abroad far more than public sector debt repayment.

There is no vision in the Budget and no element in which the Chancellor is tackling the very weaknesses exemplified by our trade deficit. He has no strategy to improve the competitiveness of our manufacturing export industry on which our real prosperity depends. Only if that and our industrial and manufacturing capacity improves will we get away from the confidence factor and be able safely to reduce interest rates. We need investment in substantial portions of British industry. We do not attract the same levels of investment as our foreign competitors.

We have to remember the true message of 1992. To hear the Government talk about 1992 one would think that it was all opportunities. The Government are right to be optimistic and to get our business men orientated to the fact that 11 nations' markets will be open to us. But it is about time that Britain realised that 11 other nations see ripe opportunities in our market. It is very easy to penetrate the British market. We have national newspapers and national media and if one pays for advertising in those one goes in with a tremendous market push.

We are extremely vulnerable to aggressive exporting incentives by the other 11 European Community countries. We have to be more conscious of how vulnerable we will become in 1992 when the barriers come down. It is excellent that we talk about the opportunities, but we should realise how vulnerable we are and how dangerous 1992 could be. What we do between now and 1992 is of critical importance in ensuring that our industry

is competitive. The absence of that drive in the Budget makes me feel so negative and pessimistic—intense caution and no imagination.

The Chancellor has had a bruising year. There has never been a period when a Chancellor has been so comprehensively disowned by his Prime Minister. Indeed, there was a time when some of us wondered whether he was the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is all very well for him to come to the House without some of the bombast that we have had to put up with when he slashed into teenage scribblers in the City who jump up and down in an effort to get press attention, but their predictions were right and the Chancellor's were wrong.

There is something else missing. There is an absence of commitment to investment, to keeping unit costs down and to skill training—an essential element if we are to remain competitive. Much of the wage pressure that is building up is because employers have to pay over the odds. There are not enough skilled people even though there is high unemployment in some parts of the country. We are not getting the right type of people through. The Government may say that they are taking measures to redress the position but all the time there is a lack of real investment in skill training, which would produce results as quickly as they are needed, which is pretty quickly.

Then there is the social dimension. The Government have done insufficient to shield some of those who are feeling the effects of high interest rates—in particular, first-time home buyers. we should move towards expenditure taxation. All savings should be treated the same. The Chancellor has always favoured a broad tax base and low rates. The problem is that the Prime Minister faces one of her usual dilemmas between intellect and instinct. She wishes to retain some tax allowances, like the mortgage tax allowance. She wants low tax rates but she wants to keep various allowances. We have to read between the lines of the Chancellor's statement. I have not yet had time to read the small print, but from what he said on life assurance and on pensions, it seems that once again his dream of taking away all tax allowances, and of going for a broad-based tax and low rates has been defeated by politics, if not by institutional inertia.

It is high time we went the other way. We have to face the fact that most tax allowances will stay. The mortgage tax allowance will remain. Therefore, all savings should be treated equitably and fairly, with tax allowances at the standard rate across them all. There is nothing inherently wrong in saving for a house. It is no different from saving for a pension. It is an individual choice that people make. We had better give up the idea of getting rid of all tax allowances and going for a simple system of narrower-based tax. We shall continue to have many allowances on savings. Let us make them neutral between savings instead of having the nonsense about mortgage tax allowance hovering between the Prime Minister's passion and the Chancellor's hatred. Let us face it: it is legitimate to have mortgage tax allowance at the standard rate and to be prepared from time to time to up it to help young people who are buying a house for the first time. They are being treated badly; it is wrong that that should happen.

One suggestion of the SDP is for a kick-start mortgage: the limit would be raised to £50,000 for the first year and then tapered down. We have to consider the question more rationally. Are the Government phasing out the mortgage tax allowance? Is that their policy? I would be interested to know. It appears that one day the Chancellor wants that but that near election day the Prime Minister comes back increasing it. We are unequivocal. We want an expenditure tax and we want all savings to be treated neutrally. Tax allowance at the basic rate, but not at the higher rate, is acceptable; the higher rate should be abolished. We would keep mortgage tax allowance and encourage home ownership. It is essential that young people who want to purchase their own homes are not savaged because of high interest rates.

Other social requirements are missing. The child tax allowance should have been increased by at least £1. It is an outrage that we have not been able to help the greatest element of poverty—the poverty among families with a large number of children.

The Chancellor has rightly concentrated quite a lot of money and support on the elderly. He has reduced the age allowance for additional tax relief from 80 to 75 and has also abolished the earnings rule for pensioners.

I welcome what the Chancellor has started to do on national insurance contributions. The SDP has urged him for many years to act on the national insurance contribution for employees. His tentative first step is welcome. It starts to make the national insurance contribution more progressive. Although there are many spikes within his new system, it will be logical only if the Chancellor carries reform on each year, continuously making changes to marry the national insurance contribution to income tax. We should accept that a national insurance contribution paid by an employee is to all intents and purposes an addition to income tax. It is one and the same thing and the two should be treated in the same way, with no disincentives and a smooth transition between the two. If that is the Chancellor's strategy, we welcome it. I hope that he will move faster on it and eventually reach complete integration.

Another missing social requirement relates to housing benefit. The impact of the present housing benefit on poor families is appalling. I hoped that there would be at least a 10 per cent. increase in housing benefit to shield people on lower incomes.

I thought that the Chancellor was seriously interested in attracting women back into employment. The problem in nursing will be savage. Employers who make nursery provision for female employees are treated absurdly because the Government insist that that is a tax perk that has to be clawed back. That is wrong, and the requirement should be abolished. These are all important changes. They are right in social justice but also have economic advantages.

The Budget has been unimaginative. I leave it with a feeling of pessimism. It is as if the Chancellor's imagination and bounce have been knocked out of him over the last year. By all means let him be cautious, but where was the understanding of the faults of our economic position? I do not know that we are yet in a crisis, but the balance of payments deficit has to be grappled with far more courageously and adventurously, and with much greater commitment to investment in the medium term than is contained within the Budget. Perhaps the Chancellor fears something that he has not felt able to let the House know. Certainly I find it hard to understand why he has produced a Budget with so little imagination on the central question of Britain remaining competitive in its industry and ensuring that its exports can expand in order to close the trade deficit.

6.8 pm

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was faced with a difficult problem this year owing to the rise in inflation and the danger to sterling. In framing his Budget he has been extremely sensible and realistic and he comes out with credit. His Budget is sound and strictly anti-inflationary.

Official statistics are notoriously unreliable. I suspect that our balance of payments figures are nothing like as bad as they are presented. Industry is thriving to an extent which I have not seen for a long time. The recent report of the Institute of Directors expresses confidence among business men. It says that generally high interest rates are not harming investment.

The outlook for business profits continues to be very good. I am delighted to see in my own constituency the progress of many firms in the past year, especially in sales and marketing and in their use of skilled manpower. Exports are holding up very well and the remarkable export successes of some of my firms, even very small ones, are unsung in the media, which only seem to like bad news.

British industry as a whole still cannot make enough products of the right design and price to compete with the flood of imports from abroad. That serious matter will take some time to cure. The motor trade, on which so many people in my constituency depend, is holding up very well.

The strength of sterling depends on strict control of inflation and is also based on the respect of foreign countries for the Government, headed as they are by a Prime Minister who is a leading world statesman. It would be too frightful to contemplate what would happen if the Opposition parties were able to form a Government.

The control of inflation must always be the hallmark of the Government. There is no doubt now that the high interest rate is cooling down excessive spending in the high streets. It is essential to bring inflation tightly under control once again, for the good of the country and to ensure that the Government are returned at the next general election.

It is terrifying to look back at the pace of inflation in the last two generations. It would take £25 today to buy goods worth £1 before the war. Even in the past 10 years, the value of our money has gone down by 50 per cent. That has not happened in certain other countries such as Germany and Switzerland. We must ask ourselves why. Is it because we have not worked hard enough, have paid ourselves too much or have paid out vast sums in welfare and other benefits which we cannot afford? These difficult questions are for the present generation to answer, in spite of the vast improvements of the Thatcherite revolution. We must hope that the next generation will make a better job of it than we have done.

I welcome the higher bands on which income tax will be levied, which will attract those who are out of work to seek employment more avidly. I particularly welcome the reductions in national insurance payments for the lower paid. I am not surprised at the vast amounts that these very important reforms will cost the Treasury, as they are well worth it from the human point of view and for the help that they will give as an incentive to work and to improve one's earnings.

I have a few disappointments, however, in this otherwise excellent Budget. I should have liked capital gains tax to be abolished, as well as inheritance tax, which runs quite counter to the philosophy of the Government. It is only natural for a parent to wish to hand on to his children what he has saved and built up. I also hoped that stamp duty might have been abolished, especially in house purchase, thereby reducing costs, and the mass of paperwork involved in housing transactions.

I welcome the reduction in the national debt, which is good housekeeping and saves the taxpayer money in future years. It also paves the way for tax cuts. I am delighted that the earnings rule for pensioners has been abolished.

I have received several representations from constituents about their fears of an increase in the tax on company cars. On the whole, I agree with what the Chancellor has done. The more that tax allowances are phased out, the greater can be the reduction in income tax.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Does my hon. Friend not agree that there is a major problem for a salesman who travels, say, 30,000 miles a year and who needs his company car? He has no choice, as he could not carry on his job without a car. It is essential that the Chancellor stops hammering those thousands of people.

Mr. Stokes: My hon. Friend is very percipient. I was coming to that very point, having a son who has risen from salesman to general sales manager, and who is now a consultant. It is most unfair on those people. I hope that there will be a chance to make the correct amendments during debates on the Finance Bill.

I welcome the improvements in corporation tax, so that smaller firms will have more money available for investment. The fall in unemployed, about which we hear so little from the Opposition, is also very welcome, but it puts up pressure for higher wages. That should be resisted by employers, unless there are real productivity gains. I welcome the many steps that have been taken to improve savings, which are vital to our future prosperity. I also greatly welcome the plans to extend share ownership.

The Chancellor said nothing, perhaps wisely, about 1992. I would be happier about it if the EEC concept was less Socialist-oriented, and more keen to create real competition from firms that were freed from old fashioned Socialist ideas, such as worker directors.

I hope that the recent blast from the bishops will not deflect the Government from continuing to enable individuals to give of their best, to help themselves and their families, and of course the economy at large. The attack by some leading Churchmen on individual effort is sinister and dangerous. Who wants inefficient state industries? How right the Government are to denationalise them as fast as they can, and thus staunch the dreadful losses that have built up. Who wants inefficient private companies or an inefficient City of London?

A good industrial or commercial concern treats its employees, suppliers and customers fairly, as for instance does Marks and Spencer and other similar organisations. What on earth is wrong with that? It is from the profits of our industry and commerce, and especially from the successes of our manufacturing industry, that taxpayers' money is found to fund all kinds of good causes such as better health care, a better environment and improved roads, and better welfare benefits, where all those are right and desirable. There would be more money for the arts and all kinds of other good causes. There would be support for

the police in the fight against crime. There would be more to contribute to the defence of the West and to the defence of our country.

The enormous sums of money needed to provide for our colossal public expenditure could not be found if individuals at all levels in industry and commerce did not work and try hard. Their successful effort is vital to the nation, competing as we are against the great trading nations of the world. But that does not mean that all those hard-working and patriotic people are nasty selfish brutes.

We only have to consider the enormous increase in charitable giving to realise how generous people are. Lower taxes seem to mean that people are giving more away; and how splendid. It is a marvellous time for charities. Let us hope that they are all being run efficiently.

I hope that the Chancellor will pay no attention to the silly dons in some of our universities who, leading a marvellously sheltered and secure life, constantly complain and hold out the begging bowl. The Oxford dons made such fools of themselves in refusing to give my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister an honorary degree. Now they are appealing for a large sum from private individuals to assist in the running of one of the great universities of the world. The combination of taxpayers' and private money is often the best way forward, whether for institutions such as universities or for special situations such as the regeneration of our inner cities.

Vast sums of taxpayers' money are spent on state education. It is right that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science should be trying to ensure that education equips people for life, including earning a living, but that does not mean that we are producing a philistine generation. I read history at Oxford, a subject that I have always loved, and I have found it a great help to me in dealing with my fellow English men and women, and essential for understanding our institutions.

As a nation we love to grumble, and the media, particularly the BBC, love to foment that characteristic. Of course we have the bad and sad pockets—the poor and those who cannot cope with life—but the vast mass of the people have never been so prosperous as now. The change in the west midlands is startling compared with when I first went there over 20 years ago. So many more ordinary people now own their own homes, and they have cars and telephones, every kind of gadget in the kitchen, televisions and videos and holidays abroad once or twice a year. They dress very well, their children are spotlessly turned out and they eat and drink well. They go out more to restaurants and they enjoy themselves.

I am glad about all that and we must be thankful for it. Provided that, as a nation, we improve ourselves morally as well as we have economically, we have little to fear and we should all count our blessings.

6.21 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): We have listened to the Chancellor deliver his sixth Budget this afternoon. Beforehand, the pundits had predicted that it would be as exhilirating as a wet Sunday afternoon. After listening to it, many will feel that their forecast was correct.

There were one or two concessions in the Budget, such as the abolition of the earnings rule for pensioners, which the Opposition welcome, and the small concession to the low-paid in national insurance contributions. However, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition said, the Chancellor faced a cruel dilemma. He had a surplus of no less than £15 billion—five times bigger than he had expected. He did not know what to do with that for fear of triggering off an inflationary spiral, upsetting the City and threatening sterling. But much of the Chancellor's dilemma this afternoon was of his own making. Last year he created a bonanza for the better-off. It helped spark off the credit boom, and the country is now suffering the after-effects.

How did the Chancellor obtain that £15 billion surplus which has caused him such problems? First, he stoked up the economy to achieve relative boom conditions at a time of the previous general election. That in turn brought about an increase in tax revenue. Secondly, the Government continue to derive immense benefits from North sea oil revenue. Whether such revenue has been put to the best use is an argument for another day. Thirdly, there is the money from the sale of what has euphemistically been called the family silver. Vast revenues have come into the Treasury from that source. Fourthly, there is the sale of council houses. The list goes on, and the vast bulk of the proceeds is pocketed by the Treasury.

In judging the measures that the Chancellor proposed this afternoon, it is worth looking, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition did, at his earlier forecasts. The trade deficit at the end of 1988 was £14 billion. The Chancellor had forecast that it would be £4 billion. He was a little out there. The trends in 1989 are even worse. For example, the January deficit was £1,700 billion, equivalent to an annual deficit of £20 billion. Interest rates have gone up from 7·5 per cent. last May to 13 per cent. That has led to increased mortage costs, imposing hardship on many less well off families. As a result, there have been many repossessions and the number of homeless families has increased correspondingly.

The situation is made worse because the Government are not allowing our local authorities to use the proceeds from the sale of council houses to build the new houses for rent which so many less well off families urgently need. Likewise, high interest rates keep up the value of the pound, making it harder to sell British goods overseas. Furthermore, high interest rates stifle investment because the cost of borrowing is so dear, yet that investment is so badly needed, particularly in our manufacturing industry.

Three years ago, the Chancellor told a City audience that inflation was the judge and jury, so let us take him at his word. He forecast a 4 per cent. inflation rate at the end of 1988. In fact, it is just under 8 per cent. at present and is still rising. In addition, there are to be increases in water and electricity charges. The poll tax is still very much an unknown quantity, but we can all fear the worse.

The Labour party criticised last year's Budget, saying that, apart from being unjust, it was foolhardy. However, the Prime Minister described it as brilliant in concept, drafting and delivery. How wrong can one be? I wonder what she will be saying about this Budget. It is because the Chancellor was so wrong last year that he has had to be cautious this year.

What would a Labour Chancellor do in the present circumstances? I am convinced that he would not give priority to paying off the national debt. First, he would look at the state of our NHS after 10 years of Thatcherism. His first decision would be to scrap the recent White Paper, which is little more than a step on the road to the privatisation of that wonderful service. He would

[Mr. Roy Hughes]

concentrate on reducing those huge hospital waiting lists and take steps to increase the number of doctors and nurses in the service. He might look too at the measly wages paid to the back-up staff in the NHS, not only the clerical and administrative staff, but the technical staff, so many of them highly trained, using the most sophisticated equipment in the operating theatres and other vital areas. If greater appreciation is not shown to those people, many of them will leave the service, and the patients will be the real losers.

An efficient transport system is basic to an efficient economy. In manpower terms, our rail network has been cut to the bone. Competitor countries such as France and West Germany have invested heavily in their rail networks. We must now do likewise. Without prejudging any inquiries that are taking place, there seems little doubt that manpower cuts imperil passenger safety.

When so much of our passenger and freight transport is by road, we are still a long way from creating an efficient road network. There are too many bottlenecks, so many bypasses yet to be constructed and our motorway network is still incomplete. We should get rid of the iniquitous toll system on estuarial crossings. Those toll charges are relics of a feudal age.

There is no excuse for not investing in roads, when this year about £17 billion will be raised in motor taxation and less than a quarter of it will be spent on roads and maintenance.

Labour believes that a concerted effort should be made to preserve and protect the environment. That cannot be left to the vagaries of market forces. The Thatcher Government have presided over a decade of environmental negligence and lassitude. Labour is pledged to clean up our beaches, promote safe energy, tackle the greenhouse effect and save the ozone layer. We want our water safe and clean, not sold off.

According to Government statistics, unemployment is now running at about 2 million. I would put the figure much higher, and I agree with the economics editor of *The Observer* who last Sunday put it at 2,700,000. But with such a staggeringly high level of unemployment, a skill shortage is fast developing. Many employers having cut back over the years in this vital sphere, there is now an urgent need to invest in skill training, and a Labour Chancellor would give that task the highest priority.

There are at last indications that the political tide is turning. The forthcoming Vale of Glamorgan by-election is likely to show that trend accentuating. At last, people are calling for change, and it is clear that Britain now needs a Labour Government.

6.33 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): The people are calling for change, as the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) said, and that is exactly what they are getting. This is a sensible and prudent Budget. It is the first time in the nation's history that we have begun to pay back the national debt, and I consider that £14 billion towards that repayment will recoup itself in interest charges. If we can go on in that way, we shall be able to repay all the debts that have been incurred by our predecessors.

I, too, welcome the abolition of the earnings rule and the encouragement which the Budget gives to wider share ownership. When I speak of wider share ownership, I appreciate what the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said about the need to think in terms of home ownership and the ownership of all assets. Those assets should be passed on to the children of those who have acquired them without incurring a penal rate of tax. The idea of saving should not be confined to one generation, just as the idea of paying back debts should not be confined to one generation.

Our exports are up, and 1992 will provide us with a challenge and a wonderful opportunity. That point was well illustrated by the right hon. Member for Devonport. Our competitor countries are often able to get into our markets and invest in our enterprises. We have the chance of doing the same to them, and there is no reason why we should not do it.

Controlling inflation is one of the most important tasks on which the Chancellor has embarked. We can see, by looking back, say, 30 years, the way in which inflation has altered the pattern of our lives. It has done much damage to the elderly, who find towards the end of their lives that their savings are worth perhaps 10 per cent. of their original value.

Our society is, happily, rapidly improving its standards of living. That is happening under Conservative rule. But high earnings must give people a sense of environmental responsibility, for example, through the use of lead-free petrol. In the way that they mean a better standard of living, they must be accompanied by higher moral attitudes. We must work at preserving that and other aspects of our lives.

Conservative policy has altered the nation out of all conception. Had we thought, say, 30 years ago of the changes that have taken place, we could not have imagined that they would happen. In my lifetime much has completely altered. Today, brains, intelligence and the ability to produce goods are attributes which the Conservative party recognises.

If we continue in this manner, we shall arrive at an even higher standard of living and create a nation that is proud of itself, in which opportunities are available to everybody and a nation that can stand well above all other nations in Europe.

6.37 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): It is a pleasure to speak following the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) but, given the short time available to me, I shall not go into many of the matters which he raised.

Today's Budget was trailed for some time as a Budget for the low paid. It was said that the Chancellor would try to rectify the disequilibrium in his fiscal system by correcting the mistakes he made last year, when he gave massive tax reductions to the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers.

I agree that the Conservatives had given a manifesto pledge to reduce taxation to 25 per cent. as soon as prudently possible, but it was rash of the Chancellor to effect that commitment so early in the Parliament and at the same time to reduce the higher rates of taxation from 60 to 40 per cent. The consequences were that he was reducing taxation in an expanding economy. The economy was forecast last year to rise by 3 per cent. It actually rose by 5 per cent. That, combined with the tax deductions, produced a massive import bill of £15 billion.

The hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) foresaw that in his Budget contribution last year, when he expressed fear that, when the tax deductions had worked their way through the system, they would come out in consumer goods, that those goods would come from imports and that the result would be a massive increase in our balance of payments deficit. All that has come about, and the Chancellor has been required to raise interest rates nine times within a few months to finance that deficit.

The Chancellor has done that at the expense of mortgagors and business people wishing to expand. Everyone needing credit is having to pay more—all because of the actions of the Chancellor last year—and virtually everybody is suffering. The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that the Chancellor had been reckless last year. He was more than reckless—he put forward a catastrophic Budget. Therefore it is appropriate that this year he should seek to bring in a cautious Budget that is lacking in imagination.

If the Chancellor really wanted to help the low paid in our society he should have increased child benefit from £8·35 to make good the cuts in its value. He should also have announced a further increase to £10·75 to reflect the real cost of bringing up children. We all welcome the national insurance contribution rate of 2 per cent. for the low paid, which the Chancellor introduced today. As the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes) said, that will cost the Chancellor a lot of money —£1 billion in 1989-90 and £2·8 billion for 1990-91. In our view, that does not go far enough to rectify the imbalances in last year's Budget tax cuts for the low paid.

If the Chancellor wanted to bring in a Budget for the low paid, he should have raised the income tax threshold for those low-paid workers by 16 per cent. As we know, the Chancellor of the Exchequer actually raised the threshold only in line with the Rooker-Wise amendment. Not taking account of fiscal drag, means that more tax will be collected by the Revenue and this will be of no great benefit to the taxpayer over the next year. The Budget is a status quo Budget, which may be in the interests of the British people but does not serve the interests of the low-paid.

It was clear that the Chancellor wanted last year's Budget to be a tax reforming Budget, and he described it as such. In an article that he wrote entitled "Tax Reform, the Government's Record", published by the Conservative Policy Centre, the Chancellor declared that his main objective in reforming taxes was to improve economic performance. Judged by his own standards, last year's Budget could only be described as a catastrophic failure.

As a direct consequence of that Budget we have had inflation running at 8 per cent. and I noticed that, in his Budget statement today, the Chancellor was careful not to say that the inflation rate would come down in the last quarter of this year. In fact, there is a clear indication that high inflation of 8 per cent. will continue into the 1990s —that is twice the rate of inflation in the United States of America, which must worry the Government.

As we know, the balance of payments deficit is now £15 billion and interest rates are 13 per cent. Personal savings must also worry the Government because they are at their lowest for 40 years—lower than any other major industrial country. In the three-tier Europe that is rapidly developing, we find ourselves—in terms of inflation—in the third tier, with Greece and Portugal.

All those unhappy events need not have happened had the Chancellor not chosen a fiscal boost at the time of an expanding economy. In his modest way, the Chancellor last year congratulated himself on having achieved what he described as sustained growth with low inflation. He did not realise that his Budget would give us reduced growth and increased inflation. Today he said that the growth rate for the present year will be 2 per cent. In his Budget speech last year he said that he expected the year to be one of healthy growth and low inflation. He said that an inflation rate of 4 per cent. would be too high, and forecast a £4 billion deficit—less than 1 per cent. of GDP. He described that as temporary and said:

"The medium term financial strategy, now entering its ninth year, will continue to provide the framework for reducing the growth of money GDP, and hence inflation, over the medium term."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 995.]

As we know, none of that has happened—for which the Chancellor must bear the responsibility.

As I said earlier, the Chancellor raised personal tax allowances only in line with inflation as it stood at the end of last year. He did not raise them sufficiently to take into account fiscal drag and did not raise them enough to help the lower paid. Had he done so and raised the allowances by 16 per cent. he would have ensured that the tax burden of a couple earning half the average wage would be restored to 1978-79 levels.

The Government have announced their intention to abolish Britain's minimum wage system. While the Chancellor today offered some tax cuts to the low-paid by way of allowances and changes in national insurance contributions, he also threatened them with wage cuts. If he really wanted to help the low paid, the best news that he could have announced today would be that the Government were scrapping their plans to leave Britain the only nation in Europe without minimum wage protection for its poorest workers.

I received a letter from one of my constituents who is a senior shop steward in the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers, asking for my support in the fight to keep the wages councils. He wrote:

"the clothing trade does not want to go back to the sweat shops of the past. As you are aware many low-paid workers in your constituency need the protection of the wages councils."

That letter was written on behalf of 600 union members who live in my constituency and who are most concerned about what will happen if the wages councils are abolished.

Earlier in the year, the Social Security Advisory Committee, in its paper "Credit Debt and Poverty", showed that the amount of money borrowed by people in Britain had doubled in seven years. The number of mortgage repossessions rose nearly eightfold over the same period and more than half of unemployed families with children are in debt. According to the Department of Social Security, 5 million people have a standard of living that is less than half the national average. Nearly 11 million people—about one fifth of the population—have a standard of living that is less than 60 per cent. of the national average.

Last week, two of my constituents, a blind man and his wife, told me that the man received £74 a week in benefit. They received income support and the man received severe disablement allowance. He tried to put £30 a week in the bank in order to cover gas and electricity bills which, he

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

said, were onerous at this time of the year. He had also tried gas and electricity-saving schemes but without much success. Therefore, the couple also drew money from the man's bank account for their personal clothing. They also had to pay 20 per cent. of their rates. They had almost nothing in the house and lived out of tins every day. As the man said, it was all too much. I wonder what that couple thought that the Budget provided for them as they listened to it on the radio.

If the Chancellor really wanted to help those on low pay and at the poorer end of our society, he should have increased child benefit from £8·35 to make good the cuts in its value and he should also have announced a further increase to £10·75 to reflect the real cost of bringing up children.

We heard a novel way of handling the economy—to repay the national debt. I remember, many years ago, reading "Great Expectations" by Charles Dickens—a book written over 100 years ago—in which it was said that paying off the national debt was a barmy concept. It has taken 100 years to meet a Chancellor who believes in paying off the national debt.

The Chancellor said today that the national debt would be reduced by one sixth as a consequence of the Budget, but the national debt is just a figure. It does not take into account the £530 billion that is owed to people contributing to pensions; if it did take that into account, it would be out of the question to pay off the national debt. The right hon. Gentleman is paying off the national debt because he does not know what else to do with the money. Even so, he is putting money into the economy by allowing Treasury paper to be taken back by the banks and institutions that bought it in the first place. The Chancellor is giving them about £14,000 million. That will be used in the City for more fancy and far-fetched takeover bids, and for exporting abroad, which will not help our economy.

The Chancellor has given us a cautious Budget. I am glad that he did not reduce income tax by 1p. He had no manifesto commitment to do that. If he had done so, he would have been trying to fulfil a pledge that he gave at the Dispatch Box last year. It was better to reduce the national insurance contribution by the low paid to 2 per cent., giving them a badly needed boost.

The Chancellor has still not rectified the great disequilibrium that he put into last year's Budget. We have all heard of fool's gold: it is actually iron pyrites. We have heard of a fool's paradise—a paradise of economic and financial structures in which there is a reduced manufacturing base, a massive increase of imports to maintain our standards of living, and reduced investment —with the result that the country's infrastructure is going to rack and ruin. In this fool's paradise oil tax revenues and the receipts of asset sales are squandered to repay the national debt of past generations, instead of being used to build up the future for generations yet to come. That is the fool's paradise of this Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is the one in which he wants us to live, and it is one which I am sure the British people will shortly reject.

6.52 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on an excellent and cautious Budget that includes many good measures. It is a Budget for the low-paid. A welcome change in the national insurance rules means between £1 and £3 a week for families on lower incomes, buttressed by the fairly generous increase in thresholds necessitated by the relatively high rate of inflation, which provides another £1 a week.

This is also a Budget for the pensioner. The whole House welcomes the decision at last to abolish the earnings rule which has stopped pensioners taking those extra jobs and benefiting in full from them.

The House should also welcome the changes in the age allowance which give a useful boost to pensioner incomes in the 75 to 79 year-old range. Those changes complement the reforms and improvements in previous years that helped the over-80s, both on the benefit side and on the tax side.

This is a Budget for the small company. Many Conservative Members will welcome the improved tax regime on profits and the increase in VAT threshold for smaller businesses. My only regret is that the Chancellor and his colleagues have not been able to persuade the EEC that the threshold for small businesses should rise still further. A threshold of about £50,000 would be much better than one of about £23,000.

This is a Budget for wider ownership, continuing the progress that the Government have made through their privatisation programme and tax measures. I welcome the profit-related pay ideas, and the ideas about ownership of shares for employees in the companies for which they work. I hope that these measures will provide a major boost to the ownership of shares in their companies by employees, and I hope that the idea of profit-related pay will make more rapid progress in the coming year as a result of the more generous treatment afforded it in the Budget. Both these proposals cannot but strengthen the response of the economy to the present high level of demand; they cannot but improve relationships between managers and employees, boost productivity output and earnings, and a sense of participation in the economy.

Last but not least, there is a welcome green tinge to the Budget, with the widened differential for unleaded fuel, giving it a 14p advantage over ordinary petrol.

What should we make of the balance of this Budget? It is clearly designed to make fighting inflation the main priority, and that must be right. Conservative Members do not wish inflation to rise to 8 per cent. and stay there. We have every wish to see it fall to well below 5 per cent. The main intention of the Budget is to deliver a shock to the incipient inflationary psychology, so that inflation will again fall to low single figures. I believe that the Budget is fierce enough, as a complement to the tight money policy that is now being pursued, to achieve the aim of reducing inflation after its peak in a few months time.

The Government's stance has now moved to being tight on money. I would therefore expect sterling to perform reasonably well on the exchanges as a result of that policy. As the Chancellor explained, the main object of monetary policy is to curb inflation; fiscal policy need not carry that burden indefinitely.

I welcome the idea that over the next few years the Government can return the economy to a zero public sector surplus or deficit. That means that there is plenty of scope for tax reductions and for the improved public services which have been the hallmark of the Government in recent years and which will continue to be so in the strategy mapped out in the Red Book.

The balance of payments deficit has excited interest among Opposition Members. It is one of the few things to which they can point which looks less than ideal. I hope that the Treasury will pursue its inquiries into the £15,000 million black hole that has appeared in the balance of payments statistics. The actual deficit on trade must be running below the deficit being reported to the House and the nation. The problem is that no statistician seems able to tell us exactly how much of the deficit can be accounted for by the missing items not recorded in the figures and how much of it is genuinely a trade deficit.

I hope that the Chancellor will not intervene too much in the exchanges, and will let tight money policy do the job. I think that the whole European Community has one problem with exchange rates—the large undervaluation of the deutschmark against all other leading European currencies. That is a result of a managed exchange rate system in Europe, and it means that 10 out of 11 member states of the Community are running substantial trade deficits with Germany. I hope that my right hon. Friend and his colleagues will examine that in their discussions with Finance Ministers of the other member nations of the EEC

The Opposition have been fairly muted in their criticisms of Government economic policy on the issues that matter to people, such as the large increase in the number of jobs and the much more satisfactory record on inflation than that before 1979. They have concentrated on the items that they want to accent at any given time and which they think are going wrong. I do not blame them for that. They are also succeeding by that device in avoiding telling the House and the nation what they would do and what their economic policy might be. I hope that in the course of the debates in the next few days a little more light will be thrown on that mildly interesting subject.

Today, we learned from the Leader of the Opposition that Labour would not run a great big surplus such as this one. How true that is: it would not have generated a big surplus like the one that the Government enjoy because its policies would not have generated the growth and it would not have been prudent enough with the public accounts to have generated a surplus in the first place——

Mr. Bell *rose*——

Mr. Redwood: After all, the Government inherited, in today's money, a £25,000 million deficit from the Opposition and are now running a £15,000 million surplus.

There has been some comment that, were the Opposition in control, the money would be spent on a variety of schemes in the public sector—from water works to rail projects and other infrastructure investment. Where were these gentlemen when the Government came to the House in the autumn and announced major increases in infrastructure investment in all the major spending programmes of concern to them?

How can the Opposition argue that such an expenditure programme would have no inflationary conequences, when the construction industry is already operating at full capacity and any major surge in demand on top of the generous levels of capital spending projected by the Government and coming from the private sector would immediately lead to an inflationary force within the economy, which would in turn lead to the bidding up of wage rates, which in turn would be spent in the shops? It is a complete myth that, if the money is spent in the public sector, there will be no inflationary consequences. I hope that we will get elucidation of these important matters of Opposition policy.

I have great pleasure in recommending the Budget to the House.

Debate adjourned.—*[Mr. Gerald Howarth.]*

To be resumed tomorrow.

First Scottish Standing Committee

7 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Regretfully I have to report from the First Scottish Standing Committee that, having drawn the attention of the Committee to the disorderly conduct of the hon. Members for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) and for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh), I have been directed to report those hon. Members to the House.

The Members referred to in my report were not nominated to serve on the Committee appointed to consider the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill, but they were present in the body of the Committee room when the Committee met today at 10.30 am. I called upon them to withdraw, but they refused to comply with my request. In these circumstances, the Committee agreed to the motion that I have reported. As the House will know, neither a Standing Committee nor its Chairman has power to discipline Members, and it is for the House to decide what action, if any, it wishes to take.

7.2 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move the following motion relating to a matter of privilege:

That the Chairman of the First Scottish Standing Committee in respect of the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill shall have power to order any Member who is not a member of the Committee to withdraw immediately from the Committee room; and the Serjeant at Arms shall act on such orders as he may receive from the Chairman in pursuance of this order.

I very much regret, as I have no doubt do most right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House, that the hon. Members for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) should have thought it right to defy the authority of the Chair by refusing to withdraw from the Standing Committee on the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill when called on to do so by the Chairman of the Committee. It is a long-standing and inviolable tradition of this House that the authority of the Chair is invariably accepted. The hon. Members have challenged that authority by refusing to comply with the request from the Chairman of the Standing Committee to withdraw.

Whatever their views about the size and composition of the Standing Committee, it is totally wrong that they should attempt to express their views in this way. I fully accept that they may hold their views quite strongly, as is shown by the enforced absence of one of their number from the Chamber at the moment, but they were wrong to act in this way. By doing so they have infringed one of the most fundamental privileges of this House—the position of the Chair.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): Will my right hon. Friend, in the light of what he has said, take it from me that many hon. Members take the view that the motion that he has moved is extremely moderate, bearing in mind the gross disorder this morning? Does he agree that if there is further disruption from those hon. Members, the House should consider imposing the severest penalties upon them?

Mr. Wakeham: That is a hypothetical question, and I hope that the situation will not arise. However, I have no doubt that the House would take an even graver view of any further disorder.

Subject to your views, Mr. Speaker, the size of the Committee and its composition are not a matter for discussion today. It is a matter entrusted to the Committee of Selection, and it is not the issue now facing us. It may be asked why I am taking the step of moving this motion now, before it can be printed on the Order Paper. I remind the House that it is over 16 years since we last had to consider such a step, and I think I am right in saying that on that occasion my predecessor suggested that there had been no earlier precedents. Fortunately, he was corrected by Mr. Speaker, who drew attention to a ruling of some 46 years previously by the Speaker that this was a matter of privilege which could be raised without prior notice. I am sure that hon. Members would consider it remarkable for the House not to have an opportunity to take action in time to prevent the disruption of the next meeting of the Committee, which takes place on Thursday.

As I have said, we are not debating the merits of the decision taken by the Committee of Selection, which, I may say, was in accordance with established procedure, or, indeed, the substance of the Bill before the Committee. This is a narrower debate about a very important aspect of the privileges of the House and the powers of the Chair. This, too, is entirely in accordance with the terms of the debate held on a similar occasion 16 years ago—in respect, by coincidence, of similar actions taken to disrupt a Scottish Standing Committee then considering the Local Government (Scotland) Bill.

The House now has to make up its mind whether it should allow hon. Members who have been unable to get their way through the proper procedures to attempt to obtain what they want by refusing to obey the request of the Chair and by disrupting the proper consideration of the business before the Standing Committee. I have absolutely no doubt that, if such conduct were to be accepted, and were repeated, the standing and authority of this House and the orderly conduct of our debates would be seriously threatened.

In my view there is only one decision the House can take: the Chairman of the Standing Committee on the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill must be given the power to require hon. Members who are not members of the Committee not to attend to sit as members of it and thus seek to disrupt its proceedings.

7.7 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I want to speak briefly in support of the motion. The Standing Committee on the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill is supposed to be considering the detail of the Bill. The measure, as most of us know, is objectionable to most of the people of Scotland, but the Committee stage will give Scottish Members of Parliament who are opposed to it an opportunity to mount cogent arguments against it and to marshal further opposition to it. In these circumstances it behoves every Member of the House—and I mean every Member—to sustain the authority of the Chair of that Committee so that those debates may take place, and the people of Scotland may make their judgment on the basis of the arguments that are mounted.

As I said on another occasion, when we were talking about discipline in this House, Members of Parliament deal in words, and we want our words to have influence. But before our words can have influence, they must be heeded; before they can be heeded, they must be heard; and if they are to be heard, we must have order. For those reasons, we must sustain the authority of the Chair in this Committee.

The fact is that many of us—perhaps all of us at one time or another—do stupid and slightly, or even substantially, disorderly things on the spur of the moment. Most other Members are willing to forgive us because they recognise that they may themselves do something similar in the near future, or have done something similar in the not-so-distant past. But in this case the obvious object from the start was to disrupt the Committee's proceedings and to make it impossible for the Chairman to ensure that the Committee was able to discharge the business that it was supposed to be discharging.

I do not want to say any more about that side of the matter, but I should like to point out that my understanding of the Bill is that, before schools may opt out, even under this legislation, it will be necessary for those in favour of that course to convince a majority of the parents involved that it would be a good thing. It is therefore vital that the arguments against opting out be properly heard and properly conveyed to the people of Scotland.

I urge on all Scottish Members of Parliament solidarity in this matter. Only if all the people in Scotland who are opposed to this ridiculous proposition stick together and argue against it will there be a likelihood—indeed, if we all stick together, a certainty—of the parents of Scotland rejecting it as soon as they have the opportunity to do so.

Hon. Members opposed to Tory party policy in Scotland and the Bill should stick together. One way of doing so is to stick by the authority of the Chair, by allowing debate and argument to be mounted and the people of Scotland to hear, appreciate, understand and agree with the overwhelming arguments against opting out.

7.9 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I rise to respond to and comment on the report put before the House by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) and the motion moved by the Lord President of the Council.

I found the speech by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) strange. He seemed to be saying that all we have to do is to collude and let the system work. It did not seem to matter whether the political opinions of the people of Scotland, as expressed at the election, will be lost in the process of such collusion. I suggest that Labour Members should cross the Floor and join Conservative Members, because that is what they have done today.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Ewing: I have just begun my remarks. I shall give way generously if the House allows me to address the issues involved.

The Government have today taken an unusual step. Rightly, the Lord President of the Council quoted the precedent that occurred on Burns night in 1973 during consideration of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. A similar step had to be taken against various Scottish hon. Members, who included the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), the hon. Member for Inverness Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), the hon. Member for Berwick and East Lothian, Mr. Mackintosh, the hon. Member for Paisley, Mr. Robertson, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central, Mr. Oswald and the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland, Mr. Grimond. There was no precedent, but it showed how much opposition there was to the Local Government (Scotland) Act, and reflected the views of the Scottish public. Hon. Members tried to make a strong point on behalf of their constituents and national opinion in Scotland.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Before the hon. Lady leaves the subject of collusion, may I put it to her that the ultimate act of treachery was committed in 1979 by her hon. Friends and Welsh nationalists when they brought down the Labour Government and let this rabble into office?

Mrs. Ewing: I thought that it might be as well to allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene at this stage because I should remind Labour Members that they refused to put the Local Government (Scotland) Act to a vote of confidence, thereby destroying the Government's ability to continue. The hon. Gentleman should not include Welsh nationalists in his remarks because of the circumstances at that time.

I wish to explain to hon. Members who will be asked to vote on this issue the reason for my hon. Friends' action this morning. It is important that people understand the rationale for our activities.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The hon. Lady mentioned the incident that occurred in 1973. Does she accept that when my right hon. and learned Friends sat in on that Committee there was no Liberal representation on it? Some of the Labour Members who sat in were protesting that there was no geographical representation. Does she see a distinction between that and the present position, because the Scottish National party is represented on the Committee dealing with the Self-Governing Schools Etc. Bill?

Mrs. Ewing: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point about the circumstances in 1973. We argue that Scottish legislation should be dealt with by Scotish hon. Members, and I think that Social and Liberal Democratic Members appreciate that. Indeed, they have said so publicly in Scotland, but they may take a different attitude in the House.

In the 1987 election, the Conservative party made a sudden announcement about the possibility of opting out being included in education legislation. It was sprung on a surprised electorate. I shall refer to some remarks made on Second Reading by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchannan-Smith). He remembers being

"totally surprised by the idea".

I asked whether opting out would apply in Scotland and we were immediately assured that it would not and that it was introduced to meet special circumstances in England and Wales. The Secretary of State intervened to try to insist that this was not the case. The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside said:

[Mrs. Ewing]

"It is a pity that my right hon. Friend did not speak to me personally during the general election campaign. Fighting as a candidate in my part of Scotland, when I consulted on the matter I was quite clearly told that it did not apply to Scotland."—[*Official Report*, 6 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 649:] The Conservative party did not include opting out in its election manifesto for Scotland. Indeed, it did not win any support for its general manifesto.

The issue was first mooted by the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) during consideration in Committee of the School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988—from which the Scottish National party was excluded—and was officially included in the Gracious Speech last autumn.

Suddenly, the self-governing Schools Bill was produced in February and is now in Committee. All educational organisations in Scotland are deeply concerned about the speed with which this legislation has been brought forward. My hon. Friends and I are concerned about the education system in Scotland. All four of us volunteered to serve on the Committee.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are debating a procedural motion. The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) has been making substantive points about the Bill, which may or may or not be relevant. The substance of the matter with which we are dealing is disorder. Those guilty of creating disorder should not use this opportunity further to forward arguments that hon. Members may wish to deploy in the proper place at the proper time.

Mr. Speaker: I must agree. The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) must stick to the motion.

Mrs. Ewing: I was trying to explain my hon. Friends' action this morning and why the motion has been moved. Hon. Members who will be asked to vote on the motion should understand the reason behind our action.

I say to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), that I find it strange that Scottish Members who attend a Scottish Committee dealing with Scottish matters to voice the opinion of their constituents should be described as disorderly. I should not define that as disorderly. My hon. Friends attended because six Conservative Members who represent English constituencies and have no interest in Scottish education have been appointed to the Committee.

The Select Committee on Selection and the Whips have deliberately tried to fill the Committee with hon. Members who will agree with the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. Their sole purpose, as was apparent when they arrived this morning, is to sit in the Committee, deal with their constituency mail and vote with the hon. Member for Stirling. They are present not to listen to the arguments and the debate but as Lobby fodder, which is legislative imperialism by the establishment to ensure that Scottish opinion is ignored and defined full explanation.

There is anger and frustration in Scotland about the way in which Scottish legislation is being conducted through the House. The Leader of the House has said that we are trying to prevent debate from taking place, and perhaps that is true, but it is interesting to read some of the comments made on Second Reading by hon. Members now serving on the——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Lady will not go into that, I have given her a good deal of scope, but she must deal with the motion on the Order Paper.

Mrs. Ewing: As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am a respectful person and I try hard to observe your rulings in this House. As one who attends regularly I am conscious of the difficulties that you face and I also know that you understand the difficulties that we in the so-called "minority" parties face.

Today we have seen an attempt by the establishment on the two Front Benches to collude to stop Scottish opinion being voiced accurately. As I said when we first discussed the Bill, I believe that the Bill should be referred to a Committee of Scottish Members. I still believe that that is the answer and, that instead of this procedural motion, the Leader of the House should have moved a motion to enable us to look at our procedures so that Scottish legislation, which deals with a distinct policy such as education, could be considered solely by hon. Members who are elected from Scottish constituencies. *[Interruption.]* That would best solve the problem facing us, but I gather from the noise coming from the Back Benchers of the establishment parties of the House that they do not agree.

Those hon. Members are ignoring Scottish political opinion and to do so is extremely dangerous. They should not treat Scottish political opinion with contempt. I believe that we should now remit the Bill to a Standing Committee consisting solely of Scottish Members.

7.21 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Part of the reason for our actions this morning is evident from the noise coming from the Benches around me and the way in which hon. Members have reacted.

Hon. Members do not understand what the House is doing to Scotland. Major Scottish institutions and fundamental matters affecting Scottish society are being railroaded by an English majority that neither cares nor understands and which is callously used by the Government to get their majority through. *[Interruption.]* That noise illustrates my argument.

At the heart of this matter is what to do in a democracy when the wishes of the Scottish electorate are not only disregarded but flouted in the House—in other words: "What do you do in a democracy when minority means you?"

It is clear that the Government have no mandate in Scotland and that is why they are forced to draft English Members on to a Committee to make up numbers. The Government do not have a majority in Scotland.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninhgame, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman does not wish to give way.

Mr. Welsh: This morning we took a principled stand to draw to the attention of the Scottish people the injustices that are being perpetrated against them by the Government and their Labour allies. We are now faced with an unholy coalition. English Tories have been drafted on to the Committee, yet Scottish Members, who have an informed view of Scottish education, are not allowed to participate.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has told us that we should mount cogent arguments against the Bill, but his advice is absolute nonsense.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Welsh: No, I shall not give way.

The nonsense spouted by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras about cogent arguments is immediately refuted by the remarks of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) on Second Reading of the self-same Bill:

"None of our amendments is ever accepted in Committee. That is"—[*Official Report*, 6 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 690]—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not go back to the Second reading, we have passed that stage. He must direct his remarks to the motion.

Mr. Welsh: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras favours cogent argument, but one of his Back Bench colleagues has already recognised that the Government do not accept cogent arguments or amendments. What can be done when something as important as Scottish education——

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill) *rose*——

Mr. Welsh: No, I shall not give way.

The Government do not accept any amendments, so any charade in Committee will leave the Bill unamended and its nature will have been determined by the English majority who have been drafted in to make sure of that. The Government are disregarding the opinions of the Scottish electorate. That is disgraceful.

I am unhappy about the use of the words "disorderly conduct" because we simply turned up in the Committee Room. Nothing was said and we did not seek to interrupt the Chairman. I am sure that that is not the type of disorderly conduct which leads to arrest at weekends. We made a dignified, orderly and justified protest.

We are up against stultifying rules that restrict Back Benchers. Earlier today, the coalition between the Tories and Members of the Labour Front Bench made sure that, through the medium of a private notice question, yet another legitimate procedural manoeuvre has been closed off to Back Benchers.

Mr. Dobson: When the hon. Gentleman served on the Standing Committee on the Transport (Scotland) Bill, why did he not make use of the procedural manoeuvres available to Committee members? He spoke only for 17 minutes out of the 33 hours that made up that Committee stage.

Mr. Welsh: I had the same success in getting amendments through as the Labour party—*[Interruption.]*—I am not allowed to quote the words of the hon. Member for Maryhill, but she made it clear that, whatever the Bill, the Government do not accept amendments.

English Tories have been drafted on to a Scottish Committee which affects a fundamental part of our society. What happens to Scottish education will be determined by people who do not know or understand our educational system.

The Government have no mandate from the Scottish people and what we did this morning was simply to demonstrate that enough is enough. The present system rides roughshod over the Scottish electorate; someone, somewhere, had to do something about that, especially as the Labour party has failed to do anything. The Labour party has sought to co-operate with fellow Tories, but we have used the procedures available to us to demonstrate that enough is enough.

7.27 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Angus East (Mr. Welsh) I am interested in the term "disorderly conduct". I do not know what happened in 1973 among the hon. Members on the Liberal Benches—*[Interruption.]*—but our conduct in the Committee this morning was less disorderly than the conduct of many Labour Members tonight.

The central element of the speech of the Leader of the House was that we should make our arguments in Committee. Surely it must be in order for me to answer that suggestion. The answer lies in the words of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe), who is a member of the Committee, and who said to you, Mr. Speaker, on Second Reading:

"I say that with all respect to you, Mr. Speaker. I did not sit in my place thinking that if I were fortunate enough to catch your eye I would be able to change the minds and attitudes of Conservative Members. We all know what a foolish hope that would be. None of our amendments is ever accepted in Committee. That is certainly true of social security and employment legislation, and the same can be said of any other measure that is considered in Committee."—[*Official Report*, 6 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 690.]

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) was speaking in the Second Reading debate.

Mrs. Fyfe: I thank the hon. Member for giving way. I certainly agree that those were my words, and I stand by them, because the point of being on a Committee or discussing legislation on the Floor of this Chamber is not to change the minds of the hon. Members opposite; it is to get the words on the record and communicate them to the Scottish public. To do that we have to put down amendments and be there.

Mr. Salmond: I am glad that the hon. Member stands by her words. Perhaps she can discuss with the shadow Leader of the House whether it is fruitful to put these arguments in Committee. I agree that it is important to the Scottish public to hear the arguments, but the most fundamental thing is the decision made by the Committee.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Salmond: If the hon. Member will contain himself and allow me to develop some points, I will give way to him later in my speech.

The fundamental point is whether we can expect this Committee, in view of its complexion, in any way to respect Scottish public opinion. A brief glance through the six English Conservative Members who have been parachuted on to this Committee gives the lie to any feeling that they are there to listen to the Scottish arguments. There is the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos), a former London teacher, councillor, Right-winger, anti-smoking, pro-birching for muggers and rapists, strong NHS supporter, educated at St. Albans——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with this motion. The hon. Gentleman should return to it.

Mr. Salmond: It was not my intention to go through the six Members one by one. I was going to mention the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), a former director of Michael Forsyth Associates Ltd.

I make the point that these six hon. Members from English constituencies are not there to listen to the Scottish arguments. I, as a Member of this House who volunteered to serve on that Committee, have thousands of constituents who stand to be threatened by this measure, which will divide and fragment Scottish education. These hon. Members do not have a single constituent who will be affected by this legislation, yet they were selected to serve on this Committee while the applications of myself and my hon. Friends were refused. That is a fundamental point.

It has already been said that we on this Bench are beginning to think there is a degree of collusion, to put it no stronger, between Labour Members on these Benches and those on the Benches opposite. The vote this morning in Committee was, significantly, 17 to 1. This afternoon we saw the remarkable sight of a Leader of the Opposition who believes it is his job not to create problems for the Government but to solve them. We believe, as a minority party, that we are the victims of collusion between the two major parties.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I am genuinely curious, and I hope the hon. Member will be able to help me. We understand from the earlier part of his speech that he is totally convinced that membership of this Committee is a futile exercise which will gain absolutely no results. We understand, on the other hand, that the whole point of this manoeuvre is that all the Scottish National party members want to be on the Committee. How does he reconcile these two points?

Mr. Salmond: The case the Scottish National party makes is that this Bill should have been considered by the Scottish Grand Committee on Second Reading. We are happy to leave the decision to hon. Members whose constituencies are affected by this legislation and, as the hon. Member well knows, 64 of the 72 Scottish Members have declared their opposition to the Bill. It is not the right of the Scottish National party to decide what we are arguing for; it is the right of the Scottish people to decide this legislation that we are arguing for.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I am not sure whether the hon. Member really wants to destabilise the Committee or not. If he does want to stop the show, he has a friend in me. However, what concerns me now is that he seems to be sailing through clearer waters in wanting it put before the Grand Committee. Why can he not put it before the Convention?

Mr. Salmond: I am happy to answer the point directly. We want to form a body which will decide matters. If the Convention were to discuss the fundamental issues of Scottish education, yet allow a Standing Committee of the House of Commons to railroad through opting out legislation in Scotland, the cause of the Scottish people would not be advanced one jot.

I claim that it is not just a Scottish National party point of view that this Committee has been rigged against the wishes of the Scottish people. It was also the view of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) himself, when he argued that the Bill is not merely bad but a breach of faith, and that it concerns a matter of honour.

I want to turn to our belief that the rules and regulations of this House are flexible: there is one set of rules for the Scottish National party and minority parties and another set of rules for the Front Benches. We have already found in this Parliament that a Standing Order of the House of Commons concerning the need to set up a Scottish Select Committee has not been implemented. We found a remarkably flexible interpretation of the rights of private notice questions and what notice should be given this afternoon. I will not go further on that matter, except to say that it is a matter to which we shall certainly return later.

As a minority party, we believe it is our right to represent our constituents in a matter which affects only Scotland. It is only Scottish constituents who are threatened by the opting out legislation for Scotland. Not a single constituent of the six hon. Members parachuted on to the Committee will be affected. I, as an SNP Member, a Scottish Member, cannot accept the right of English Members of Parliament to ride roughshod over clearly expressed Scottish opinion.

I close with this remark. There are only two measures which I believe have mobilised deep opposition in Scotland to the present Government. The first is the poll tax, and that campaign is under way. The second is this Bill, and the Scottish National party will not accept the English majority imposed upon us on the Standing Committee.

7.28 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I feel inclined to be very brief, and I sense that the mood of the House is of great tolerance on both sides, because hon. Members have listened reasonably attentively to arguments in the hope that people outside will appreciate the exigencies and intricacies of our procedure. The Leader of the House is well known for his tolerance and understanding, and I do not want to go into the difficulties he has had in setting up a Scottish Select Committee.

I think we are due some explanation of the effect of this motion. How long is it intended to last? Is it intended to last for the duration of this Parliament or just for the duration of this particular Committee? Normal procedure, as I understand it, is if Members who are not on such bodies as Select Committees enter Committee rooms when a Committee is deliberating in private, the Chairman may courteously ask a Member who has inadvertently come in to remove himself, and no draconian measures will be necessary.

I wonder where we are going. If Members are sitting within the precincts of the Committee, as I expect was done today, how are these defined in our Committee rooms? We know quite clearly when we are in the House and when we are out of the House. For example, if I step across this line, by convention I am out of order. If I move into the Gangway, I am out of order. How are we to determine, when a Member is in a Committee room, whether he is actually in the Committee or not? *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may say that those SNP Members were stupid. We do many things in this place which are apparently stupid. Some of our procedures are dignified and sanctified, but the whole procedure of voting might be construed as stupid as we march through the

Lobbies, walking back and forth, at 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning. My God, what could be more stupid than that? If our constituents saw it, they would think that we were mad.

That is not at issue today. We are considering a unique power which we are going to give my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin). The last time such powers were used was in 1973. I believe that the use of such powers was justified then to deal with a piece of legislation from which many of our difficulties today emanate. My goodness, if there was any piece of legislation which we should not have passed, it was that legislation dealing with the so-called reform of local government. We will have to try to reform that again, but that is another issue.

I do not want to be disrespectful to you, Mr. Speaker. However, my experience of this place goes back in one way or another for 14 years. I have never known a private notice question not to appear on the annunciator. Its absence today was sharp practice. I am not accusing you, Mr. Speaker, but the Front Benches used sharp practice against the Back Benches. I do not care tuppence which party that practice was used against: it was used against Back Benchers. Some people have used a rather crude word to describe it—collusion. The Front Benches collude and Back Benchers must be very careful that they do not collude against them. Our liberties and rights as Back Benchers can be severely restricted in this place. We must be careful to ensure that they are not further restricted.

I do not intend to consider the merits of the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill now. Nor do I intend to consider the merits of the Government's railroading the legislation through. There can be no more objectionable legislation before the House now than the legislation to reform Scottish education.

The Leader of the House has responsibilities. I have emphasised to him before that his responsibilities lie not simply to the Tory party, but to the House. His colleagues may shake their heads, but I have described the tradition and we are considering the traditions of this place. The onus and balance of the argument in this place claims that those terrible SNP Members have offended against the traditions of order.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I hesitate to intervene, but is it not a fact that those hon. Members intervened on the freedom of speech?

Mr. Douglas: I doubt that very much. This House has a responsibility to defend the freedom of speech, but people outside the Chamber defend it. Freedom of speech is defended outside this place. Many people have a mistaken view about the location of the repository of free speech. We are lucky to have freedom of speech, and over recent years the Government, with their enormous majority, have railroaded minorities in this House and particularly over minorities represented on the Labour Benches.

We must be very careful about the powers which we confer. Of course we want order and we want the procedures of this place to be carried out. However, we should not kid ourselves that the Government will play by the rules. Any Opposition Member who thinks that is kidding himself. The issue arises because the Government know that they have extreme difficulties over the number of Conservative Scottish Members. They are changing the rules daily. That is why we must be very careful before we pass this motion. We must ensure that we are not creating an unfortunate precedent.

7.42 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I suppose that hon. Members who speak in this debate should present their credentials. For the past 18 years, I have fought against the erosion of the rights of Back Benchers. Over that time, I have seen rights eroded. When I first came here, hon. Members could table two written questions to Ministers. There was also a counting-out procedure in the House. In those days, we could ask Mr. Speaker to count the House and if there were fewer than 40 Members present, the Government would lose their business for the day.

Between 1970 and 1974, the Conservative Government, led by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), reduced the quorum in Standing Committee and abandoned the counting-out procedure and the quorum in the House. I fought against all that.

If I give the impression that what happened in Standing Committee this morning was an erosion of Back Benchers' rights, I would be giving the wrong impression. Members of the SNP may call that collusion. I do not care about that, because I have been in politics long enough and I can defend myself before my constituents. SNP Members need not take my word for that, they can ask Dr. McIntyre, John Donnachy, John McGregor or Ron Halliday and all the other SNP candidates who have opposed me over the past 18 years. They will say whether I am fit and able to defend myself before my constituents in anything that I may do.

It would be a great mistake if we created the impression that what happened in the Standing Committee this morning had to do with the erosion of Back Benchers' rights or was related to concern being expressed on behalf of the people of Scotland about the measure before that Standing Committee. It is wrong for SNP Members to give the impression that they are the only Members of this place concerned about the Government's proposals on opting out.

If you do not mind my saying so, Mr. Speaker, the three SNP Members who have contributed to this debate have displayed an appalling lack of confidence in their ability to convince their constituents that this legislation is so bad that their constituents should not use the terms of the legislation to opt out.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ewing: No, I will not give way, because I do not want to get involved in an argument with the hon. Gentleman and the three SNP Members. I want to make serious points. If the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) is going to make a serious point, I will give way. This is not a trivial matter.

Mr. Walker: My serious point is that the hon. Gentleman has a distinguished record for having amendments accepted in Committee when he was leading from the Opposition Front Bench. If his colleagues had his confidence, obviously the Standing Committee could make progress and we could get on with the work.

Mr. Ewing: I suspect that if I had been leading from the Opposition Front Bench during this Parliament, my distinguished record would have been somewhat dented.

About three weeks ago the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup detailed 47 pieces of legislation to which no amendments were accepted in Standing Committee. I would not want the impression to go from this place tonight that what has happened in Standing Committee today is an erosion of Back-Bench rights or an expression of concern.

Mr. Salmond: Looking at the complexion of the Standing Committee with his long experience in the House, does the hon. Gentleman anticipate any meaningful amendments being accepted in Committee? As we both know the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, does he believe that Scottish schools which might be vulnerable to the legislation will be provided with substantial incentives to opt out if the Bill reaches the statute book?

Mr. Ewing: This is not the first piece of education legislation to come before Scottish Members during this Parliament. The school boards legislation passed through the House, but there was no demonstration by SNP Members and there was no SNP Member on that Committee. There is one SNP Member on the Committee on this Bill, and there has been a demonstration.

It is as well that the House should know that this whole exercise has been trailered for the last three weeks. The only people who have been taken in by it tonight, as far as I am aware, are the Scottish media. I understand that they have covered this incident, but that is because it has been a dull Budget. To be fair to the Scottish media, they have not really had much to report in terms of the Budget.

In all seriousness, it would be a great tragedy if somehow or other the impression were given that the demonstration in Committee this morning was a demonstration of concern for the people of Scotland or concern that Back-Bench rights were being eroded. It is purely and simply—there is no nice way of saying this—a publicity stunt for the SNP, and some of the media in Scotland will fall for it.

If all four Members had secured a place on that Committee, it would have been the worst thing that could happen to the SNP. I apologise to the Leader of the House, because he is not responsible for it, but I am sorry that the Chairman of the Commitee could not find a place for all four Members, because they would not have turned up. I have the voting record here, if any hon. Member wants to challenge me, of Committees they have been on. I will not speak ill of Donald Stewart, because he is one of the finest friends I have had in all my years in the House. Donald will send me a nice letter after this; the only problem is that he will write it in Gaelic so that I will not be able to read it.

However, when Gordon Wilson and Donald Stewart were here and we had the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, the two of them would serve on that Committee. The SNP does not have a good Committee record. We have had as many as 11 SNP Members here and they still did not have a good Committee record. They are trying to give the impression today that somehow or other they are bubbling over with concern for the people of Scotland. They are bubbling over, all right—bubbling, full stop—and they will bubble all their days here because that is all they can do.

I am confident that I can take this bad legislation to my people in Falkirk, East and convince them that it is not worth paying any attention to it. If the SNP Members had any confidence in themselves, they would do the same. I shall give my support to the Chairman of the Committee because that is the only way the House can function. The only alternative is to break away. There is just no other option. The rules and procedures of the House will not be reformed to meet the views and the needs of four Members, so we should face up to that challenge: we either support the Committee Chairman and make sure that these Committees work, or we do the extreme thing. I am against that, so I am in favour of the Chairman and will support him tonight.

7.52 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Perhaps it is an exaggeration to say that we are getting used to the idea that there will be a bit of excitement from the Scottish national on Budget day, but I suspect that it may be the start of a tradition. I remember that when I first came to the House the excitement was what Mr. Leo Abse might be wearing. Perhaps in future years it will be who is going to be thrown out from the Scottish National party Bench.

I do take this seriously, although it is a matter on which it is easy to joke, and there are quite important principles at stake here. It is not a matter just of who is colluding or conspiring with whom; it is a matter of the good order of the House and how we conduct our affairs.

I have to say to my colleagues on the Scottish National party Bench that I have found some of the remarks made tonight difficult to understand. The hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh), for example, made a very spirited point about the difficulty in getting any of his amendments accepted. My understanding—I am quite prepared to be corrected—about the Transport Bill is that the hon. Gentleman put down one amendment, to replace the word "may" by the word "shall", so possibly he is generalising from a rather narrow base.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: As usual in these matters the hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong. That was not my amendment. He perhaps might take into account my eight amendments on this particular Bill.

Mr. Dewar: I am glad to hear that the hon. Gentleman's interests are growing. I noticed that he was careful to say, "That was not my amendment." He did not say that he had more than one, however, in the whole history of the Transport Bill.

Undoubtedly, what took place this morning was an attempt to disrupt the Committee, and this has not happened in Committees of the House in the past. I have considerable respect for Gordon Wilson and Donald Stewart, and they did not think it was necessary to disrupt the poll tax Bill, although certainly that was a piece of legislation that was disliked by the people of Scotland in an almost unprecedented way.

I am totally confused as to exactly what argument has been put to the House. As I understood what the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), who spoke first for the SNP, had to say, she was advancing the argument that the whole point of the demonstration today was that she and her three colleagues should all have been included in the membership of the Committee. Then we had the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who

argued very strongly that the last thing he wanted was to be on the Committee as at present constituted because it would be an essay in futility and he would be unlikely to make progress of any kind. I am not clear whether we are being told that the Committee should never meet or that the Committee should be reformed to include those hon. Members.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: The hon. Gentleman seems to have moved very substantially from the points he made in his own speech on 6 March, columns 644 and 645, when he said it would be——

Mr. Speaker: Let us not go into the Second Reading Committee again, please. We are dealing with this motion.

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for the information that she has been re-reading my speeches. I do not often make that mistake, but on this occasion I will perhaps have a look.

It is always dangerous to put historical perspectives on these matters and I plead guilty to trying to do this. Perhaps I could be allowed to give the House a quotation which is of historical interest as it goes back to the mid-1970s:

"Following Hamilton and Mrs. Ewing's grand tour of Scotland, where she played to packed houses, the SNP gained an instant mass membership. But it was membership lacking in political background and quality, with a higher than normal proportion of cranks and people motivated by grudges."

That was the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) talking about the hon. Member for Moray's mother-in-law. I give you a solemn undertaking, Mr. Speaker, that that is my last mother-in-law joke of the evening.

To be serious on the matter, I genuinely regret that this motion has had to be brought foward, but this is, as the Leader of the House has said, a very unusual set of circumstances. What distinguished this from many rowdy scenes that we have seen on these premises at various times is that it was quite clear that the people involved intended to persist. This was not a matter of making a point and withdrawing. It was quite clear that if the House did not take steps to deal with the matter we should see it on Thursday and Tuesday and the following Thursday ad infinitum. That, I think, is what gives it its special character and justifies the fact that this motion is now before the House.

It is not a draconian measure, I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas); it is a motion specifically related to the proceedings of this one Committee when it is considering this one Bill. It is not a blanket power that is being brought forward that will stay there to threaten the activities of Back Benchers on all occasions. It is tailored to deal with this one specific situation, where unmistakable notice has been given that if the House does not take steps we shall be in a situation of continuing impasse, which would not be good for Scottish politics or, certainly, for the conduct of the House.

I am not on the Committee but, on behalf of my colleagues, I am anxious to see the issues debated, because this is an unusual Bill. I will not go into the merits of the Bill except on this narrow point, which is relevant to why I believe that we should not be faced with a continuing impasse. Even if the Bill is forced on to the statute book, its most objectionable part—the opting-out provisions—will remain simply an entry on the shelves and a piece of constitutional lumber, unless it is brought to life by groups of parents using the powers.

The real argument will be conducted in Scotland with public opinion, with the Minister trying to create circumstances in which the powers will be used, while those of us on the other side of the argument will try to persuade parents to consider the wider interests of the educational system and refuse to have anything to do with the legislation.

To do that, it is necessary to debate the matter in Committee. This morning, all that was achieved was two and a half hours of nominal debating time, during which the Minister did not have to say a single word to justify or defend his proposals. There is no point in that.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman address the point that, if the legislation proceeds, either parents will be faced with huge incentives to agree that schools should opt out or, as has been the English experience, they will be faced with school closures——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) should not address that point, as it has nothing to do with the motion.

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) to be allowed to make an argument and then for other right hon. and hon. Members not to be allowed to pursue that argument with questions?

Mr. Speaker: The motion before the House is in order, but much wider consideration of the merits of the Bill is not.

Mr. Dewar: It is clear that there are points of difference as to the Bill's merits. I am saying to the House that it might be advisable to get down to debating those differences rather than get hung up on a procedural wrangle that has a lot to do with column inches but not very much with the practical fate of the legislation.

We have had a day of excitement. Earlier in the day, the House was invited to advance the Budget debate by discussing the fate of the Vale of Glamorgan. I know that I cannot do that now, but that was a transparent procedural device—it could not be anything else. There was the extraordinary situation of an attempt to move the writ being made by one member of the Scottish nationalist group while being opposed by another. That was a device for making a point on the Floor of the House. It was a manoeuvre for political advantage, and one cannot call foul if one is out-manoeuvred. The only result is that one hon. Member has been suspended, which is to no one's credit—certainly not to his. The cause in question was advanced not a whit.

I back the motion not because I am conspiring with the Leader of the House, with whom I have not spoken today, nor because I am in some way conniving in the suspension of Back Benchers.

Mr. Salmond *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: I am just finishing. I have given way several times.

I am backing the motion because, put in the simplest possible terms, I believe that it is an attempt to mount a parliamentary manoeuvre that is outside the rules of the House, that cannot be justified, and that is wrong on the

[Mr. Dewar]

basis of the arguments and the merit. It is for those reasons, and because I agree, albeit reluctantly, that such a step is necessary, that I invite my hon. Friends to support the motion that is before the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 256, Noes 10.

Division No. 121] **[8.3 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Baldry, Tony
Battle, John
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Blunkett, David
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Glyn, Dr Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamond, James
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Morley, Elliott
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaz, Keith
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Worthington, Tony
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David MacLean and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Douglas, Dick
Kilfedder, James
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Nellist, Dave
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Margaret Ewing and
Mr. Andrew Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Chairman of the First Scottish Standing Committee in respect of the Self-Governing Schools Etc (Scotland) Bill shall have power to order any Member who is not a member of the Committee to withdraw immediately

from the Committee Room; and the Serjeant at Arms shall act on such orders as he may receive from the Chairman in pursuance of this order.

PREVENTION OF TERRORISM (TEMPORARY PROVISIONS) BILL (ALLOCATION OF TIME)

Resolved,

That the Order of the House [23rd January] be supplemented as follows:

Lords Amendments

1. The proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments shall be completed at this day's sitting and, subject to the provisions of the Order of 23rd January, those proceedings shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion be brought to a conclusion not later than the expiration of the period two hours beginning with the commencement of the proceedings on this Order.

2.—(1) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph 1 above—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided and, if that Question is for the amendment of a Lords Amendment, shall then put forwith the Question on any further Amendment of the said Lords Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown and on any Motion moved by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in the said Lords Amendment or, as the case may be, in the said Lords Amendment as amended;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining Lords Amendments as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown to a Lords Amendment and then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown. That this House doth agree or disagree with the Lords in their Amendment, or as the case may be, in their Amendment as amended;

(ii) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown, That this House doth disagree with the Lords in a Lords Amendment;

(iii) put forthwith with respect to each Amendment designated by Mr. Speaker which has not been disposed of the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Amendment; and

(iv) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all remaining Lords Amendments;

(c) as soon as the House has agreed or disagreed with the Lords in any of their Amendments Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith a separate Question on any other Amendment moved by a Minister of the Crown relevant to that Lords Amendment.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

Stages subsequent to first Consideration of Lords Amendments

3. Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the consideration forthwith of any further Message from the Lords on the Bill.

4. The proceedings on any such further Message from the Lords shall, if not previously brought to a conclusion, be brought to a conclusion one hour after the commencement of those proceedings.

5. For the purpose of bringing those proceedings to a conclusion—

(a) Mr. Speaker shall first put forthwith any Question which has already been proposed from the Chair and not yet decided, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown which is related to the Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) Mr. Speaker shall then designate such of the remaining items in the Lords Message as appear to him to involve questions of Privilege and shall—

(i) put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown on any item;

(ii) in the case of each remaining item designated by Mr. Speaker, put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in their Proposal; and

(iii) put forthwith the Question, That this House doth agree with the Lords in all the remaining Lords Proposals.

Supplemental

6—(1) Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith the Question on any Motion made by a Minister of the Crown for the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons.

(2) A Committee appointed to draw up Reasons shall report before the conclusion of the sitting at which they are appointed.

7.—(1) In this paragraph "the proceedings" means proceedings on Consideration of Lords Amendments, on any further Message from the Lords on the Bill, on the appointment and quorum of a Committee to draw up Reasons and on the Report of such a Committee.

(2) Paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(3) No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, the proceedings shall be made except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(4) If at any time the proceedings are interrupted by a Motion for the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration), the bringing to a conclusion of any part of the proceedings which, under this Order, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 15

PROVISIONS SUPPLEMENTARY TO S.14.

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 10, line 41, at end insert—

"(10) Section 61(1) to (8) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (fingerprinting) shall apply to the taking of a person's fingerprints by a constable under subsection (9) above as if for subsection (4) there were substituted—

(4) An officer may only give an authorisation under subsection (3)(a) above for the taking of a person's fingerprints if he is satisfied that it is necessary to do so in order to assist in determining—

(a) whether that person is or has been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism to which section 14 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 applies; or

(b) whether he is subject to an exclusion order under that Act;

or if the officer has reasonable grounds for suspecting that person's involvement in an offence under any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (1)(a) of that section and for believing that his fingerprints will tend to confirm or disprove his involvement.""—[*Mr. Douglas Hogg.*]

Mr. Speaker: With this we shall consider also Lords amendments 5, 28 and 29.

8.13 pm

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): As the amendments are either technical or part of the general thrust of amendments moved by the Opposition in the House of Lords, I shall not oppose them.

Question agreed to.

Remaining Lords amendments agreed to.

British Railways Bill

Order for Second Reading read

8.15 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The annual British Railways Bill is connected with the desire of the British Railways Board to bring the railway system into line with the requirements of modern operation. This general works powers Bill is one of a substantial number introduced in the House since 1963. It aims to improve the safety and efficiency of the railway system, but such Bills have always been seen in the past as an opportunity for hon. Members to raise other matters relating to the railway system. Although I am sponsoring the Bill on behalf of the board, hon. Members should recognise that I am not competent to answer any points outside its scope.

It is, of course, right that all hon. Members should be concerned about safety, as indeed is everyone in the country. Let me make it clear that the board never puts safety after passenger convenience: it is always a top priority. Everyone who works at British Rail receives basic training, and every railwayman receives at least two years' training before taking out trains, so that he has a knowledge of both train operation and the routes that the train is likely to cover.

Automatic warning systems are already provided for drivers, and automatic train protection is the next step. Such technology, however, has yet to be applied to a complex rail network. It is in existence for simple rapid transit systems, and it is hoped that a pilot scheme may be in place next year.

Part I of the Bill deals with the normal preliminary provisions that incorporate the usual enactments by reference relating to such matters as compulsory purchase. Part II deals with the works proposed, part III with the lands, part IV with the normal standard protective provisions and part V with the miscellaneous and general provisions.

Let me begin with the major works proposed. Works No. 1 is a new railway in Birmingham to connect Snow hill station with the station at Smethwick West. The proposed new railway is sponsored by the Passenger Transport Executive which will pay the cost of the reinstatement of British Rail tracks on disused track-bed out of Snow hill until the line joins up with the board's existing freight railway for the final part of the link. For part of its length, the proposed link will share presently disused four-track formation with a light rapid transit railway proposed to be constructed by the PTE. That plan is very much welcomed by local residents and will benefit them and others.

Works No. 3 consists of a new railway—partly reinstatement of disused track, and partly totally new railway—intended to form a link between Nottingham and Mansfield to permit services on the Nottingham-Mansfield-Worksop corridor. The proposal is backed by local authorities in the area which will provide the funds to construct the railway which is expected to relieve traffic congestion. There is also some likelihood of European funding being obtained.

Works Nos. 9, 10 and 11 consist of work associated with platform extension to enable longer trains to operate on certain sections of Network SouthEast. Hon. Members who are concerned about overcrowding on trains must

welcome that proposal, which will provide some easement of the inevitable overcrowding in the rush hour. Works No. 9 deals with the reconstruction of the tunnel at Woolwich Dockyard station. Works Nos. 10A and 10B involve bridge and viaduct widening at Lewisham station. Works No. 11 involves bridge widening at Dartford station.

Greenwich borough council is aware of the proposed works No. 9 and has expressed no opposition. Lewisham borough council has expressed some concern about some aspects of works Nos. 10A and 10B, but discussions are continuing with the board and it is hoped that a mutually acceptable solution will emerge. The initial reaction to the proposed works No. 11 from Kent county council and Dartford borough council is not unfavourable and further discussions are continuing.

I shall briefly identify the other works in the Bill for the convenience of hon. Members. Works No. 2 at Tickhill has received no objection from Doncaster metropolitan borough council or from the Tickhill town council which is well aware of the planned works.

Works No. 4 relates to the extension of the high speed train depot at St. Philip's marsh. Bristol city council is aware of the board's proposals, and discussions are taking place.

Works No. 5 relates to the construction of a new cord line to improve facilities for the coal trains supplying the Fiddlers Ferry power station to which there is no objection, as far as the board is aware.

Works No. 7 is a new siding to run to the British Alcan works at Bassaleg, and the Gwent and Newport district council is in favour of the scheme.

Works No. 8 relates to the deviation of Margam to Tondu branch railway at Cefn Cribwr to achieve the release of a significant amount of coal which can be exploited by British Coal.

Clauses 6, 7 and 8 relate to works No. 1, clause 9 involves the relinquishment of powers under the British Railways (No. 2) Act 1981 and the British Railways (No. 2) Act 1984. Clauses 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 relate to works Nos. 3 to 9.

We now come to the provisions of the Bill which have caused some concern. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has expressed concern and has put his name to the blocking motion. The provisions deal with the stopping up and closing of footpaths. The hon. Gentleman will be familiar with the petition on behalf of the Ramblers Association. Clause 17 deals with the removal of a dangerous walkway over the River Ribble. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that that change should be made in the interests of safety.

For the convenience of the House I shall touch on the related clauses. Clause 11 relates to the stopping up of footpaths at Kirkby in Ashfield and deals with the earlier works to which I have referred. Clause 18 provides for the taking down of a dangerous footbridge and clause 19 the stopping and discontinuance of a footpath at Tipton with which the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish is particularly concerned. The vehicular use of the crossing was prohibited in 1981 and subsequently in 1984 and as a result the crossing has been only for users of the footpath.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I apologise for intervening at this stage, but perhaps I should tell the hon. Gentleman as a matter of information and courtesy that clause 11 is of interest not only to my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), but to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, as it is in your constituency.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman should proceed with caution.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: Of course I shall proceed with caution, and I hope that I will carry you with me, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to make it absolutely clear that the board has no desire gratuitously to curtail movement across any of its tracks or any of its land. In all the cases that I have mentioned, the proposals stem entirely from a desire to improve safety.

Clause 19 relates to Watery lane level crossing in Sandwell. Vehicular access was prohibited nearly 10 years ago and the board proposed a scheme using miniature warning lights. Quite properly and understandably, the local school and the council were concerned that that would be dangerous because many trains travel through the area. The council was concerned that the crossing should be closed. The board believes that that is probably the only sensible answer, but as school-children and those requiring access to the school are likely to be concerned for at least another year, no action will be taken until 1990, but I hope that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish and others concerned about the footpath will look favourably on the suggestion, which is not a gratuitous interruption of access but in the interests of safety. If hon. Members wish to explore the matter further I shall do my best to answer their points later, if I am fortunate enough to catch your eye again, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The remaining clauses in the Bill are fairly standard. Clause 28 sets time limits for the purchase of land and the rights over land which are limited until 31 December 1994. Clause 29 deals with the extension of a time limit from an earlier Bill because of the work required for the reinstatement of the curve linking the midlands line with the great central route at Doncaster. The board intends to apply for an extension until December 1994.

Part IV of the Bill is the standard incorporation of previous protective provisions. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, part V deals with the miscellaneous and general provisions. As the House well knows, there are also schedules attached to the Bill.

In conclusion, I want to point to the modest nature of the proposal. I hope that, it will find favour with the House. I also hope that, at a time when British Rail is very much in the news, perhaps for all the wrong reasons, those of us who are concerned about its operation will give the Bill an opportunity to proceed so that the modernisation, and as a result the safety and efficiency that we hope will flow from it, will be a benefit to all the travelling public.

8.30 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I apologise to the House for causing a debate to take place on the Bill. I had hoped that it would be possible for the promoters to meet the points raised by the Ramblers Association and by myself without a debate. I was disappointed last week that it was not possible for the promoters to give an undertaking, particularly because my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) has been pressing me hard for several months about the importance of the part of the Bill which will provide a rail

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

link from Mansfield to Nottingham. I fully appreciate his point, and I have great admiration for the work that he has done on behalf of his constituents to try to get that line included in the legislation and to get the local authorities, and hopefully the EEC, to come up with the money to make the line a practicality.

I am concerned about the principle as to how footpaths should be diverted or stopped up. Anyone who wants to close a footpath, stop it up or divert it should use the highways legislation or the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 rather than a private Bill. I do not want to rehearse the whole argument. I suspect that on future British Rail Bills we will go into the argument in more detail.

I have always contended, and I believe that the Private Bill Committee has also made it clear, that planning matters should be the subject of public inquiries and, perhaps as a long stop, parliamentary legislation, rather than public inquiries being short-circuited by parliamentary legislation.

It would have been possible for the diversion of the footpath in the Mansfield area to be dealt with by an application to the local authority. The local people would have had an opportunity to object. As I understand it—I do not know the area well—most of the local people do not object. They are losing one piece of path and they will gain an alternative path. Therefore, British Rail could have used the local procedure. If local people had been concerned about the proposal, they could have made their point of view known directly to the inspector appointed to consider the objections to the footpath closure. Instead, the proposal has to be dealt with at second or third hand on the Floor of the House and in Committee upstairs.

No doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield knows all the detail on the ground, but it is not easy for another hon. Member to argue about footpaths in a constituency other than his own. It is not easy either for the Ramblers Association, which has to put the petition to the Committee, to get its information from local walkers and put it to the Committee at second hand. It would have been far better for British Rail or the other promoters to make their proposal for the diversion of the footpath through the Wildlife and Countryside Act and the highways legislation rather than by a private Bill.

The next footpath is at Malton where the proposal is to take down the bridge at the level crossing because it is not safe. Again, local procedures could have been used rather than resorting to a private Bill. It is a cumbersome process for local people who want to object. It would be simpler if they could object to the local authority. I believe that there would have been no difficulty for British Rail if it had proceeded in that way.

The third footpath is in the Tipton area at Sandwell. It is more complicated and I am reluctant to tread that path. Again, I suggest that it is not appropriate to deal with the matter through a private Bill. As it involves the closure of a footpath across a railway, it could have been argued about locally rather than at second hand in the House. British Rail insists that it could not use the highways legislation or the Wildlife and Countryside Act because it could not establish that no one wanted to use the footpath.

The argument is more complicated. In that case, people want to use the footpath but it is not safe. British Rail argues that, because it wants to close the footpath in the interests of safety, it could not use the highways legislation or the Wildlife and Countryside Act. It could use those provisions only if it believed that people did not want to use the footpath.

I do not know enough about the local position. Perhaps British Rail is using the argument of safety to avoid the cost of constructing a proper crossing which would enable people to get over the railway safely. In one or two places British Rail has erected footbridges. Although the footbridges are a safe way for people to cross, they have caused considerable upset to people who have suddenly found a substantial structure by the side of their gardens. I do not know enough about the Tipton case to know whether a new footbridge would be practical.

Again, it is not the best use of parliamentary procedure for a private Bill to be pushed through the House which will close a crossing over the railway on the ground of safety, with the odd little addition that British Rail will not close the footpath straight away but will leave it open as long as a school wants to use it. In future, when the children stop using the footpath, other local people will be denied the opportunity to do so. Again I argue strongly that such a proposal should not be in a private Bill but be dealt with by other means.

The Ramblers Association will put its petition to the Committee. I hope that British Rail may be able to meet the association's points. Perhaps British Rail need not make changes to the Bill in relation to Mansfield and Malton. If it was to give a general undertaking to the Ramblers Association that in future it will deal with closures through local procedures rather than a private Bill, that would be satisfactory. In the case of Tipton there should be more investigation of the legislation in general to see whether it is correct, as British Rail contends, that it could not close the footpath by any procedure other than a private Bill.

I do not intend to divide the House, particularly in view of all the efforts that my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield has made to try to get the railway line into his constituency. I hope that British Rail can clear up the matter and that the Bill may have a speedy passage. Perhaps in the not too distant future my hon. Friend will invite me to travel on that bit of railway to see his constituency.

8.39 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Michael Portillo): It might be for the convenience of the House if I were to intervene now and briefly explain the Government's view of the Bill. First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) for his very lucid exposition of the Bill. These Bills are necessarily complicated and detailed, so I am sure that the House is grateful to my hon. Friend for his very useful presentation, which enables hon. Members to have an informed debate on these matters. The Government have considered the content of the Bill and have no objection in principle to the powers sought by the British Railways Board.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) made an interesting and thoughtful contribution, in which he alluded to the Ramblers Association's objection in principle to the use of private Bill procedure for the stopping up and diversion of public footpaths, on

the ground that the existing powers of highway authorities provide adequate safeguards for public rights and private interests.

However, I understand that the powers under the Highways Act 1980 do not at present allow for stopping up on safety grounds. The hon. Gentleman will know that the Joint Committee that considered Private Bill procedure recommended in October that the Highways Act 1980 should be extended to permit stopping-up orders to be made on grounds of safety in appropriate cases. That would be achieved through the usual Highways Act procedures, including confirmation by the Secretary of State, if necessary following a local public inquiry. But the House has not yet had an opportunity to debate that report. The Government are still preparing their response to it. It is only fair to tell the hon. Gentleman that in the present circumstances the Government are satisfied that there is no objection to British Rail seeking powers in the Bill.

The three petitioners against the Bill will have the opportunity to present their objections to the Committee, which will be in a very much better position than we are tonight to examine in detail the issues involved. It will have the added advantage of hearing expert advice. Therefore, I welcome the assurance by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish. I recommend to the House that the Bill should be given its Second Reading and be allowed to proceed in the usual way to Committee, where it can be given the detailed consideration that it merits.

8.42 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Like the Minister, I welcome the Bill. I also extend my usual thanks to the hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) for the way in which he moved the Second Reading of the Bill. I, too, spend a long time—it might seem even longer to my audience—dealing with these measures. Perhaps I might be allowed to refer to some of the works in the Bill in a little more detail, not least because many of the provisions of works No. 1 are in my constituency.

I and most of my constituents express great pleasure at the restoration of the old great western route between Snowhill and Handsworth, especially as that route will be eventually a four-track formation once again. While we shall not be able to see halls, kings and castles along the great western main line, I hope that we shall see on two of the tracks fairly new sprinter DMUs, and on the adjacent tracks the even newer super-trams of the midland metro, provided the Department of Transport gets its act together and stops changing the rules, as it did recently in a hopefully futile attempt to stop us having a midland metro. But that expectation gives me great pleasure. I hope that the works will be proceeded with quickly if the Bill receives its Second Reading tonight.

I should like to deal with works No. 3, and the replacement of a passenger rail service between Nottingham and Mansfield, and, I believe, Worksop. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) who has done a great deal of work behind the scenes in the House and with his local authority and the other relevant local authorities to see that the railway services that were short-sighted and misguidedly withdrawn in the 1960s are restored sooner than later.

Mansfield is the largest English town that is not connected to the railway network. I apologise in advance if I have pinched a line from my hon. Friend's speech in saying that, but the fact that a town the size of Mansfield has been off the railway network for 25 years speaks volumes for the short-sighted decisions that were taken in the so-called Beeching era. Thanks to the efforts of the local authorities and hon. Members with constituencies in that part of the world, I am sure that that railway service will be restored.

My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish gave a careful and concerned speech about clause 19, the Tipton Watery lane level crossing. As I said to the hon. Member for New Forest, who is responsible for the Bill, that crossing is in the constituency adjacent to mine. I notice that the hon. Gentleman was careful to give a full and detailed explanation to Madam Deputy Speaker when she was in the Chair, as the work concerns her constituency.

The circumstances surrounding the clause are complicated. It is a long-running saga. Sandwell borough council wrote to Madam Deputy Speaker, my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd), and to me, and I should have thought also to my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) and to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), asking for support so that the crossing would remain open. The circumstances surrounding its proposed closure are that the British Railways Board, in its constant desire to cut costs and ingratiate itself with the Minister of State and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, wants to close the manned signal box at Watery lane, which controls the wicket gate through which members of the public pass across the track.

I have some sympathy with BRB and I do not quibble with my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish, as I am aware of his expertise on Acts of Parliament. But British Rail has the bulk of the responsibility for preventing motorists and pedestrians from killing themselves. It is strange and slightly illogical, although I understand the reason for it, that we protect the railways in this manner, yet children and adults, whether responsible or sober, are free to cross heavily-used dual carriageways if they are unwise enough, without any protection. Proposals to stop up crossings across lightly used railways—although this is a heavily used main line—are greeted by opposition from individuals, local authorities and groups such as the Ramblers Association.

Various alternatives to closure have been discussed by the council and BRB. I ask the Minister to clarify this point at the end of the debate. As I understand it, the board does not propose to take any action until an annexe has been completed for an adjacent school in 1990. Once that annexe is completed, the need for the crossing will be removed, although I accept my hon. Friend's point that there may well be inconvenience to present users.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish reminds us, the replacement of level crossings by bridges is occasionally as controversial as the original decision to close a level crossing. He does not represent the Woodsmoor area of Stockport, but it is close to his previous constituency, and he will be aware of the controversy that arose when British Rail decided to stop up a level crossing to save the wages of those working in the signal box, and to replace it with a bridge. There was such a row that after about seven years British Rail had to take down the bridge. Thankfully, there is no suggestion in works No. 3 that British Rail will adopt that course, but

[Mr. Peter Snape]

that case shows that often what British Rail does is wrong in the eyes of many people. I hope that, as my hon. Friend said, the discussions that are taking place, and will take place up to 1990, will lead to agreement. He may be able to persuade the Ramblers Association, whose interests he guards zealously in the House, that the closure should go ahead.

As the Minister said, these matters can be discussed more fully in Committee. On behalf of the official Opposition, I give the Bill a warm welcome. On behalf of my constituency, I hope that British Rail, having been given the parliamentary go-ahead for these works, will proceed quicker rather than slower, and that we shall see once again early in the 1990s a four-track railway line between West Bromwich and Birmingham Snow hill.

8.50 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): This can be described as a useful little Bill. It costs only £26 million and extends British Rail's network. As the preamble to the Bill says, British Rail has a duty

"to provide railway services in Great Britain and, in connection with the provision of railway services, to provide such other services and facilities as appear to the Board to be expedient."

I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) for allowing a debate on this issue which goes wider than the details of the Bill, to which I have no objection and in no way wish to obstruct. Throughout the debate on the extension of the British Rail network as it affects my constituents and my part of Britain, I have tried constantly to be constructive and positive. I have no desire to be a Luddite, and never have been. My anxiety is to make sure that as Britain enters the 21st century, for the first time for many years with a rather exciting prospect for railways, we get it right.

Getting it right means not only getting a railway of a kind that we can be proud of and that can discharge the kinds of functions that we wish it to discharge, but also a railway that is acceptable to the people who have to endure its passage. I talk about the new high-speed rail link to the Channel tunnel, which has been a source of trauma for a long time in my part of the world.

Part III of the Bill includes powers of compulsory purchase. One can but hope that British Rail has fully consulted all those affected. However, one cannot rely upon that. In my recent experience, British Rail does not understand what consultation is. In my part of the world, British Rail has exhausted itself with meetings. On the one project alone, admittedly 77 times more expensive than the one we are discussing this evening, it held about 160 public meetings. Any fair-minded person must pay tribute to the extraordinary stolid good humour with which British Rail personnel, often exhausted and often shown to be incompetent, managed to retain their good nature.

However, good nature is not enough. The meetings were all confused, crowded and very angry. They were confused because either they were told different things at different times or they were told nothing much at all. They were crowded because they dealt with matters at the very heart of individuals' concerns—home, environment and life style. They were very angry—this is the point—because they were in no sense consultations; they were confrontations. I hope that, in the areas covered by the Bill, British Rail has consulted or will consult. However, in case it still has not learnt what consultation is, I shall tell it again, although I have told it often enough already.

Consultation means sharing. It means saying to someone, "This is my difficulty. It affects you. Will you help me to resolve it?" In my area there are many people with diverse skills, long experience and a strong sense of public duty. There are engineers with experience of multi-million—even billion—pound projects. There are architects, planners, designers, naturalists, noise specialists, geographers, surveyors and lawyers. They are intelligent, mature, rational people. Present them with a problem and they will work to find a solution. Confront them with a solution designed with no reference to them, pat them on the head as if they have nothing valuable to contribute, and they will fight every inch of the way.

My worry in Kent is that, now that British Rail has retired to a new position prepared in isolation, it will argue that it has consulted enough. I tell it now that further public meetings with communities down their chosen route will not be considered consultation. North Downs Rail Concern—the umbrella group with which I have been associated—has reorganised itself. It has set up specialist sub-committees concentrating on matters such as compensation, noise measurement and so on. It will offer its help to the individual communities along the line, each of which will set up its own negotiating team to talk with British Rail.

If British Rail responds to that, it will be consulting. If it does not, it will be confronting. I hope that in Kent, as in other areas covered by this Bill, it will this time consult. If it does not, it will steel the opposition to its railway and all its related works.

In relation to freight, the Bill allows for the construction of new railways. In my part of the country we are in trauma over the plan to construct the longest railway in Britain this century. It will be a passenger line. Part of our trauma stems from the fact that we do not believe that the proposed railway is the only railway that will need to be built. We believe that there is already a need for a purpose-built freight line. We are not alone in that belief. Eurotunnel would like one. Its chairman, Alastair Morton, says:

"We believe it is virtually certain that the capacity of Network SouthEast to accept and carry to schedule a rapidly rising flow of international passenger and freight trains will not be maintained at the level shown in British Rail's Study Report."

Maunsell's, Kent county council's consultants, pointed out that even the higher estimates so far used by British Rail stem from a database which dealt with the years 1974 to 1984. They recommended

"That serious consideration be given to the design of the new tracks to accommodate freight services in addition to international passenger services."

Steer, Davies and Gleave, consultants to Transport 2000, also attack British Rail's forecasts, pointing out that it has carried out no complete revision of freight forecasts since 1985. That group believes that it may be possible to cope by upgrading an existing line, but only if it were upgraded to take continental gauge freight.

General Technology Systems makes it clear that, unless British Rail provides a Berne gauge line, it will lose to the competition for the growing Euro-freight market and that its revenue loss will be so great that the funds to sustain

even relatively modest improvements to the United Kingdom rail network, such as are proposed in the Bill, will fall.

The Minister tells me that I am wrong because there will not be capacity in the tunnel to take the freight anyway. I believe him to be misinformed. I think that British Rail, frightened of competition, is trying to persuade us that it will make an adequate response to the challenge of a rapidly growing European freight market by slotting in freight trains in gaps left open by the transfer of some passenger trains.

It is absurd to enter the 21st century with a railway system which cannot take Berne gauge wagons. Out of 200,000 European freight wagons, only 2,500 can run on British tracks. That is why I believe that we shall shortly be confronted with a proposal for a new freight line, possibly built by private enterprise. No wonder we in Kent take a burning interest in the hitherto unavailable freight proposals of British Rail. I earnestly hope that British Rail, which is bound to present its freight proposals before the end of the year, will have the tact as well as the sense to present them before it puts its private Bill before the House next November, if it manages——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Member has been referring to the subject of the Bill until recently, but I am now getting a little lost. I am sure that he will return to the subject matter of the measure.

Mr. Rowe: I was about to do so with my next sentence, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This interest should not be confined to Kent. The people of Birmingham, Doncaster, Ashfield and Gedling, Bristol, Avon, Warrington and Newport, and all the other places covered by the Bill, should be taking as sharp an interest as we are taking.

Mr. Snape: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the people of all those places, and of West Bromwich, take an interest in these matters. If, however, he is seeking allies for a Bill which will come before the House at a future date, he will not get them by blocking the installation of new railway systems in other parts of the country. Speaking for my constituency—even though I am on the Opposition Front Bench—we in West Bromwich welcome a new railway line. If the hon. Gentleman wants allies to prevent the establishment of a different line, we would appreciate it if he did not block the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must be careful not to stray from the subject matter of the Bill that we are discussing. I am sure that the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) will stay in order.

Mr. Rowe: It was never my intention to block this Bill and I did not realise that there was any danger of the House running out of time on it. The House will agree that I have not been frivolous or irrelevant in the remarks I have made. I will not develop further my argument about freight at this stage.

I have no doubt that some of those affected by this Bill will be entitled to compensation. I wonder whether they feel less aggrieved than my constituents, some of whom are distraught at the damage already done to their property by British Rail's proposals. We have no idea if or when this massive purveyor of blight will be built. The chairman of BR, presenting BR's chosen route to MPs, said as his eighth presentational point:

"We have no idea when this project will become economically viable, but we are sure it will one day."

As a result, hundreds, if not thousands, of households have seen tens of thousands of pounds arbitrarily sliced off the value of each of their homes. As the average stay in a house is less than five years, the great majority of them will have to sell their homes long before any line is built. Surely they are entitled to some compensation.

There must be considerable merit in compensating people if their homes are disturbed by BR proposals to build new lines, to extend existing lines or to alter materially the way in which lines are operated by those properties being bought by the British Rail Property Board, one of the largest property organisations in the country. It is imbued with the clear vision, which is shared by railwaymen throughout the country, that living near a railway line is an asset rather than a disadvantage.

Given that to be the case, it has nothing to lose by backing its judgment and buying properties which, to their present owners, appear to be disadvantaged by the existence of a railway line. That is, in BR's eyes, a serious misconception because it believes that people will benefit from the railway line, even if they do not understand that at this stage.

The British Rail Property Board should buy the large numbers of houses that will be at a serious disadvantage in the property market because of British Rail's proposed changes which, in many cases, may take many years to come to fruition.

I do not wish to be destructive or Luddite or to block the Bill in any way, and I bring my speech to a close.

9.5 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I congratulate the hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) on introducing the Bill so that we might at last have the opportunity to try to obtain proper transport services in my area, if works No. 3 of the Bill is eventually carried out.

Tonight we are faced with an unusual set of circumstances, particularly when we remember what has recently happened in the railways. The hon. Member for New Forest has received an all-party and disciplined response to his call to get the Bill through the House this evening. The Bill's supporters come from both Conservative and Opposition Members and the Government support the Bill's passage through to Committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) has a great history with, and knowledge of, the railways, in particular the National Union of Railwaymen. If hon. Members were to examine my biographical details, which are in the Library, they would see that I too have a history of working with the rail unions and with the train drivers, union, ASLEF.

I should also like to thank the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) for saying that he does not wish to block the Bill, which will also provide a great service for his constituents. Whether he likes it or not—I am sure that he does—my in-laws are his constituents. They live in Bearsted in Kent and I am sure that they will be pleased that the hon. Gentleman will not be opposing the Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East said earlier, the Bill will enable them to board a train in their constituency and travel to the largest town in England yet to acquire a railway service.

[Mr. Alan Meale]

All the hon. Members who support works No. 3 of the Bill represent constituencies in Nottinghamshire—the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), my hon. Friends the Members for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen)—and have been active in pursuing the objectives contained in the Bill. Credit should also be given to British Rail for its excellent work in bringing the Bill to the House, and to the local authorities in the Nottinghamshire area—in particular to Nottinghamshire county council, which has spent much time and money arguing the need for such services into the east midlands areas. The county council has spent much money with Leeds university going through feasibility studies with the communities that will be involved in stages one and two of the programme. I am happy to report that on each occasion, the general public were very much in favour of reviving the service.

If it is reintroduced, the line will travel from Nottingham to Ashfield, Mansfield and Worksop and will pass through many areas that have lost their main source of employment because of the massive pit closure programme in Nottinghamshire in recent years. These communities have lost pits or the pits in them are at risk, and the line would be a shining light in these areas, heralding the restructuring of opportunity throughout Nottinghamshire.

I am pleased to report that the Bill is also supported by the Railway Development Society and all the MEPs of the area. As the Minister knows, only last week Worksop, Mansfield and Nottingham were given the go-ahead by the EEC, thanks to the support of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I should be grateful if the Minister for Public Transport would pass on a message of thanks to his right hon. Friend for his honest approach to the application for grant. These three areas in Nottinghamshire have successfully applied for regional assistance from the EC. We hope that some of the money will be used to rebuild our society, which has been so badly hit.

If the Bill becomes law it will be a shining example of economic development for people in the areas concerned. Not much light has been seen there in recent times. Not only is Mansfield the largest town in England without a railway, it is a small constituency. I could walk its width in about 45 minutes. It is like a city in the middle of the country. My hon. Friends who represent neighbouring constituencies could probably drive for 30 or 40 minutes and still be in them. The constituency is many miles from the centres that do have transport. The M1 is five or six miles away and the A1 more than seven miles away. The main conurbations such as Worksop are further from the M1. Worksop is about 17 miles from Mansfield, which is 12 miles from Chesterfield—the nearest railway station —15 miles from Nottingham railway station, and 19 miles from the railway station in Newark. This is a problem area, and the Bill would give us great hope if it became law.

The Bill would also give us the chance to try to attract new businesses and create the employment necessary to reduce unemployment in the areas through which the route would pass. Up to 37,000 people are unemployed now in the small communities that would benefit from such a service.

I appreciate the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has decided not to pursue his objections to the Bill at the end of the debate. I am grateful to him because I know of his concerns. I may add that I have equal admiration for the sturdy work that he does on behalf of the Ramblers Association and others. For many years he has represented their interests in this Chamber.

In conclusion, I beg hon. Members on both sides of the House, in the interests of an awful lot of people—about 500,000—to register their objections by a method different from that which might be adopted in the Chamber tonight. If they think it necessary, let them adopt the procedure that could be used at the Committee stage.

9.15 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I do not want in any way to oppose this Bill or to impede its progress. As the hon. Members for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) and for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) have said, where it affects particular constituencies it is to be welcomed. In that spirit I do welcome it. I have taken note of the words of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), who gave the Bill qualified support. I think he accepts that the legislation has to go through as a private Bill, but he expressed the view that this principle may itself be wrong. It seems entirely wrong and archaic that the presentation of propositions, plans and proposals to improve the railway system in this country should depend on the private Bill procedure. It is wrong that debates attended by so few hon. Members should be the means by which people's lives are changed dramatically—in some cases, their homes destroyed and their whole lifestyle and family life put at risk.

The principle of this Bill is broadly welcome, but it is the same principle that will be used in the next few days to get the King's Cross measure through. There has been little consultation. The very procedure this evening demonstrates the inadequacies. The establishment of a second terminal in London, at King's Cross, will predetermine the route through south-east England and the route through London. The proposal presupposes that every passenger going to Mansfield or West Bromwich, East, or Denton and Reddish must go through London. It presupposes that every item of freight coming through the Channel tunnel or coming from the south-east of this country will have to go through London before reaching an onward destination.

This Bill demonstrates the inadequacies of the parliamentary vehicle, even though its purpose is generally acceptable. I will give an example to illustrate my point. Last week—quite out of the blue, without warning—it was proposed that, by way of a private Bill, a whole area of my constituency centred on Warwick gardens should be disrupted. It is suggested that there should be a sub-surface junction with a branch line going to Waterloo by a most circuitous route. People who are not going to Waterloo will go through King's Cross.

The locality has been presented with a great problem, which raises the question whether we ought to change our procedures for dealing with British Rail matters. We must ask whether there should be some kind of public inquiry to meet the needs of local residents and to give them an input as to the implications. As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) suggested, there is often far more

expertise, experience and professional skill locally than is available to British Rail in making its plans in the first instance. It would be very wrong not to recognise that and to proceed with this means of dealing with British Rail business.

I will not oppose the Bill; indeed, if it goes to a vote I will support it, but, in supporting it, I am doing so for its proposals and not for the means of their implementation —the matter, not the manner. Before we embark on other major legislative proposals introduced by private Bill that will affect not only thousands in the south-east today but millions throughout the rest of the country tomorrow, we should consider whether the procedure is right. I believe that it is wrong.

9.19 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: With the leave of the House, I should like to deal with some of the points that have been made and thank my hon. Friend the Minister and the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) for their support. As the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) rightly said, this is important legislation and the sooner it passes its remaining stages the better it will be for British Rail and the travelling public. I was interested by the remarks of the hon. Member for Mansfield about works No. 3.

I listened with interest to the comments made by my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) and Dulwich (Mr. Bowden). They dealt with important matters relating to British Rail, and although their remarks were slightly outside the detail of the Bill I am sure that they will have been noted by the Department and the British Railways Board.

I shall deal in more detail with the remarks of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). Interestingly, he drew our attention to the report of the Joint Select Committee on Private Bill Procedure, of which I had the honour of being Chairman. I am looking forward to the debate on private Bill procedure almost as much as the hon. Gentleman. We shall discuss the provision of powers for British Rail that will be an alternative to the current private Bill system. Let us hope that we will not have to wait too long for that debate.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish specifically addressed his remarks to the footpaths that we were discussing earlier this evening and to clauses 18 and 19. As he will know, there are powers in the Highways Act 1980, but, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, safety is not a consideration. The Joint Select Committee report makes some suggestions about that.

It might have been possible to apply to a magistrates' court under section 116—I am thinking mainly of the Ribble crossing—to obtain powers if the highway authorities had been so minded. It is necessary to prove that the way in question is unnecessary. It is believed that magistrates are likely to be unwilling so to find, especially if there is evidence of opposition to the proposal. While the board does not seek to dissuade highway authorities from making applications under section 116, as, if they are successful, the board and the highway authority are content, it is difficult to argue that it is an appropriate vehicle for dealing with such matters.

As the law stands, if there is considerable objection it could be a slow or futile process when one is dealing with something that, in the wider context of the works in the earlier part of the Bill, means that closures are essential. If we are to use the present procedures, the board has no alternative. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that, although he and I may share views about how things should be done on another occasion.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I admired the work done by the Joint Committee on private Bill procedure and I hope that much of its work will be implemented quickly. It strikes me that promoting a private Bill could save some time. On other occasions, will British Rail consider starting proceedings under the Highways Act 1980 so that, when it reaches this stage, it can say that local agreement has been reached or that a local inquiry has been undertaken and that the inspector has found that there is a case for closure? I believe that that would simplify things.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's remarks will have been noted by the board and others, and I hope that they will be carefully considered.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East discussed the Sandwell borough council problem. He referred to the school and the new buildings. It is important to note that, conscious that the crossing is of such potential danger, the council has concluded that the only satisfactory solution would be to close it completely. Coincidentally, the council's education committee has proposals for extending the accommodation at the main Alexandra high school, thereby enabling it to close the annex in Queen's road. Therefore the only caveat which the council has is that the crossing should remain open until July 1990, when the academic year ends. The hon. Gentleman stressed that point. Against that background the board, by clause 19 of the Bill, seeks power to stop up the crossing.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will consider that that is a fair solution given the problems relating to a busy piece of track and the possible dangers to children and others if something is not done.

The proposals are comparatively modest. They do not represent major pieces of railway building, but are essential to the proper performance of the railway system. Therefore, I hope that the House will now allow the Bill to go forward to Committee for further consideration.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed.

Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace) Bill *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

9.27 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The passage of the Bill will enable the work to begin on a hotel and leisure complex that will bring considerable benefit to the area as a whole and to my constituency in particular. The hotel and leisure complex will be built on a small part of the site occupied by the old crystal palace.

That palace was opened by Queen Victoria in June 1854 and between then and the beginning of the first world war it became the dominant entertainment and cultural centre of south London. Crowds flocked there to watch sporting events, listen to concerts and to marvel at the art displays and the permanent exhibitions. The crystal palace led to the development of the surrounding area.

In 1914 the management of crystal palace changed and the Crystal Palace Act 1914 empowered trustees to hold and to manage it as a place of public resort and recreation. The main object of the trust, as expressed in the 1914 Act, was to maintain and manage the park as

"a place for Education and Recreation and for the promotion of Industry, Commerce and Art"

In 1936, as some of us will remember, the crystal palace burned down in one of the greatest peacetime fires ever known in the country. Much of the park continued to be open, but the site of the crystal palace was derelict and closed to the public. In 1951 control of the area passed to the London county council and in 1965 it was taken over by the Greater London council. In 1986 control passed to the London borough of Bromley and the council of the London borough of Bromley wished to open up the area, which had lain derelict and closed to all members of the public for more than 50 years. Much of the work is already in hand, partly in conjunction with English Heritage.

The council decided, after very wide consultation, that it would be beneficial to lease part of the land and to build a £20 million hotel and leisure complex and, because there is a shortage of such facilities in the area, money from the lease would pay for the improvements to other parts of the park.

The aim of the Bill is to permit the commercial co-operation necessary and the implementation of easements on the land concerned. Clause 3 of the Bill, which is the operative clause, would permit the council to lease all or part of the land shown on the plan and to grant easement in connection with the provision of a hotel, restaurant, shops, licensed premises, leisure facilities, entertainment facilities or other associated uses.

The 1951 Act gave the LCC very wide powers to build or alter buildings, create gardens, ornamental lakes and even spaces for military drill, but under the strict interpretation of the 1951 Act the provision of a hotel did not seem to come under the five headings of education, recreation, industry, commerce or art. Clause 3 of the Bill fills that gap.

The council's plans, which were unveiled two years ago, have been the subject of very wide local consultation. This large draft landscape plan was widely circulated. There was a popular version of it. There were public meetings and an exhibition in the civic centre, and the views of local inhabitants were canvassed widely.

The result of that consultation showed a unanimity which we normally associate with the regimes of Romania or Albania: over 95 per cent. of those consulted or who responded to the consultation were in favour of the council's broad proposals, and there has been all-party support for them.

The area surrounding Crystal Palace park is represented by Conservative and Labour councillors, while the area of the Bill itself is part of a ward presently represented by two councillors who were members of the SDP and who are now members of the party widely known as the "salads". Conservatives, Labour and SLD have supported the proposals. It is not surprising that the plan received such widespread support. There is a shortage of first-class hotel accommodation in the area, and Holiday Inn, which will run the hotel, has a deservedly high reputation.

It is perhaps worth noting that the management of the national sports centre, which will be overlooked by the hotel, is particularly enthusiastic about this 150-bedroom development, for many of the leading athletes who come to the national sports centre now look down their noses at the hostel rooms available at the sports centre itself. It is also worth noting that the Department of the Environment and the relevant tourist authorities also strongly support the provision of extra first-class hotel accommodation in the area.

The hotel and leisure complex will also provide a welcome extension to employment opportunities in the area. Over the past two years the unemployment rate in the area has dropped dramatically, but new job opppor-tunities are still welcome. The creation of 200 new jobs, of which a substantial proportion should be filled by my constituents, will still be very welcome.

The few people who object to the proposal tend to believe that open space will be taken away from the general public. That is not so. For more than 50 years, since the palace burned down, the 20 acres which we are talking about have been closed off entirely. No member of the public has had free access to the bramble-covered terraces, and for 80 years before the great fire in 1936, the public had to pay to get into that area.

It is exactly 175 years since the few acres which we are talking about were last generally open to the public. The Open Spaces Society has raised some objections in recent weeks. Consultations have taken place between that society and council officials. I believe that the objections on the grounds of loss of an open site can and will be met.

There is also a feeling in some quarters that the jobs on offer should be looked down upon because they will be mainly in a first-class hotel. I believe that that attitude is wholly mistaken. Tourism and business travel are growth industries in most parts of the world. There is nothing second-rate about jobs which provide shelter, food and comfort for travellers.

There is also some concern about the extra traffic which will be generated by the development. It is impossible to build a 150-bedroom hotel anywhere in London without causing some traffic problems. However, it would be difficult to think of a site more capable of absorbing extra pressure than this. Crystal Palace parade, which the development will adjoin, is an exceptionally wide thoroughfare and the scheme envisages the provision of no fewer than 800 parking places. It is true that there is considerable congestion on the roads in other boroughs

near the access to the roundabout where Anerly hill meets Crystal Palace parade. However, some elementary traffic management in those boroughs would ease the problem.

By all sensible criteria, therefore, this scheme, which has all-party support, should be allowed to proceed. I hope that the House will give this worthwhile Bill a Second Reading.

9.38 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I had several reasons for blocking the Bill originally. As an ex-member of the Greater London Council, I have no love for the London borough of Bromley. I may as well come straight out and declare my prejudices. If the London borough of Bromley promoted a private Bill to give away free bacon sandwiches, I would object to it.

I well remember that borough's record in its—as it turned out—successful attempt to destroy the GLC's "fares fair" policy. I believe that that was unconscionable. It put the London borough of Bromley in the kind of context where I have always kept it. It is one of the meanest, nastiest, mean-spirited boroughs, and I want to respond in kind tonight.

My second point is the substantial one and it is that my dislike of the London borough of Bromley is more than matched by my great love of the crystal palace site. The hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) quite rightly described some of the feeling that many Londoners have for the crystal palace, particularly those of us who have lived in the south of London. For electoral purposes I have transferred my residence to the east side of London but it is a difficult jump to make. That river is a great barrier, physically and psychologically, in many respects, so my feelings still are with areas such as Crystal Palace where I spent a great deal of my childhood.

I ought to say something about the crystal palace because it plays an enormously powerful image-building role in the consciousness of many people who live in the south of London. One does not have to have been around at the time of the great exhibition of 1851, although one or two hon. Gentlemen I know were, to have taken the tram ride up Sydneham hill or to have seen the great fire in 1936. My mother still talks about the fact that in 1936 the glow over the whole of London was fantastic. It was one of the greatest fires that London had ever seen and people were taking the tram to Crystal Palace to see this spectacular incident. It provided a good night out for large numbers of Londoners, but a far greater number deeply regretted that tragic fire, the causes of which, as far as I am aware, have never yet been found although it happened all those years ago.

At least one was able to go up there by tram in 1936. I am still looking round for the very clever person who decided that we did not need trams any more. I remember riding on what was, I think, the last tram from the Oval to Brixton, from my school to where I lived. The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) looks up. I was, of course, a child in arms, just in case she tries to check in Dod's. It was a sad occasion when the trams were removed. We now have bus lanes, which are unenforceable. Those trams that took people to see the great conflagration of 1936 could have been doing a very useful job since 1936 and right through to 1989 taking the citizens of London round somewhat faster than the buses and tubes do today.

The original crystal palace, as you probably know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was built in Hyde park to house the great exhibition of 1851. The idea of the exhibition was to enable Britain, at that time the wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world, and other countries, to display their manufactures and arts and thereby promote international trade and understanding. The designer of the building was Joseph Paxton, a brilliantly versatile man, who was self-taught in architecture. He was not an architect but a gardener, as I recall, who was very adept at putting up glasshouses, and he made the crystal palace one of the largest glasshouses that the world has ever seen. The structure was of iron and glass. It was 1,848 ft long and 488 ft wide and held more than 100,000 exhibits.

As the hon. Member for Beckenham said, there is no longer a palace at Crystal Palace. For more than half a century, one of the finest sites in London has remained empty, while that great symbol of the Victorians' faith in progress and enlightenment has lived on only in the imagination. Such was its grip on the imagination of so many people in London, young and old, that it has remained the crystal palace. Many mementoes of the palace were created, so that we have many visual images in prints, paintings, models and medallions, which one can still buy fairly cheaply in the markets of London.

If anyone wants to start a good collection, I suggest 1851 memorabilia. They might not appreciate in price, because millions of these things were produced during the course of the great exhibition, but they give an image of the sort of vision that the Victorians had—a vision that is so sadly lacking on the Government Benches today.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I remind the hon. Gentleman that although the Crystal Palace was destroyed by fire, the two towers remained as a visual reminder of the old palace until they were pulled down during the war.

Mr. Banks: Vandals are all around us, even to this day. Let us briefly move on to the 1951 festival of Britain. It is a lamentable fact that its skylon and dome of discovery were pulled down. Even a shot tower went in order to clear the site. Fortunately, no one has proposed pulling down the Royal Festival hall. That example of the festival of Britain shows that, even in a period when one might have thought people would be more concerned and sensitive about our architectural legacy, the vandals were still among us and prepared to destroy it. In the same way that there is a proposal to recreate the site of the 1851 exhibition, there are also proposals, which the House debated yesterday, to recreate something close to the 1951 festival on the south bank. I have as many reservations about that as I do about the 1851 re-creation.

Sir Philip Goodhart: The two towers to which the hon. Gentleman referred were pulled down not as an act of cultural vandalism but because they served as a landmark for German bombers during the war. They were removed as an anti-aircraft measure.

Mr. Banks: There are no greater vandals than the Luftwaffe, and obviously one would not have wanted to guide its planes to sensitive spots.

Even though the crystal palace site remained derelict after the 1936 fire and after the towers were pulled down, it had an ability to recapture the spirit that prevailed there until the great fire—even though we knew that it was not

[Mr. Banks]

the original site of the great exhibition and that the palace was transferred from Hyde park to Sydenham hill. I hope that I have made my point about the palace's imagery.

It is now suggested that the palace will rise, phoenix-like, from the ashes on Sydenham hill. What rises from the ashes will not be a replica or re-creation of one of the 19th century's finest monuments, but a mockery. The romanticism of the crystal palace, which has acquired almost mythical importance, is to end in pathos. My second objection to the scheme is the function of the proposed building, which is to be private rather than public. It would be built on the site of the original terraces, which Bromley restored with the help of English Heritage, using taxpayers' and not private money.

The Crystal Palace Foundation, which is an institution for which I have the highest regard and which was established in 1979, welcomes the prospect of a new crystal palace but questions whether the hotel and proposed facilities are necessary and whether a more imaginative scheme should not be promoted. The foundation asks:

"If this is to be the new palace of the people, could there be space created for public meetings, conferences, concerts, and so on?"

Mentioning concerts gives me an opportunity to ask the hon. Member for Beckenham, who has a constituency interest in the matter, to tell me what happened to the open-air concerts at the Crystal Palace bowl. In the days when the GLC was responsible for the Crystal Palace park, I used to spend very enjoyable evenings at the weekend attending open-air concerts, which attracted thousands of people from the immediate locality. That was a really enjoyable experience. What happened to those concerts? Why have they stopped? That is one of the casualties of the GLC's abolition that has not drawn much comment either in the House or outside it. I will gladly give way to the hon. Member for Beckenham if he can explain why I have had to feel so deprived on Saturday and Sunday evenings since the abolition of the GLC, partly because I have been unable to attend concerts at Crystal Palace. For the new complex to become just another hotel does not reflect what the original Crystal Palace stood for.

The London borough of Lambeth has considered the proposal. Although I do not know whether the borough has communicated the full extent of its objections to the Bill's promoter, I know that correspondence has been exchanged between the boroughs of Lambeth and Bromley. Lambeth has objected to the various changes proposed by Bromley to enable the complex to go ahead. Bromley's additional aims would include

"a hotel, restaurant, shops, leisure facilities, entertainment facilities or other associated uses".

In September 1987 members of the town planning application sub-committee in Lambeth were advised by their officers that Bromley's proposals for the site were premature and took no account of the visual effects or the traffic effect on the area or the benefit to users of the park from such development. Lambeth's sub-committee agreed, and the council therefore replied to Bromley stating its objections

"on the grounds that insufficient detail was provided as to the sale of the development and suggested that (a) a planning brief for the Crystal Palace Parade site is prepared by Bromley officers; (b) a Public Inquiry is held to consider hotel/leisure development proposals before planning permission is granted; and (c) a comprehensive traffic management study is carried out to assess the impact of the proposed developments."

I would like to know to what extent any of the requests made by the London borough of Lambeth were commented on or followed by the London borough of Bromley. The paper that I have in front of me, having recently acquired it from the London borough of Lambeth, states:

"Bromley's Borough Plan (adopted in 1985) designates the Crystal Palace park as Metropolitan Open Land. This includes the application site on which Lambeth's observations were sought. The Plan's written statement contains three policies on Metropolitan Open Land. Policy R8 states:

'Within the areas of Metropolitan Open Land as defined on the Proposal Map the following are the only uses which will generally be considered acceptable: (i) Public and private open space and playing fields; (ii) agriculture, woodland and orchards; (iii) golf courses; (iv) allotments and nursery gardens; (v) cemeteries and crematoria; and (vi) schools and institutions in large grounds'.

The proposals to which Lambeth objected did not appear, therefore, to conform to Bromley's own adopted Borough Plan, yet there was no reference to a possible departure from the Borough Plan in Bromley's request for formal observations from this Council."

It is clear that Bromley is prepared to alter its own plan, adopted as recently as 1985.

"Bromley Council granted itself deemed planning permission for the application referred to . . . It was not called in, despite it appearing to represent a departure from the adopted Bromley Borough Plan. However, it appears that the existing legislation, contained in the London County Council (Crystal Palace) Act 1951 is not wide-ranging enough to encompass Bromley Council's plans for the use of the Park."

That is why Bromley has come to the House to use the Private Bill procedure to change the legislation and to get round its own plan.

That brings me to my third objection, which has been echoed by Conservative Members in respect of other legislation: the use of private Bill procedure, in the event of controversial, perhaps unacceptable proposals such as this, to get round planning inquiries. Often the promoters of a Bill use the private Bill procedure to circumvent a local authority's own planning procedures. Here we have a local authority using private Bill procedure to circumvent its own planning procedures, which is twice as bad.

That is why I object so strongly to the Bill. It is not the way to go about it. The hon. Member for Beckenham said that the various documents had been well circulated around the area. Of course I accept what he says, but so often what happens in such circumstances is that the documents are put through people's doors. The bigger and bulkier they are the more one can guarantee that they will not be read.

The hon. Gentleman may intervene, or wait to reply to the points that I have raised, to say whether a synopsis of the plan was circulated, in which the proposals were fairly simple and straightforward so that people would get a general idea of what was being proposed. Even if that has been done, it is no substitute for a proper local inquiry so that people have the opportunity to think about it.

It is not a question of people sitting isolated in their homes waiting for documents to be stuffed through their letterboxes, reading them and understanding immediately the implications of the proposals. We all know that it does not happen like that. People may throw the information to one side or not understand it. It is only when people who have more time and direct interest have studied the

document and explained its implications that the real body of feeling awakens. I believe that there will be a real body of opinion when people become more aware of precisely what the proposals entail.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us what plans the Greater London council had for developing the site when it had control of it, so that we can appreciate his point more fully?

Mr. Banks: That is a fascinating subject. I should love to hold the attention of the House for as long as possible, perhaps even until 11.30 pm, to explain all the various proposals that we had. The main area of expenditure by the Greater London council was on the national sports centre. When I was chairman of the arts and recreation committee of the Greater London council, I took great pleasure in devoting a large amount of London ratepayers' money to the development of that site, without feeling guilty. I have had close, detailed discussions with the Crystal Palace Society about what we could do with the site where the new development is to take place.

I must tell the hon. Gentleman that my plan was to completely rebuild the crystal palace. We have all the plans and many of the artefacts still exist. It might look like a tip, but plenty of things could be restored. The Crystal Palace Society has done a wonderful job restoring many of the old artefacts from the original site. My idea was to rebuild it and we started discussing the proposal. It would have been an exhibition centre for concerts and for the arts generally, but essentially it would have been a public development scheme. However, we are talking big money—or megabucks, as they say. Although the Greater London council was a fairly well-heeled organisation, in the time scale that I envisaged we did not have the money for that development, but the idea was there. It was not just a dream: I had committed it to paper and worked out some plans and some proposals which I think would have grabbed the imagination of people in the immediate vicinity and throughout London.

The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) asked me a question and I have done my best to answer it. The hon. Gentleman put up a fairly spirited defence of the Greater London council from time to time.

Mr. Stanbrook *indicated dissent*——

Mr. Banks: I was giving the hon. Gentleman the benefit of the doubt. I thought that he was on the side of the angels, but I realise that, as ever, he was working with the forces of darkness to try to destroy the Greater London council. I meant to refer to the hon. Member for Beckenham.

The destruction of the Greater London council was a tragedy and was deeply resented by large numbers of Londoners. Opinion polls still show that 70 per cent. of Londoners oppose the Government's proposals. But she that must be obeyed had already decided that the Greater London council was to be abolished. Therefore, it went. The renaissance of that wonderful crystal palace could have been achieved. I hope that the hon. Member for Orpington feels totally ashamed of the shabby role that he played in the destruction of the Greater London council, thus denying the resurrection of the wonderful Crystal Palace.

Mr. Stanbrook: Surely the hon. Gentleman has just made an excellent case for what the London borough of Bromley proposes to do.

Mr. Banks: No. That is most certainly not the case.

I come to my last point: what is proposed? If it was a faithful reconstruction of the Crystal Palace, if it was still enshrining the old visions of the Victorians and if it was to be a public building, providing a great addition to the facilities for ordinary people in south-east and south London generally, I would not object to the scheme, other than perhaps to have a go at Bromley borough council about something or other. Because the proposed scheme does not fit the image that I have tried to describe and because it does not follow the traditions of the old Crystal Palace, I object to it.

David Prout, the architectural adviser to the Victorian Society, wrote a good letter in which he said:

"We are extremely worried about the cynical exploitation of the dream of rebuilding the Crystal Palace in order to promote the use of the site for the construction of a luxury hotel and shopping centre. We wish to condemn the present scheme and emphasise that the lip service paid by the developers to the old Palace should not prejudice opinion in their favour."

That is a full answer to the hon. Member for Orpington. Mr. Prout continued:

"Architecturally the Crystal Palace was one of the most significant buildings of the 19th century. This building having disappeared, however, it is more important to remember that for the second half of the 19th century the Palace was a place of public entertainment and education, comparable in importance to the South Bank centre in modern London."

I can see how the Crystal Palace and the south bank centre are being linked. It is coincidental that the House is considering reconstruction at Crystal Palace and also the proposed development at the south bank around the site of the 1951 exhibition. In neither case is the proposed reconstruction fitting to the traditions of the historic past.

David Prout continued:

"Rather than a great public building, however, the present plans envisage a typical suburban commercial development with luxury hotel, shopping facilities and leisure centre. This is a wasteful abuse of a location which is a natural site for a public building. It utterly ignores the influential historic role of this nationally important site and the possibility of restoring this role.

As if in compensation for this, the developers propose to build a 'new' Crystal Palace. The resulting 'conservation modernism", however, is totally unacceptable. The curtain wall structure with a mirror glass skin is pastiche revivalism of the very worst kind. Not only is it a pastiche architecturally, but it is a fraudulent abuse of the Crystal Palace dream."

Perhaps I would not have put it so exotically, but I could not have put it better than David Prout.

I have raised my three sets of objections. I do not like the London borough of Bromley, and never will until it becomes Labour controlled, which I expect it to, very soon. Secondly, I do not think that the proposal fits in with the image and vision or, indeed, the use of the old Crystal Palace. Thirdly, this is further evidence of the abuse of the private Bill procedure. It is for those three reasons that I wanted the Bill to be brought to the Floor of the House for a short debate.

10.4 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I had not realised that the hon. Member for Newham, North West (Mr. Banks) has a similar background to mine. It is different because we are both Londoners, but I was born north of the Thames

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

and now represent a London constituency south of the Thames. Like the hon. Gentleman, I find that the gracious river separates London in many ways besides the geographical division. Nevertheless, one has great affection for London's institutions, including Crystal Palace.

I remember, possibly unlike the hon. Gentleman, the night when the Crystal Palace was burning. I heard about it on the wireless and went out and saw a red glow in the sky to the south. I thought how terrible it was. But times have moved on and in the past 50 years the site has been cut off from the public and has not been developed for any public or useful purpose. I am beginning to think that this is a repetition of the old story of an area in London that could not be developed because the local authorities could never agree with each other. The London docks are the best example of bureaucratic, official, municipal inertia; no one could agree on the best way forward, so nothing was done for 50 years.

When I asked the hon. Gentleman what the Greater London council had done about Crystal Palace he seemed confident that there was a solution to the problem and he had grandiose ideas about what might have been done. In some ways one sympathises with him: it might have been nice to rebuild Crystal Palace to serve the purposes of its original design, or at least to be of some public benefit.

Unfortunately, those Socialist pipe dreams of local councils and the Greater London council were never achieved and translated into practicality. Like the London docks, the solution depended on the enterprising authority of the London borough of Bromley, which decided to develop the site at last, using funds from the private sector. The splendid London docks development has been rejuvenated in that way with the assistance of private money. Almost everyone, even those wretched borough councils that refused to co-operate with each other, now admit that that splendid progressive development has benefited all of London. I believe that the same will result at Crystal Palace.

Thank goodness for the London borough of Bromley, which has had the good sense, courage and enthusiasm to decide at last on the future development of that site. I hope that it will benefit all Londoners and will realise to some extent the worthy aims and ambitions of the hon. Member for Newham, North West. I welcome the Bill and hope that it goes through rapidly without further amendment.

10.8 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): It may be helpful to the House to give a brief indication of the Government's view of the Bill. It is traditional on consideration of private Bills that the Government take a neutral stance, and this Bill is no exception to that rule. The Government have considered the content of the Bill and have no objection in principle to the powers sought by the London borough of Bromley. We have no points outstanding on the Bill.

It is for the promoters to persuade Parliament that the powers they are seeking are justified. Only one petitioner remains against the Bill for the Select Committee to consider. The Committee will be in a very much better position than we are tonight to examine the issues involved in detail. It will have the added advantage of hearing expert evidence.

I therefore hope that the Bill will be allowed to proceed in the usual way to Committee for this detailed consideration.

10.8 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart: With the leave of the House, I shall respond to one or two of the points made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). I am delighted that he began by explaining that his main reason for opposing the Bill was his prejudice against the London borough of Bromley. He is an honest Member of the House and we are glad to have that on the record.

The hon. Gentleman departed a little from his normal sense of honesty when he claimed the national sports centre for the GLC. I was present at the opening of the national sports centre, which took place slightly before the GLC came into being.

Mr. Tony Banks: I did not say that the GLC constructed the national sports centre; I said that the national sports centre was the main recipient of expenditure devoted by the GLC to the Crystal Palace area. When I chaired the arts and recreation committee, I spent, on behalf of the hon. Gentleman and all other London ratepayers, large amounts of money, as I said, without any guilt, on upgrading and investing in the national sports centre. One can still see the result of that work around us today.

Sir Philip Goodhart: I am delighted that money was poured into the national sports centre. I am slightly less pleased because perhaps the hon. Gentleman, certainly some of his colleagues, removed me from the management committee at that time. No doubt the money would have been spent even more wisely if that had not happened.

I was fascinated by the hon. Gentleman's description of the splendid public building that would have emerged on the site if only the south bank regime had remained in power in London for another mere 50 years. However, there were 20 years when the GLC had control of that site. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman had some fascinating plans in his fascinating mind, but, during those 20 years he did not share those thoughts on the development of Crystal Palace with me, my constituents or the local inhabitants in any way. Since no scheme was produced by the hon. Gentleman, it is not surprising that the new scheme has been greeted with enthusiasm.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the concerts. They gave a great deal of pleasure to many people but they also caused some aggravation. By no means all my constituents were enthusiastic supporters. Financial problems have arisen and there are disputes over the contracts. Since legal action is pending, it would not be appropriate for me to go into those matters in detail. However, I hope that in future appropriate open-air concerts will be held on the site once again.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the somewhat muted opposition from Lambeth council. It has not petitioned against the Bill. After its initial objections, it did not follow up those matters with the council, but I believe that its points about traffic management and parking problems have been dealt with.

The hon. Gentleman's main point was the suggestion that the London borough of Bromley was using this procedure because it wished to short-circuit the normal planning procedures. That is not the case. The private Bill procedure must be used because the site is governed and controlled by a private measure. To go outside the use of the site in terms of that measure, another private Bill is required.

Mr. Tony Banks: The proposal before us tonight could not proceed under Bromley's borough plan, which was adopted in 1985. I agree that Bromley must come to Parliament with a new Bill if it wishes to change the original measure. The 1985 plan took into account the original measure, and under those circumstances the borough is, in effect, getting round both procedures.

Sir Philip Goodhart: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not argue that once a plan has been produced it can never be changed. We have procedures for changing a plan, and those procedures have been followed in this case.

The widest consultation took place. About 5,000 people locally were circulated, meetings were held and the overwhelming view of those consulted was that the plan should proceed. I hope that the House will support this legislation.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed.

Voluntary Services (Bradford)

10.17 pm

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I am introducing a brief debate on the funding crisis facing the voluntary sector in the city of Bradford.

Last Friday, my constituent Michelle Renshaw was sentenced to a week's imprisonment for contempt of court when she refused to give evidence against someone who had threatened her with violence because she was frightened to give that evidence.

It may not seem immediately apparent why I am referring to that case in a debate on the voluntary sector. I am doing so because there is widespread concern, which the Renshaw case has aroused, over the effect that that case will have on many women facing violence, who it is feared will not be prepared in future to come forward and make a complaint for fear that they might finish up in prison in the way Michelle Renshaw did last weekend.

It is also relevant for me to mention the case of Michelle Renshaw, and the fears that many women threatened with violence will have of coming forward, because one of my local voluntary organisations threatened with closure is the Bradford Gingerbread centre, which provides support and self-help for lone parents and their children. There are only a handful of such agencies in Bradford and if the Gingerbread centre closes, it will be another door shut in the face of worried women in Bradford, who are desperately looking for advice, help and support. Undoubtedly, after the Michelle Renshaw case, the work of such organisations will become more, and not less, important.

When Bradford Gingerbread centre was threatened with closure a few days ago, I contacted a large number of agencies and individuals who had used its services over many years. I shall give three of the views expressed by people who have used the centre. One said:

> "Coming to the centre means that I am not on my own and I can share my problems with other Single parents. I am disabled and my son is 7½. Coming here shows my son that he is not the only child without a dad."

Another said:

> "For many parents, the centre is a lifeline, it offers security knowing that people care about you as an individual, without the centre people will feel isolated."

The third said:

> "For me personally it has built up my confidence and gives me something to look forward to."

These examples demonstrate the genuine strength of feeling and underline the importance of the Gingerbread centres in Bradford and Keighley which should be kept open and allowed to continue to serve the vulnerable people in our deprived and disadvantaged community in Bradford.

It is always a pleasure to debate with the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) but I am rather disappointed not to be debating with the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) who is visiting Bradford tomorrow—perhaps that is why he is not here tonight. I understand that when he is there he will visit the enterprise centre, which is a new, plush, city centre project with uniformed staff, colour-matched furniture and

[Mr. Max Madden]

fittings, and rubber plants. It is sad that there is no wheelchair access to the library and information centre, which are said to have cost a total of £200,000.

It is sad for those working in voluntary organisations in Bradford to see such vast expenditure on a new city centre project when genuine community-based projects such as the West Bowling enterprise—which helped more than 300 people in a recent 12-day period—has no money with which to pay the workers. It is sad that Bradford will lose those important community services.

It would be a scandal if the Bradford Cyrenians centre were forced to close. It is the only—I stress only—direct-access hostel for homeless men, especially young and old single men. One hundred men use this hostel every year and a staggering 400 are turned away. The Cyrenians have a long-stay home and furnished flats, which provide accommodation for 33 men. If its funding is withdrawn, the project will close, which will mean more and more homeless men sleeping rough in cardboard boxes, on benches and in doorways in Bradford. Such a scandalous state of affairs can be found in many cities, as well as Bradford, and is not just a grim feature of everyday life in London.

On 7 March, the voluntary sector co-ordinating group issued a statement saying that 32 voluntary projects were facing closure or severe cuts in services at the end of this month as a result of the failure of Bradford council to pick up urban programme funding or former Manpower Services Commission grants. The statement went on to say that Councillor Pickles, the Conservative leader of Bradford council, had said that no money was available to fund these projects. It continued:

"There is at least £5 million allocated to next year's Council balances—money which will not be spent.

Councillor Pickles has said that the money going to the voluntary sector in 1989-90 will be at the same level—£5·1 million—as in 1988-89. However this claim is backed up by very dubious creative accounting. For example £400,000 of the money claimed to be going to the voluntary sector is in fact debt charges on capital purchases, some as many as ten years old. This money has never been mentioned before or included in any calculations about voluntary sector funding. In most cases, the property it represents was bought by the Council and is owned by the Council . . . and never belongs to the groups—this is as if Council is forcing the voluntary sector to pay its mortgage.

In 1989-90, £200,000 of the money allocated for the voluntary sector will actually go towards the running costs of the community trust. Administration costs of grants have never before been included in the calculations. Coincidentally, the amount of money needed to pick up the threatened projects is around £600,000."

The statement concluded:

"We understand that the Council has obtained permission from the Department of the Environment to refund 3 projects (around £100,000) out of next year's Urban Programme grant. While we welcome this, it is important to stress that it is not new money—it means that less will be available for other urban programme spending next year. When the Labour controlled Council approached the DoE for a similar solution in September . . . they were refused."

This raises a number of interesting questions, not least why the Department of the Environment was prepared a few days ago to give £100,000 to enable three voluntary organisations to continue when last September it was not prepared in identical circumstances to allow such an allocation of urban programme money. The voluntary sector co-ordinating group rightly pointed out that 62 full and part-time jobs will be lost if these 32 voluntary projects are closed down or if their services are severely cut. The cost of making these people redundant will be at least £55,000, which is enough to fund essential services.

The statement went on:

"Next year 400 people would have come to the Volunteer Bureau looking for the chance to do voluntary work—where will they go? 6,000 people would have come to Gingerbread in Bradford and Keighley for advice and support—where will they go? 7,000 children will be looking for playschemes, toy libraries, holidays and trips out—where will they go?"

All these cuts and closures and lost services come on top of a catalogue of cuts that have hit the poorest people in Bradford extremely hard. Earlier this year our benefit advice shops were closed. Our school meals charges are now the third highest in Britain and our council house rents have been increased by £5 a week. Charges across the board, from home helps to car parks, have been greatly increased.

We know that these massive cuts are deliberately undertaken to reduce the poll tax so that middle-class people living in middle-class areas will pay less poll tax, while the people I represent—the unemployed, the poor, the deprived and the disadvantaged—who live in difficult areas, will pay a high poll tax. The price that they will pay for that will be cuts in services and increased charges for all the things on which they depend in their daily lives.

I want quickly to refer to some of the organisations that are threatened with closure. The first is the Asian women and girls centre. Based in Manningham, it offers support for Asian women and girls. Its activities include sewing and craft classes, English classes, a playgroup and advice counselling. More than 100 women use the centre each week. Bradford Metro Childminders employs a part-time worker to offer support to registered childminders in the district—of whom there are 800, and more than 250 of them use the service.

The Bradford metropolitan council for voluntary service is particularly hard hit. I have already mentioned its volunteer bureau. Its employment development projects offers advice and support to groups that work with the unemployed, and encourages the development of projects that offer employment and training. There is also the Asian development project.

The Bradford parent and toddler association employs a part-time worker to offer advice and support to about 70 PTAs in Bradford. It runs a toy library, a bulk-buy service and training for parents and play leaders. All its services would be lost. DIAL grant funds an advice line service. It is part of the Bradford voluntary action group for the disabled and provides advice and information for disabled people.

Keighley Gingerbread family support unit offers a comprehensive advice and support service to single parents in Keighley. It deals with a wide range of problems and develops activities to support single parents, such as housing projects and self-help groups. It will close without funding. It dealt with more than 3,000 inquiries in 1987-88.

Thorpe Edge encourages the development of a range of local groups, including tenants associations and a credit union and provides equipment, facilities and meeting places. There are many more of these organisations, but time does not permit me to mention them all.

Great anxiety and uncertainty hangs over all these voluntary organisations and the thousands of men, women and children who depend on them to improve the quality of their life.

A letter dated 23 February, written by Barry Clark, the chair of Bradford metropolitan council for voluntary service, to Councillor Pickles says:

"In your telephone conversation . . . you said that 'everyone knew that these cuts would take place, and that no reasonable person could have expected otherwise'. This is in direct contradiction to what you, your deputy, Richard Wightman, and Council officers, have been telling Voluntary organisations and the press since the full council meeting on October 25th . . .

Time after time we and others have asked for assurances that your promise to fund the voluntary sector at the level of funding received in 1988/9, plus inflation, was a real commitment, and not just political rhetoric. Time after time you assured us that 'The Council is already committed to maintaining the current level of funding support to the voluntary sector in 1989/90 plus inflation' and that 'you will note that so far the voluntary sector has escaped any cuts in real terms at the expense of cuts in council services'—your letter to Val Mills on the 30th January . . .

Is it really your intention to cause the voluntary sector serious harm by depriving it of essential funding for core services, and if this is your intention, why did you not say so at a much earlier date? Why, particularly, have you left it until a few weeks before the beginning of a new financial year before informing voluntary sector groups of your intentions to cut or remove their funding, and why have you, or your officers, not even had the courtesy to inform affected groups that they were even being considered for such drastic cuts?"

There is widespread anxiety about the community trust which is proposed for Bradford. I gather that there are about 50 others around Britain. I understand that none have budgets of more than about £100,000. In Bradford, it is proposed that the community trust would allocate more than £5 million. There are worries about the legalities and constitution of a community trust. I understand that the Conservative council intended to allocate section 11 and urban programme moneys through the community trust, but it has been advised that that would be illegal. There is concern that the community trust will be unelected and unaccountable. It is seen as a buffer between the public and the council that is extremely unwelcome. I hope that the Government will persuade Bradford council that it would be monstrous for an unelected and unaccountable body such as the community trust to allocate enormous amounts of money.

For many years, the voluntary sector in Bradford has offered vital service to a city that suffers from acute deprivation and disadvantage. We hope that the Minister will make clear that the Government will provide the £600,000 that is necessary to enable the 32 voluntary organisations to continue. That sum is peanuts, and I hope that the Government will recognise that on a day when the Chancellor of the Exchequer has allocated £10 million to repay the national debt and spent only £2,000 million on the people of this country. Many people who depend on the voluntary sector in Bradford will not see an extra penny piece from today's Budget.

I received a reply to a question that I tabled to the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier). He said:

"I understand that several projects which have reached the end of their approved funding period, and which were not included in next year's programme, may come forward for consideration. I will of course examine these very closely.—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 669.]

The Government should put their money where their mouth is. If the Government and Councillor Pickles believe that the voluntary sector is important and should be protected, they should provide the extra £600,000 that the voluntary sector so badly needs and not allow it to fall victim to the political whims and prejudices of Conservative councillors and Ministers.

I hope that the Minister will make it clear that that £600,000 will be made available, that funding will be guaranteed indefinitely and that the voluntary sector in Bradford can continue doing the excellent job that it has done for many years, served by dedicated men and women whose only desire is to serve the community.

10.37 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I apologise for not being my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), but I assure the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) that I will pass to my hon. Friend the observations that have been made in the debate.

I may be an appropriate Minister to reply to the debate, because I have a long experience of work with the voluntary sector. It has pioneered many of our greatest and most important social reforms. Often, it has set up services on a shoestring budget to meet a previously unrecognised need and has developed sources of funding until they become stable within the community.

It is naive of the hon. Gentleman to think that the funding of the voluntary sector has ever been predictable and secure. Some uncertainty about finance is often inherent in voluntary sector organisations. I fully appreciate that those involved want to bring an end to the present uncertainty, and I hope that by putting the hon. Gentleman's remarks in the context of the variety of sources of funding for voluntary groups I shall be able to throw some light on these problems.

I want to make it unequivocally clear that the Government believe that the role of the voluntary sector is profoundly important. The Government have been a major supporter of the voluntary sector. In 1986-87, voluntary organisations received £280 million in grant from Departments, which is an increase in real terms of 90 per cent. since 1979. Overall funding from Government sources amounted to over £2 billion. In addition, many voluntary organisations are charities and so benefit from tax relief, which in 1986-87 amounted to £600 million.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Budget, which offered further assistance to charities, both in terms of VAT relief and in terms of the doubling of the tax relief that will be available for payroll giving. We believe that, although the funding of the voluntary sector should come from Government and local authority sources, the individual, the company, the church and other groups have an important part to play.

Voluntary organisations must look widely for funding and for support. Anyone who has worked with a voluntary organisation will know that there are various sources of support and assistance. Such support is no longer limited to cash donations, as secondments, provision of equipment and facilities, gifts in kind and sponsorship are increasingly the norm.

For the most part, voluntary organisations—I recognise that there are some exceptions—should not be dependent upon long-term Government funding. It is in their own interests, as much as anything else, to move on and to become independent. Voluntary organisations can receive funding from a number of different Government Departments, depending on their areas of activity. Some

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

of the programmes are aimed specifically at the voluntary sector and in other cases voluntary organisations can obtain funding for projects of funding to provide services under more general schemes. The range of the programmes and the number of the organisations funded is such that it would not be possible, without detailed inquiries, to make a precise analysis of the full range of funding available to the voluntary organisations in Bradford.

The hon. Gentleman may have just learnt that Bradford has been chosen to form part of the safer cities programme, for which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is responsible. Projects supported by that programme aim to reduce crime, lessen the fear of crime and create the conditions within which economic enterprise can flourish. The hon. Gentleman mentioned Miss Renshaw and the need to overcome the fear of crime and build up confidence in the community is important. In Bradford, work is being done with the voluntary sector, with the council for voluntary service, the community relations council and others.

Bradford benefits greatly from section 11 funding, which is also the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. Last year, about £6·5 million was spent in the Bradford area, particularly to provide assistance for work with ethnic minorities of Commonwealth origin.

One of the major sources of funding for the voluntary sector, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, is the urban programme, which works in deprived inner-city areas. Through that grant machine local authorities, with severe inner-city problems, including Bradford, receive a yearly allocation from central Government to be spent on a variety of projects. Apart from inner-city Bradford, the surrounding district also benefits. Economic, environmental, social and housing schemes are all represented by that programme, and all sectors of society have an opportunity to participate in worthwhile projects aimed at inner-city regeneration.

The voluntary sector is particularly well represented and the Department of the Environment, through the urban programme, actively encourages community-based projects. A strong voluntary base has always been seen as a vital element in the Government's determination to uplift urban areas.

My professional experience of working in Peckham and Brixton strongly bears out the importance of working with voluntary groups rather than only working with and directing help to local authorities. The urban programme has made an impressive contribution to Bradford and in part explains why the hon. Gentleman was able to read out such a string of organisations that have benefited from that form of Government assistance.

In the year 1986-87 alone, some 116 voluntary projects, which accounted for £1·17 million, were approved. That meant that 116 groups which could find no other source of income were given a new lease of life. In 1987-88 we had a similar story when 189 projects were helped and a further 120 projects, worth £1·29 million, have been approved in the current year. The type of project currently supported is almost unlimited and the hon. Gentleman has made reference to some. They cover such things as help for disabled community centres to help for single-parent families.

It is important to appreciate that the urban programme is not, and never has been, a bottomless pit for funding. It has always been a pump-priming grant, designed to get things started. Projects that prove their worth will, when they reach the end of their period of funding, often survive on their own, or be taken over by the local authority.

The difficulty in Bradford is that many of the schemes to which the hon. Gentleman referred have already been re-funded, so there would not normally be an expectation that they would be funded again under the urban grant scheme. However, in exceptional circumstances, it is open to the local authority to resubmit a scheme for a further period of funding, although this would be expected to last for only a short time. The decisions on these important and valuable schemes are being taken by my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale (Mr. Trippier). He hopes to make an announcement on these matters soon, and bring an end to the uncertainty.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the establishment of community trusts. These are independent charitable trusts, drawing funds from a variety of sources to help the needs of the community. the idea came from the United States, where such trusts have been successful. They have only recently started to emerge here, but they offer a way to bring together the voluntary organisations, the local authorities, the business community and individuals. We believe that support for systems like this means that the local authority can extend its facilitative and enabling role within the community. Recently, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives welcomed trusts as an important way to achieve a good working relationship with the voluntary sector.

Bradford has achieved a significant increase in Government grant of some £23 million, or 16 per cent., which has meant that its block grant goes up to £167 million next year. It is a matter for the authority how it spends those resources and it is making every effort to analyse and consider carefully the most effective and productive way to allocate the money. We have no doubt that voluntary organisations can play an important part in bringing people together and generating alternative sources of finance to meet the needs of the community in an effective and valued way.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 15 March 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (No. 2) BILL

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Thursday 16 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Hearing Aids

1. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate of the numbers of hearing aid dispensers making use of home visits to sell hearing aids.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Eric Forth): I understand that some 80,000 hearing aids a year are dispensed by the private sector. There are no statistics available to indicate what proportion of those are as a result of a home visit, but it is likely that a significant proportion will have involved a call by a hearing aid dispenser.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that although the vast majority of visits arranged and made by private companies are perfectly reputable and of a high standard, a significant minority of those selling private hearing aids use disreputable tactics and make home visits that are neither wanted nor acceptable to the patient? Will the Government make a statement to the effect that they believe that there should be no home visits to people needing hearing aids unless they are requested by the patient?

Mr. Forth: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's point and it has come up frequently, especially recently, as we have been considering a Bill which will be in Committee shortly. The number of complaints received, for example, by the Hearing Aid Council, which is responsible for such matters and to which such complaints should be made, is running at about 70 per year and the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, which has recently given us its latest figures, has recorded about 260 complaints in the past four months covering all matters to do with hearing aids. We recognise that there may be a problem, but the correct course for individuals who have been adversely affected is to raise the matter with the Hearing Aid Council, which then has responsibility for dealing with it and, so far as we know, is prepared and able to deal with such matters effectively.

Ms. Quin: Does the Minister agree that in view of the unfortunate examples which have occurred there is good reason to consider tightening up the code of practice of the Hearing Aid Council and increasing the number of consumers on the council to ensure that people who need hearing aids are able to obtain them in the best conditions and at the best price possible?

Mr. Forth: I congratulate the hon. Lady on her appointment and on her debut at the Dispatch Box. I look forward to seeing and listening to her in future. I acknowledge that this is an important matter, but I can only repeat what I said to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). The effectiveness of the code of practice is the responsibility of the Hearing Aid Council which, so far as we are aware, has always been able and prepared to review the code of practice and when necessary, to change it. The hon. Lady will also be aware that a private Member's Bill—the Hearing Aid Council (Amendment) Bill—will shortly be in Committee. I have had dealings with the promoter of that Bill, the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones). We shall seek, with him, to produce the best possible Bill which will bring us up to date in these matters and allow us to have the most effective and representative council. On the basis of conversations so far, I am optimistic that we shall be able to achieve that objective.

Enterprise Initiative

2. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications have so far been received for consultancy support under the enterprise initiative.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Tony Newton): More than 20,000 applications for assisted consultancy have been received since the launch of the scheme in January 1988.

Mr. Nicholson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the scheme, with the measures announced yesterday, will be of great help in the coming year, especially to smaller firms? Can my right hon. Friend give the House any idea of the target for the coming year and the evidence showing that the scheme is especially used by smaller firms?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. We are well on course and the evidence is that we have already achieved the 1,000 per month target for applications which was set for last year. We expect to be able to achieve the 1,250 per month target in the forthcoming year. About 90 per cent. of applications come from firms with fewer than 100 employees. There is no doubt that the response from those firms and the benefit to them has been considerable.

Trade Deficit

3. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his latest estimate of the deficit in trade in manufactured goods for the last 12 months in respect of which figures are available.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Robert Atkins): In the 12 months ended January 1989, trade in maufactured goods is provisionally estimated to have been in deficit by £14·9 billion.

Mr. Wallace: Until recently the Chancellor of the Exchequer seemed to be saying that the impact of his policies would be to reduce that trade deficit, but yesterday he said that he did not expect to see it come down from its present record level. Can the Under-Secretary of State say what has changed, and is he concerned about it?

Mr. Atkins: It is not for me to make judgments at the Dispatch Box about what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said yesterday as my right hon. Friend is in a better position than anyone to be in control of the facts. He said that the deficit this year would be much the same as last year and suggested again this morning that the deficit would fall. It is, however, nothing like the kind of deficit that we have had in the past as most of the imports are of components, semi-manufactured goods and other capital equipment—very much the sort of things that Opposition Members have been urging us to encourage industry to use.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my hon. Friend agree that people buy goods from abroad because they find them cheaper and of better quality than goods from this country, so the answer to our trade deficit is in the hands of British industry? Does he further agree that the panaceas suggested by the Confederation of British Industry to keep the exchange rate down are not likely to succeed? Is my hon. Friend aware that the Japanese yen has appreciated against other currencies by almost 100 per cent. in the past two years, yet Japan's trade surplus is increasing?

Mr. Atkins: With his usual perspicacity, my hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head. He is right that this provides an opportunity for British industry to fulfil the requirements of those consumers, both commercial and private, who wish to buy equipment or material. At present, such consumers have to buy from abroad. It would clearly be better and in everyone's interests if they were to buy from home, giving British companies the opportunity to make such products.

Mr. Rees: With the manufacturing trade deficit in mind, I looked around Leeds last weekend and this morning. The centre of the city is booming—with banking, commerce and distribution. New buildings are being erected in which nothing is manufactured but from which goods from the rest of the world are distributed. Yet Leeds was once a proud manufacturing city. I do not say that the decline has occurred only in the past 10 years, but it has certainly got worse in the past 10 years. It is a long-term problem. Will it ever end? Is there anything that the Government can do, or think that they can do, to help manufacturing in our once-great northern manufacturing cities?

Mr. Atkins: The right hon. Gentleman is a fair man and he knows that there have been changes in the manufacturing capacity of western industrialised countries compared with what is happening in parts of the far east and the Third world. I think that the right hon. Gentleman will recognise that that change will continue. By the same token, the Government have tried, like many other Governments of European countries, to ensure that in the future high technology manufactured goods and other areas of activity are improved and given attention. The right hon. Gentleman will know, as I do, that when one travels abroad one sees that the impact of British manufactured goods is great and that we are doing well. Of course, change is always difficult to bear, and we must ensure that that change is carried through in the most efficient way, both for the consumers and for those who manufacture the goods.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Does my hon. Friend agree that part of the trade deficit results from imports which enter other than on a level playing field—for instance, supposedly duty-free imports of manufactured goods from the so-called Third world? Is my hon. Friend aware that China manufactures 30 million bicycles per year and EEC rules allow Chinese bicycles to be imported with the result that imports to this country have increased from 600,000 units to 1·3 million units, which is not good news for my constituency which has Raleigh in its centre?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend knows that Raleigh has recently increased its work force by about 300 people and that the company is doing exceptionally well. That is a tribute largely to the work that has been put in and to the quality of the cycles produced. I had always understood that Raleigh itself encouraged the import of some Chinese bicycles because they are sold in this country at a price level at which Raleigh does not compete. In those circumstances, the imports fit in with Raleigh's own range. If my hon. Friend has any further information or evidence of an adverse impact on Raleigh, perhaps he will write or come to see me so that we can pursue the matter.

Mr. John Garrett: According to yesterday's Red Book, growth in domestic demand from last year to next year is forecast to fall by 75 per cent., so why is the trade deficit forecast to be only slightly lower next year? Does not that tell us something about the Government's view of our competitiveness?

Mr. Atkins: If the hon. Gentleman will wait a little longer, he will be able to put that question to Treasury Ministers who discussed that matter yesterday.

Textile Industry

4. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of the wool textiles industry; and if he will make a statement.

8. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of the British Clothing Industry Association, the Knitting Industries Federation and the British Textile Confederation; what was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade last met representatives of the British Clothing Industry Association, the Knitting Industries Federation and the British Textile Confederation on 31 October, when a wide range of textile trade issues was discussed. He met representatives of the National Wool Textile Export Corporation on 9 January to discuss the future of the statutory wool textile industry—export promotion—levy.

I also met several representatives of the textile industry during a visit to Manchester and at a luncheon in Bolton on 8 February.

Mr. Riddick: Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to congratulate the wool textile industry on record exports last year, especially as trading conditions were not at all easy? Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the challenges

facing the textile industry is to attract enough school leavers into the industry? Does he share my surprise and disappointment that only four schools out of well over 40 were represented at a recent open day of the Huddersfield Textile Trading Group when a large number of trainees, managing directors and senior company executives were there ready and prepared to talk to teachers and, indeed, to potential new recruits? Does my hon. Friend agree that that was an appalling missed opportunity and possibly a reflection on the career teachers in the schools which did not attend?

Mr. Atkins: As usual, my hon. Friend is right to draw attention to such problems. He was also right about the success of the wool textile industry, with record exports worth £613 million last year. We should be proud of that record.

I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of education links and the need to get people into the industry. We should capture youngsters—not just at secondary but at primary school level—to make them appreciate that making things is of crucial importance to the future of our manufacturing base. In my experience of industry, I have found that the problems do not come from children but from the teachers. I urge my hon. Friend to encourage the teachers in his area to recognise the importance of youngsters developing an interest in manufacturing. To ensure that teachers take more interest in the career opportunities offered, perhaps my hon. Friend will take the matter up with our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to see what can be done.

Mr. Tredinnick: Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the British Clothing Industry Association, the Knitting Industries Federation and the British Textile Confederation on the formation of the new Apparel Knitting and Textiles Alliance, which is a great step forward in providing a unified response? Does my hon. Friend share with me and many of my constituents the deep concern felt about the recent agreement negotiated between the EEC and China in relation to textiles and the 20 per cent. increase in imports that will follow? Will my hon. Friend also consider the import of acrylic yarn from Turkey, which is of particular concern at this time as it can come in at below production costs in this country?

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. He is right to offer congratulations to those bodies and I join him in doing so. My hon. Friend will be aware that our hon. Friend the Minister for Trade has been discussing matters relating to Turkey and China on a regular basis. Were there to be any doubt about that, I should point out that he has been defending the interests of my hon. Friend's constituents and other companies in this country with the assiduity that we have come to expect of him. In the circumstances, my hon. Friend will understand that the agreement with China, for instance, although perhaps not so good as we in the United Kingdom might have wished, is nonetheless better than the alternative. We can exercise some control over imports from China. My hon. Friend's point about Turkey is also well taken. We have done an enormous amount about that, and Turkey's exports to this country have fallen in recent months. I repeat that my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade has those matters in hand and will continue to fight Britain's corner as strongly as we have come to expect of him.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister guard against being carried away with too much self-congratulation? A large part of Britain's balance of trade deficit is made up of imported textiles and clothing, representing unfair competition. Does the Minister recognise that the combination of high interest rates, high exchange rates and unfair competition creates in the British textile and clothing industry the fear of a return to the closures, increasing short-time working and large-scale redundancies experienced in the early 1980s? Will the Minister give a clear assurance that Government policy is a renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement and a commitment to take other action in support of the British textile and clothing industry?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman talks as though he is the only person who understands the textile industry. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is."] He represents a point of view, but he must recognise that many Conservative Members —not least my hon. Friends the Members for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) and for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) and myself—have parts of the textile industry in our constituencies and are fully aware of the concerns being expressed. I take the hon. Gentleman's point about unfair imports. As I said earlier, and as the hon. Gentleman knows, my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade has been working extremely hard to ensure that Britain's position is protected. It was obvious from the debate on 9 December, in which the hon. Gentleman and other right hon. and hon. Members participated, that much is being done by the Government to defend the interests of the textile industry. As for interest rates, all right hon. and hon. Members must surely recognise that an increase in interest rates is far better than an equivalent increase in the rate of inflation. It is common sense to take action to get rid of inflation by taking action on interest rates. Even the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends must recognise that.

Mr. Vaz: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that from 31 October last year until now is far too long to wait before meeting the federation? The Minister should urgently seek a meeting with representatives of the wool and textile industries. When I and other hon. Members met them a fortnight ago, representatives of those industries gave the Government a very rough ride and criticised the lack of Government action. Is the Minister aware that in the past year Leicestershire has lost 2,891 jobs out of a county work force of 40,000? That is the proof sought by the Minister for Trade that the industry is being damaged. When will the Government start protecting British jobs and British industry?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman is on record from the 9 December debate as being someone who wishes to break international agreements. That is something to which Conservatives and, I hope, the Opposition Front Bench would not wish to be a party, although we recognise that there are problems at various levels in the textile industry. My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade is on record as saying both in the House and outside that he is prepared to defend British interests within the limitations of the

EEC and our own legislation. The hon. Gentleman must make clear whether he is still in favour of breaking international agreements.

Mr. Vaz: Yes, and of standing up for British interests.

Mr. Atkins: Now we know exactly where we stand. It is on the record.

Mr. Waller: Is my hon. Friend aware that the industry is still very concerned about imports from countries which erect blatant barriers against the entry of British goods? With the multi-fibre arrangement looming on the horizon, does my hon. Friend fully appreciate that the wool textile industry in particular does not seek protection but seeks reciprocity so that it may compete fairly?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is yet another of my right hon. and hon. Friends who understands the industry and speaks about it with authority. He makes a very fair point. He will know that my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade is fighting that battle as strongly as he is fighting the others.

Mr. Henderson: What advice does the Minister have for Courtauld, which right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House will recognise as a high-productivity company with good industrial relations, following its announcement of a further 780 redundancies in the cotton industry in Lancashire, bringing the total number of redundancies in the textile industry since October to 10,000? Following the *Financial Times* forecast the day before yesterday of further output cuts and exchange rate policy changes, does the Minister blame Courtauld and companies like it or does he blame his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman makes an entirely fair point about Courtauld. I understand and get no pleasure from the closures that Courtauld and other mills have announced. I understand all too well, because I had been a Member of Parliament for only one month when 2,400 Courtauld workers were put out of work in my constituency. Courtauld has had to retrench, reinvest, re-equip and change its attitudes. The hon. Gentleman will know, even from his base in the north-east, that the textile industry has had its difficulties and has come through them but is currently facing further difficulties, which have been discussed in this question. I will bring the hon. Gentleman's concern to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends may have an opportunity to discuss these matters later this afternoon.

Exports

5. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the latest export figures.

Mr. Newton: In the 12 months ended January 1989, the value of exports is provisionally estimated to have been £81·2 billion.

Mr. Amess: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the many businesses in Basildon which are currently enjoying record exports as a result of their enterprise initiative and the Government's excellent policies? Will he note our contribution to trade with the launch of the "Buy British in Basildon for Export" campaign?

Mr. Newton: I happily join my hon. Friend in congratulating the business men of Basildon on the way in which they have taken advantage of the excellent climate that the Government have created for business. I hope that in the true spirit of reciprocal good will between hon. Members representing Essex, my hon. Friend will join me in congratulating the business men of Braintree on their slogan, "Braintree means Business".

Mr. Win Griffiths: When does the Minister expect the value of our exports to equal the value of our imports? What influence does he think that high interest rates and inflation are having in impeding the growth of exports?

Mr. Newton: Against the background of Britain's historic position in world trade, it would be a rash man who predicted the balance that the hon. Gentleman suggests. The question shows the hon. Gentleman's lack of knowledge about the way in which the economy has worked historically. Our trading has always been significantly assisted by invisibles. The way in which Opposition Members persistently consider only part of our national accounts is not the least of the disservices that they do to sensible economic discussion.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the strength of our exports covers the whole sector, including not only services but manufacturing goods? Is he aware that last night the president of the British Constructional Steelwork Association announced that last year was its best for steel construction, with a 20 per cent. increase in the fabrication of steel compared with 1987, a record market share and record investment, much of which is being exported? Is it not sad that the only trade and industry news that the Opposition enjoy is bad news?

Mr. Newton: The answer to the latter part of my hon. Friend's question is that it is indeed sad. As to his earlier observation, it is a striking example of the improved performance of many sectors of British industry.

Mr. Gould: Does the right hon. Gentleman recall the forecast that the Chancellor of the Exchequer made in last year's Budget that exports would grow by 3 per cent.? He will know that in the outturn they fell by 1 per cent. Does he recall the Chancellor of the Exchequer's forecast that the balance of payments deficit would be £4 billion? He will know that the outturn was a deficit of £14·7 billion. Given that our current deficit is running at an annual rate of £20 billion, what faith does the right hon. Gentleman think that we should have in the Chancellor's current forecast that exports will grow by 5 per cent. in 1989? Is this not just another piece of ludicrous self-delusion? What is the basis for such a forecast, and what advice did the Department of Trade and Industry give the Chancellor on the subject?

Mr. Newton: The evidence to back up the expectations that the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressed yesterday about our export position is twofold. First, the trend remains upward. Indeed, over the latest three months the volume of exports, excluding oil and what are charmingly known as erratics, was the highest ever recorded. Secondly, and perhaps more important, the overseas investment in the country is an indication of its growing

attractiveness as a manufacturing base. In addition, there is the greater strength of those manufacturing and other industries from which we can expect to see rising exports, not least on the basis of rising investment.

Exports

6. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the estimated volume of United Kingdom exports facilitated by the activities of the Export Credits Guarantee Department over the past five years.

Mr. Forth: In the five years to 31 March 1988—the latest date for which figures are available—the total volume of United Kingdom exports for which guarantees have been issued by ECGD was £78·25 billion.

Mr. Cran: I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree that the ECGD has been outstandingly successful in facilitating exports from the United Kingdom. Incidentally, it is worth noting that the ECGD has traded —if that is the right word—successfully for 60 out of its 69 years. Does my hon. Friend agree that, as with all institutions that have been affected by Third world and other debt problems, there is at least a case for looking at the ECGD's balance sheet to distinguish those debts that can be recovered from those that patently can not?

Mr. Forth: I welcome very much what my hon. Friend says about the ECGD's invaluable contribution to the trading performance of this country. We are very confident that, in spite of some very difficult trading circumstances recently, it will continue to provide an excellent service to exporters. However, it has to be examined, and we are currently looking at its flow and at the way in which it operates to ensure that it will continue to provide the best possible service against the most secure financial background.

Mr. Cousins: Can the Minister give the House an assurance that the present arrangements for the Export Credits Guarantee Department will survive the introduction of the single market in 1992, and that there will not be a reduction in the scale of its activities or, alternatively, entirely new arrangements opening it up to other Common Market countries?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. We all recognise that the current role of the ECGD will have to be looked at, both by Her Majesty's Government and by the Commission of the European Community, in the light of developments up to and beyond 1992. This is being done. One cannot prejudge the outcome, but it is fair to say that we expect to see the ECGD's role in this country continuing to be fully comparable with that of its opposite numbers in other countries of the Community, and its role vis-a-vis countries outside the Community, if anything, being strengthened.

Balance of Trade

7. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what studies the Department of Trade and Industry is carrying out regarding the effect on the balance of trade of oil production and exports *(a)* falling by 50 per cent., and *(b)* ceasing completely.

Mr. Newton: The latest estimates indicate that the United Kingdom will remain self-sufficient in oil until at least the end of the century, and that the level of output is likely to decline only gradually. My Department is therefore not carrying out any studies based on such hypothetical propositions as the hon. Member suggests.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that people in this country are concerned when they consider what has happened in spite of the rise in exports—from £2·9 billion to a peak of £6·5 billion in 1986-87? Why have this Government turned a surplus of £1·6 billion in 1981 into a deficit of £20 billion in 1989?

Mr. Newton: It is difficult to understand what the hon. Gentleman is seeking to say. It seems to me that in any commentary on these matters it is necessary, apart from anything else, to consider what has happened to oil prices over the period.

Mr. Grylls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is evidence that British manufacturing industry is investing very heavily at the present time, and that that will not only improve its competitiveness, but increase its capacity to supply the home market and to export? Is it not the case, therefore, that the prospects are very good?

Mr. Newton: Yes, indeed. My hon. Friend makes very much the point that I was seeking to make a few moments ago to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould).

Mr. Kennedy: The Minister will be aware that the quality of bids that the Department of Energy has received so far for the next licensing round is encouraging news for anyone interested in future oil production, but, although it may not be his direct responsibility, will he note that in terms of 1992 the oil-related sector is concerned about the offshore supplies office and its remit to ensure as much United Kingdom content as possible in fabrication work? What discussion has the Department had here, and, more crucially, with the European Commission, to secure some base under the Single European Act for an OSO-type unit?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is right about the encouraging response in the latest round in respect of oil exploration and extraction, which is one reason why I am not prepared to speculate on the highly hypothetical and pessimistic basis of the original question, and I am grateful to him for making that point. The best single guarantee of participation by the offshore industry in the opportunities that remain in the North sea, and a healthy return for British industry, whether before or after 1992, is the growing strength and efficiency of British industry and its competitiveness in that area.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister just said that there was a great deal of investment in British manufacturing industry. If that is so, why is the manufacturing deficit going up all the time? When shall we see some beef on this economic miracle?

Mr. Newton: It is an undoubted fact that there has been a substantial increase in manufacturing investment, which in turn is part of a striking rise in overall investment in Britain in recent years—about twice as fast as consumption. That is a dramatic contrast to the position when the Labour Administration was in office, and it is a clear sign of the continued strengthening of the British economy.

Manufacturing Output

9. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his assessment of the causes of the relative performance of each region in terms of constant value manufacturing output since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: There are many factors underlying regional performance, including the state of the world economy and regional industrial structure. I am happy to say that recent indices show a continuing strong growth in manufacturing output in the regions.

Mr. Pike: When the Minister next returns to his constituency in the north-west, will he look at the real situation there instead of accepting what his civil servants tell him? Is it true that there is 38 per cent. less investment in manufacturing industry in the north-west now than there was in 1979? Is that why there are fewer jobs and 20 per cent. less output? Have not the Government failed manufacturing industry and the regions?

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman should know that no Minister receives much advice from his civil servants on constituency matters. He uses his own eyes, as I do. Representing the north-west as he does, the hon. Gentleman will know just how well the north-west is doing at the moment.

Mr. Pike: Rubbish.

Mr. Atkins: The hon. Gentleman does not serve his region well by talking it down and suggesting that things are so bad. We are doing extremely well and that is largely due to the Government's economic policy.

Mr. Dykes: Is it correct that in the past 10 years, taking all the regions together, total manufacturing industry output rose by 9·8 per cent.—less than ½ per cent. compound per annum? Britain's investment in the private sector is the lowest of all those on the OECD official list of countries with populations of more than 50 million. What are we to do to change that fundamental weakness?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is right to highlight the fact that there is always room for improvement. It is the Government's policy to ensure that that improvement continues. If my hon. Friend remains long enough, he will learn from an answer on OECD productivity figures that Britain's productivity is one of the highest within the OECD in terms of percentages.

Mr. Caborn: I congratulate the Minister on presenting an almost convincing fairy-tale this afternoon. The allocation of objective 2 of the new EEC structural fund is based upon unemployment and industrial decline. The EEC decided that from the 50 million people covered by that definition, 20 million are in the United Kingdom. To put it another way, 36 per cent. of objective 2 money will, under the new criteria of the structural fund, come to the United Kingdom. Is the Minister aware, therefore, that in the objective assessment of the Commission, the regions of this country are in greater industrial decline than any other areas in the EEC?

Mr. Atkins: It might interest the hon. Gentleman to know that as a result of pressure that we have been able to impose, we have managed to obtain objective 2 status for Burnley borough council, about which the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) questioned me. That is an indication of the fight that we have put up against the Commissioner who, the hon. Gentleman will recall, was a Member of the Opposition and who is making life a little more difficult than we would wish it to be.

Export Promotion

10. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress of recent initiatives on export promotion.

Mr. Newton: It is just two months since the Minister for Trade launched the Department's export initiative. Since then, we have received some 2,000 inquiries in response to our advertisements in the national press alone. We expect the campaign to be very successful in introducing companies with significant export potential to the benefits of exporting.

Mr. Knapman: I thank my right hon. Friend for that helpful reply. Will he bear in mind the problems of constituents such as mine, and particularly the Stroud valleys, where there are many small companies, employing 50, 100 or 200 people, always requiring up to date information about a large number of export markets? Is he aware that they will be unable to gain export orders unless they are aware of the tendering opportunities?

Mr. Newton: Yes, of course, and that is very much a purpose of the enhanced range of DTI services to exporters—not least to small companies which are potential exporters—to improve the range of intelligence and information about which my hon. Friend speaks.

Mr. Allen: Was there anything in yesterday's Budget to increase exports?

Mr. Newton: The entire tenor and purpose of the Budget was to maintain and develop the strength of the British economy, and the confidence in it which has led to an increase in investment, including manufacturing investment, and has given us such a strong export performance.

Mr. Gould: The right hon. Gentleman's answers are totally at variance with the experience of British industry on the ground. How does he square those answers with the fact, well known to him, that a group of major British exporters is bitterly critical of Government policy on export promotion?

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the tenor of his remarks and questions in the House this afternoon, and on a number of previous occasions, reflect the mood of British industry, it is he who is not getting around on the ground.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way to promote exports is to defeat inflation, which is much more likely to be defeated by the policies of the Budget than by the inherently expansionary and inflationary policies put forward by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday afternoon?

Mr. Newton: In a word, yes.

Hearing Aid Council

11. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration he is giving to the reform of the Hearing Aid Council.

Mr. Forth: The RNID's fair hearing campaign made a number of suggestions for amendments to the Hearing Aid Council Act. The Secretary of State for Health and I are considering the RNID's proposals. The Bill promoted by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) would make changes to the Hearing Aid Council Act.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that the membership and composition of a Hearing Aid Council which favours the industry that it is supposed to supervise is an absurdity and should be changed in such a way that the consumers and the medical profession predominate? I hope that that change comes about shortly. Is the Minister further aware that even when that change has been made, the Secretary of State should take reserve powers to amend any code of practice or standard put forward by that council so that he can keep a watch on future developments?

Mr. Forth: The right hon. Gentleman is aware, because he will be a member of the Committee that will consider the Bill, that the Bill proposed by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn covers those matters to which he has referred and which have concerned many people. Proposals in the Bill and, I believe, amendments to be considered by the Committee, will alter the council's composition to make it more representative and effective. I am optimistic that the Committee will conclude that the council may well be rearranged to ensure that representation is better and more effective. Together with the other changes proposed in the Bill, that will make the council more effective and allow better representation of the interests that are vital to people with hearing impairments.

Plessey

12. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the GEC/Siemens bid for Plessey.

Mr. Newton: The bid by GEC/Siemens for the Plessey company is being examined by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission which is due to submit its report to my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State by 10 April. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the bid in advance of the publication of the commission's report.

Mr. Colvin: Is my right hon. Friend aware that GEC has a history of growth through takeover rather than through research into and development of its own products? Therefore, the prospect for the workers and output of the company's two research centres at Roke Manor in my constituency and at Caswell near Daventry —I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) in the Chamber—is very much worse under a Plessey carve-up than it would be under the existing management and ownership of that company.

Mr. Newton: I think that my hon. Friend will understand that I can do no more than note his comments. I am sure that he will accept that it would be inappropriate for me to comment on them.

Mr. Tim Smith: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, because GEC and Plessey are major suppliers to the Ministry of Defence and because such competition is vital, the taxpayer has a major interest in this matter? Will he confirm that when decisions are taken, the taxpayers' interest is taken fully into account?

Mr. Newton: I can confirm that when my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State considers these matters he will take account of everything in the commission's report and the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading. I am not willing to be drawn beyond that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If the Secretary of State is to take these matters into account, will he, in the taxpayer's interest, ask Peter Levene, who is in charge of defence procurement, and all the people responsible in the contracts division of the Ministry of Defence, what they think, especially as that Department is trying to move more contracts over to a competitive-based system? If that takeover move were made in the form in which some people think it should be made, that may well act counter to this proposition.

Mr. Newton: The House will recognise the difficulties that I face in answering supplementary questions on such a matter at this time. I cannot add to what I have already said.

City Institutions

14. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met members of City institutions to discuss matters relating to financial markets and transactions in shares.

Mr. Newton: I frequently meet members of City institutions. Our discussions usually cover a wide range of issues, including those referred to in the hon. Member's question.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has the Minister read the book "The City Sharepushers" by Mr. Davidson? If so, has he noted the comments about Harvard Securities—a company which we have effectively managed to close—Afcor Investments, IDB and Tudorbury Securities? In so far as Tudorbury Securities is still trading and, in effect, conning the public, does the right hon. Gentleman think that he should make a statement to Parliament? Is it true that Department inspectors have been investigating that company?

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that it is not appropriate for me to comment on a number of those matters in reference to both the book and specific cases.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend recognise the invaluable work of the British Invisible Exports Council which is encouraging the continued progress of the City in earning income for this country? Will he note in particular the latest figures, which show that invisible exports may have been under-recorded by up to £4 billion in last year's balance of trade figures?

Mr. Newton: It is certainly true that invisible trade—as I said in response to an earlier supplementary—is one of

the strengths of our economy. I join my hon. Friend in congratulating those who have contributed to our performance in that regard.

Mr. Stott: When the right hon. Gentleman had discussions with City institutions, did he discuss the possible future funding of the sale of Girobank? If so, did he tell them that he has told the chairman of the Post Office board that he has altered the terms of reference laid down by his predecessor for the sale of Girobank? Did he tell them that he has done that because he, the Secretary of State and the Department, are having a great deal of trouble in selling Girobank? In view of that predictable difficulty, is it not time that the Secretary of State cancelled the sale of Girobank and stopped this nonsense, to lift the veil of uncertainty that has hung over those who work for Girobank and its customers for the past nine months?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman was present during the Adjournment debate before Christmas when I said that the Government had not changed the criteria set out at an earlier stage for the sale of Girobank. Had the hon. Gentleman attended the Select Committee the week before last, he would have heard me reaffirm that point. Quite simply, he is wrong.

Industry and Schools

15. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps his Department has taken to improve links between industry and schools.

Mr. Forth: My Department has a keen interest in promoting partnership between business and schools. Last year we launched the enterprise and education initiative, which is an ambitious programme that will extend the benefits of partnership activity to all schools. Working with organisations already active in the partnership area, DTI's 145 local advisers on enterprise and education will approach employers to ensure that there are places for all pupils to have at least two weeks' work experience before leaving school. In addition, we are setting up a programme under which 10 per cent. of teachers will each year be given the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of the world of business. My Department also supports much other partnership activity, including initial teacher training, both on a national basis and through our regional office network.

Mr. Stevens: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that reply. I am sure that he will appreciate that in constituencies which, like mine, are sharing in the resurgence of business prospects in the west midlands, we are very conscious that the future of business and of students depends on understanding and contact between them. In particular, it is important that the links between industry and education should start, not at secondary school, but at primary school. In that context, would my hon. Friend care to say a little more about the teacher placement programme, which has an important contribution to make?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend has put the matter in context. Arguably, one of the most important challenges that we face is to set up a dialogue and an understanding between those involved in education and those involved in wealth creation, for the obvious reason that we want to motivate teachers and pupils alike to understand the world of business and to want participate in it. The initiative that we have launched will be a major step in that direction. On the teacher placement project, I can report to my hon. Friend that a recent very favourable report on a pilot scheme that we have been conducting has suggested mechanisms that we might develop to bring us closer to the ambitious target that we have set for encouraging participation by teachers in the business world.

Mr. Frank Haynes: Is the Minister aware that there used to be a first-class link between the mining industry and schools in my constituency? Is he aware that that link has been cut and will he go with me to Hobart house and kick the backside of Sir Robert Haslam to get that link restored, in the interest of young people who want to work in the mining industry?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman has made a valuable point. I hope that all those involved in the coal industry and every other industry will become increasingly aware of how important it is to educate both teachers and pupils throughout the education system in the importance of industries such as the coal mining industry. It will be in the interests of everyone for people to talk to one another, for those in the mining industry to visit schools and for those in education to visit mines so that that understanding can be maximised and the talent, skills and enthusiasm of young people will be attracted into that important industry.

Overseas Investment

16. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of how many jobs have been created or maintained by overseas investment since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: According to the figures known to the Invest in Britain Bureau, since 1979 more than 186,000 jobs have been created and since 1983, when records were started, more than 100,000 jobs have been maintained.

Mr. Coombs: Will my hon. Friend confirm that far from being the pariah of the international investment community, as Britain was 10 years ago, we now attract nearly one third of American investment in Europe and nearly half Japanese investment in Europe? Does he agree that this is because of the enterprise policies adopted by the Government and because industrial relations in Britain have been transformed so that British managers have far greater freedom to manage than those in any other country in Europe? Will he resist any impulse by the European Commission to make that more difficult?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is quite right. As inward investment is one of my responsibilities, I see an enormous number of representatives from foreign companies and countries, all of whom are very keen to invest in Britain. They recognise the strength of our economy, the beneficial effects of our industrial relations legislation, and a wide variety of other factors, the most important in my opinion being the quality of the work force that they can utilise in various parts of the country. My hon. Friend is quite right to draw attention to that and he can rest assured that we will endeavour to maintain that position for as long as possible.

Cycle Industry

17. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what he is doing to encourage exports from the cycle industry in the east midlands.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade announced the launch of the export initiative on 17 January. Services provided under the initiative are available at all sectors of industry including those engaged in the production of cycles.

My officials in the east midlands regional office of the Department are available to provide advice and assistance to all east midlands firms with an interest in exporting.

Mr. Allen: The Secretary of State and the Minister will be aware that one of his predecessors, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), said, in one of his more cynical moods, that the unemployed youngsters in Britain should get on their bikes. Is it not ironic that the companies which produced those British bikes have lost thousands of jobs, many of them in my constituency? Will he make serious representations to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to ensure that interest rates are brought down to a manageable level and that the inflation rate is reduced considerably so that the exports of those cycles can increase and more people can get on their bikes and work in the cycle factories?

Mr. Atkins: I am tempted to suggest that this is a cyclical problem, but the House may not appreciate that. The hon. Gentleman makes a point about interest rates to which we have already devoted some time this afternoon. If a rise in interest rates will solve the problem of inflation we would prefer that policy to increased inflation. As the hon. Gentleman may recall, although he was not here at the time, the Labour Government forced inflation up to levels that we had to reduce when we came to office.

In regard to the cycle industry, the hon. Gentleman will have heard my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) in whose constituency the Raleigh factory is situated and who never ceases to make representations to me about the interests of his constituents at Raleigh. None the less, my reply applies just as much to the hon. Gentleman. Jobs are increasing in Raleigh in Nottingham because of the achievements of the bicycle company, and we want that to continue.

Manufacturing Productivity

18. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give comparable figures for the growth of manufacturing productivity in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries between 1979 and 1987.

Mr. Atkins: Those countries for which figures are readily available showed the following increases in manufacturing productivity between 1979 and 1987: Greece 0 per cent., Australia 6 per cent., Canada 9 per cent., Germany 14 per cent., Switzerland 19 per cent., France 20 per cent., Japan and Norway 21 per cent., the Netherlands 25 per cent., Sweden 26 per cent., Austria and Belgium 29 per cent., Spain 32 per cent., Italy and the USA 33 per cent., the United Kingdom 37 per cent. Only three countries out of the member states—Finland with 43 per cent., Portugal with 54 per cent. and Ireland with 81 per cent. have higher increases than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hind: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's answer. Has he noted from the labour force survey that, in the months to June 1988, manufacturing employment has increased, along with the momentous increases in productivity already mentioned? Will he also confirm that German companies operating through subsidiaries in the United Kingdom are finding that productivity in Britain is higher than in West Germany?

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend is right. That is certainly the case with West German companies. He will also know, as I do, of a company—Leyland DAF—which employs many people in our respective constituencies. As a direct result of a deal with that company, productivity has increased 100 per cent. over the past 18 months. That is a measure of the productivity in British industry, which, may I yet again dare to remind the Opposition, is a great success story of which we should be proud.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that between 1 October 1988 and 1 April this year no restrictions have been placed on the number of research assistants or secretaries that Members of Parliament may employ and that any hon. Member who leads the general public to believe otherwise is doing the House a disservice?

Mr. Speaker: The new arrangements covering the allocation of passes to Members' staff were debated a few weeks ago in the House.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will you, Mr. Speaker, confirm that what I said was true?

Mr. Speaker: I suppose that is right.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to draw the attention of the House —and in particular of you, Mr. Speaker—to the incident yesterday which led to the naming and eventual suspension of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars). As you know, my hon. Friend tried to raise a point of order with you, Mr. Speaker, at 3.30 pm. You said that points of order could be taken only immediately after Question Time and, because you had already called a private notice question, you could call my hon. Friend only after that.

May I remind you, Mr. Speaker, that during Scottish questions on 21 December my hon. Friend raised a point of order and you called him. When your action was queried by the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), you ruled that any matter that needed immediate action should be raised with you there and then. I can assure you that the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Govan wished to raise yesterday needed immediate attention—it related to the abuse of the procedure of the House by the Leader of the Opposition. Why did your ruling change between 21 December and 14 March?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady was correct in what she said about the point of order which was raised at Scottish Questions. However, when her hon. Friend the Member for Govan rose yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition had not begun to ask his private notice question. When the private notice question began he had not said anything.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. When I raised this matter yesterday, you asked me to consult "Erskine May" to discover why the Leader of the Opposition could raise a private notice question, and why the 12 o'clock rule did not apply in this case. I have now done so, and "Erskine May" contains no provision exempting the Leader of the Opposition from the 12 noon rule. Page 346 of "Erskine May" states:

"Questions which have not appeared on the paper, but which are of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance, or to the arrangement of business, may be taken after half-past three or at eleven o'clock on a Friday, provided that they have been submitted to the Speaker before noon on the day on which they are to be asked."

Page 347 of "Erskine May" states that the Leader of the Opposition does not have to establish a factor of urgency.

Given that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) contacted your office, Mr. Speaker, at 1.50 pm yesterday and was told that no private notice questions had been submitted, and given that no notice was placed in the Members' Lobby and no private notice questions was displayed on the annunciator yesterday, when did the Leader of the Opposition submit his question to you and what precedent was used to accept that private notice question without due notice?

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that my office would not disclose whether any private notice questions had been submitted, because by definition such questions are private. I can tell him however, that I received notice of a private notice question from the Leader of the Opposition yesterday morning. The notice was provisional on the proposed motion for a writ being opposed at 2.30 pm, and I accepted it on that basis. It would not have been appropriate to put such a notice on the annunciator, particularly as it related to a statement that the House was expecting in any case.

As is made clear on page 347 of "Erskine May", special considerations apply to private notice questions from the Leader of the Opposition. In my opinion, what happened yesterday was perfectly regular, as I was ready to explain once the private notice question had been completed. I do not think that we can pursue the matter further now.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is not the bottom line that anyone who enters into guerrilla activity in this place had better read pages 346 and 347 of "Erskine May" before doing so?

Mr. Speaker: That is useful advice.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I tried to ask the Prime Minister a question, about which I now raise a point of order of which I have given you notice. My question concerned the implications for women threatened with violence of the sentence imposed on my constituent Michelle Renshaw. When I had uttered only 16 words, Mr. Speaker, you interrupted to say:

"Order. The hon. Member knows that the Prime Minister cannot answer questions such as that."

With the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker, I do not think that on the basis of 16 words you, the Prime Minister or anyone else could have known what I was going to ask.

I have been helped by the Library, which has supplied me with five questions put to the Prime Minister on 11 February 1982, 14 December 1982, 20 December 1983, 5 February 1987 and, most recently, 10 February 1987. In all but one instance the Prime Minister replied at some length —and those questions dealt with sentences and their implications and asked her to take action.

With respect, Mr. Speaker, I ask you to reflect on the matter. If you think that I can be granted another go, perhaps I will be lucky enough to catch your eye tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: That is a handsome offer, or rather suggestion. I was listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman's question to the Prime Minister. He referred to

"the shameful decision of Judge Pickles to sentence my constituent".—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 285.]

That was clearly a preamble to criticism of the judge, which is not in order on a question, and I therefore had to stop the hon. Gentleman. Let me again appeal to all hon.

Members to be certain when they ask questions, particularly at Prime Minister's Question Time, that their preamble is in order; then they will not be stopped.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): On a point of order Mr. Speaker. Will your clarify exactly when you reeceived the private notice question from the Leader of the Opposition yesterday? May I ask you to give a clear ruling on the precedent that you set in relation to private notice question procedure? Will you confirm that the Leader of the Opposition spoke for about 45 minutes, and that none of his questions was answered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer? Did yesterday's precedent decide the method by which private notice questions will be taken in future, or is it merely an example of the abuse of the private notice question procedure by the Front Benches?

Mr. Speaker: I think that I have said all that I am able to say about that. The House fully understands the situation.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to return to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). Since the Budget was delivered under a private notice question, are we still operating under that procedure and will the vote on Monday be taken on the basis of the private notice question?

Mr. Speaker: Was the hon. Gentleman not here yesterday?

Mr. Ross: I was.

Mr. Speaker: Well, perhaps the hon. Gentleman did not hear what I said. When the Leader of the Opposition had completed his question, I said that since the subject of the private notice question was debatable on the resolutions I would take no further questions. The Chairman of Ways and Means then took the Chair and put those resolutions to the House.

BILL PRESENTED

Amusement Machines (Protection of Children)

Mr. Patrick Thompson, supported by Mr. Roger Gale, Mr. Andrew Bowden, Mr. Tony Favell, Mr. Conal Gregory, Mr. Charles Irving and Mr. Simon Coombs, presented a Bill to empower local authorities to prohibit in their area the use by children of amusement machines: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 May and to be printed. [Bill 100.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the three motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Coal Industry (Restructuring Grants) Order 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Weighing of Goods Vehicles and other Cargo) (Application to non-UK Ships) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Loading and Stability Assessment of Ro/Ro Passenger Ships) (Non-United Kingdom Ships) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Safety in Children's Playgrounds

3.41 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to introduce compulsory safety standards for equipment, layout and surface in children's playgrounds.

Every parent in the country and anyone who has ever taken a child to a playground knows precisely why the Bill is necessary. They also know that the problems can be substantially solved. They know that in many playgrounds in Britain their children are at risk. The playground to which I take my daughter is dangerous. When I say that it is dangerous, I mean that it has broken tarmac, pieces of metal sticking out of the tarmac and deplorable standards of maintenance.

The Consumers Association says that this matter is one of the most important concerns of its members. It is an important concern of all parents in this country.

A playground is different from any other place where children might choose to play because it sends out signals of safety. The National Playing Fields Association says that the presence of equipment acts as a signal or signpost saying, "Come in, you can play safely here." Therefore, where play equipment is provided there is a duty of care upon the people providing that equipment to ensure that it is safe. Regrettably, that is not the case now.

I am certain that hon. Members of all parties care about safety in children's playgrounds and wish to see the highest possible standards. Much progress on setting the standards has been made over the past few years and British standard 5696 gives comprehensive guidance on the design and layout of playground equipment. A new British standard awaiting publication sets out standards for impact-absorbing surfaces. Those documents are commendable, and when they are in operation they make playgrounds safer. The problem is that the British standards are not usually implemented.

Over a year ago the Consumers Association inspected 139 playgrounds in three representative areas. It records that there has been some improvement over the 12 years since its previous survey. However, it found that our children's playgrounds are not as safe as they should be. Seven out of 10 playgrounds have hard surfaces under swings, climbing frames and slides. More than one third have badly placed equipment such as swings placed in the entrance to the playground or squashed between climbing frames. That means that children are at risk from colliding with equipment or each other. In two of the three areas inspected, half the swings, roundabouts and other equipment needed attention. In the other area, that applied to one third.

The estimates of the number of accidents caused in our playgrounds vary. The Consumers Association estimated that last year 250,000 incidents occurred in playgrounds causing injuries of all types. Clearly there is some concern in Government, and the Department of Trade and Industry has been collecting statistics. I understand that, when the statistics are published next month, they will show that each year in playgrounds there are 70,000 accidents sufficiently serious to require attendance at hospital.

The Department responsible for play is not the Department of Trade and Industry, but the Department of the Environment. It is of some significance that, when I

[Mr. Robert G. Hughes]

spoke to officials yesterday, they told me that they were unaware that the Department of Trade and Industry was collecting statistics. Sadly, the concern of the Department of Trade and Industry does not appear to be shared by the Department of the Environment. I find that unbelievable.

I find it unbelievable that officials at the Department of the Environment tell me that there is no hard evidence about accidents or types of accidents and that everything they see and hear is anecdotal. That is especially difficult to believe if one looks at Occasional Paper 2/76, "Children's playgrounds", published by the Department of the Environment. I shall read the opening words:

"Nobody knows how many accidents there are in children's playgrounds—but there may be as many as 150,000 a year treated by doctors and hospitals."

It seems that the Department knows that there is a problem, but does not want to do anything about it.

I have one request to make of an audience wider than this House. I ask people to provide the Department of the Environment with the information that it claims it does not have.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): What about money?

Mr. Hughes: I shall come on to money in a minute.

I ask people to provide the Department of the Environment, either through me or their Member of Parliament, with information about accidents in playgrounds. Let us find out about the record and the hard evidence and put on pressure to ensure that the Bill is passed.

The time scale for introducing the Bill must be as short as possible, but I recognise that a substantial amount of money is involved in implementing safe surfaces and proper layouts in playgrounds. I recognise that money will have to be found over a period, so the Bill will set out a schedule under which the Secretary of State for the Environment will consult and produce a statutory code of practice, probably similar to the existing British standard and the draft British standard. The code of practice will be compulsory for new playgrounds and over five years, I suggest, compulsory in all playgrounds. I do not under-estimate the fact that money is needed to back up this proposal, but that money must be made available.

I want to thank the people who have helped me to put together the information for the Bill. Apart from a number of hon. Members of all parties, I want to thank the National Playing Fields Association, the Consumers Association, Mr. Graham Tipp, who wrote the draft British standard, the playground equipment manufacturers and the Association of Play Industries. They have given me great help and encouragement. I also want to thank the many hundreds of parents who have written to me and other hon. Members expressing their concern about this matter. I believe that the Bill already commends itself to the nation. It has wide, all-party support, and I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Robert G. Hughes, Mr. Paul Boateng, Mr. Robert B. Jones, Mr. Timothy Kirkhope, Mr. Roger Knapman, Mr. Ian McCartney, Mrs. Gillian Shephard, Mr. Ian Taylor and Mr. Matthew Taylor.

SAFETY IN CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUNDS

Mr. Robert G. Hughes accordingly presented a Bill to introduce compulsory safety standards for equipment, layout and surfaces in children's playgrounds: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 April and to be printed. [Bill 99.]

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Consolidated Fund Act 1989.

Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Act 1989.

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [14 March].

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and the Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;

(b) for refunding any amount of tax, otherwise than in a case where the amount has been paid by reason of a mistake;

(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or

(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

Question again proposed.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

[Relevant documents: European Community document No. 8887/88, Annual Economic Report 1988-89 and the unnumbered document, "Annual Economic Report 1988-89" (final version as adopted by the Council).]

3.49 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Yesterday the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented his Budget for 1989 without a word of apology for the damage done to our economy and to our society by the Budgets—now totalling six—for which he has been responsible. Last year we had a Budget for the rich. It was the most unfair redistribution of income and wealth that has occurred this century. However, it was also more than that: it was foolish as well as divisive and unfair. As is now startlingly clear, it was manifestly wrong in its assumptions about the economy and foolishly complacent about the policies it promoted.

The Chancellor was warned by the Opposition and by a few voices elsewhere about the dangers of a deteriorating balance of payments deficit on the current account. His response was to predict—in one of the most massive failures of prediction that has been offered to the House—that the deficit for 1988 would be £4 billion. We now know just how wrong he was. The outturn was a deficit of well over £14 billion, and the Chancellor confirmed that he expects the deficit to be just as bad this year. In an interesting insight on his own embarrassment, the Chancellor did not state the actual figure. Almost as if he could not bring himself to utter the words "£14·5 billion", he took refuge in the circumlocution of saying that the current account deficit would remain at the same level as last year.

The Chancellor's forecasts for the trade deficit are worse than ever before, but they may still be an under-estimate. The latest trade figures for January are running well ahead of the forecast that the Chancellor gave the House only yesterday. The deficit in manufactured goods for last year was in excess of £20 billion. I am forced to observe that the surplus—not the deficit—in the balance of trade in manufactured goods when the last Labour Government left office was over £3 billion.

We hear a little less today, but occasionally, in tones of fading echoes, we hear about the economic miracle wrought by the Government. It could, of course, be thought to be a miraculous achievement to turn a £3 billion surplus in manufactured goods into a deficit of £20 billion, all within a decade in which the Government gained the enormous windfall of £78 billion of North sea oil revenues, but, unfortunately, it would be a miracle in the wrong direction. The truth is that it is the Government's pretensions, their glosses on the truth, the hype that modern advertising has perfected to an alarming degree and the absurd claims and exaggerations, which are so faithfully repeated by acolyte organs of communication, that are miraculous. The reality is depressingly not so good.

Let us take as examples three critical and indisputable facts about Britain's economy. We have the highest balance of payments deficit in our history, the highest interest rates in the industrialised world and, with the exceptions only of Greece and Portugal, the highest rate of inflation in the European Community. We clearly have the highest rate of inflation among the G7 countries.

However, let us cast our minds back to just one year ago—almost a year to the day. Was there a hint of the danger ahead from our intrepid navigator, who was too busy moving the best furniture in the ship into the first-class cabins to notice the directions in which he was heading? There was not a word. Even after he had been warned in our debates on last year's Budget, in his reply the Chancellor complacently affirmed that we had an economic miracle.

There was no talk then of a soft landing or a hard landing. I suppose that some perception of reality must have penetrated the Treasury over the year, as it now recognises that there must be a landing. However, if we are still involved in an economic miracle, it is difficult to understand why we do not keep on flying. Perhaps we are landing just to refuel or to change the pilot, or perhaps—even more likely—to give an extra seat in the cockpit for Sir Alan Walters.

When, in the period between the Budget of 1988 and now, it became clear that the Chancellor had gravely underestimated the boom in demand that the huge expansion of credit and his irresponsible tax handouts to the rich had caused, he started the relentless increase in interest rates that moved up from 7·5 per cent. to the current 13 per cent.—and there he is stuck. Interest rates have been lowered on or shortly after the Budget for years past—it is almost an annual ritual—but there has been no announcement of a cut in interest rates this year, nor is there likely to be.

The Chancellor dare not. Higher interest rates are the Lawson risk premium that must be paid to the foreign holders of the short-term money which finances the balance of payments deficit for which this Chancellor is responsible. They are the beneficiaries of the Chancellor's repeated rounds of one-club golfing. However, as is painfully clear, the losers are industry and the British people as the cost of living soars. British industry is saddled with an uncompetitive exchange rate and higher costs for investment as it seeks to compete in the world market place. Industry is being urged to prepare for 1992 with one arm tied behind its back by its own Government.

[Mr. John Smith]

Home owners have borne the brunt of the Chancellor's chosen instrument of credit control. They have seen any tax benefits that they received in last year's Budget vanish like snow from a dyke. To be fair, not all those who received tax cuts are worse off—the rich are still well ahead. They have so much that they can finance any increase in mortgage payments—those of them, of course, who need mortgages.

Let us consider those with more modest means. For the vast majority of home owners their mortgage payment is by far their largest domestic outgoing. A family with two children on £12,000 per year—£240 a week—received £12 per month in tax reductions last year. If they had a modest mortgage of only £25,000, their monthly repayment is up by £42. Last year the Chancellor with one hand gave them £12 and in the course of that year they were relieved of that and suffered an extra penalty of £30 per month. The Chancellor gives with one hand and then takes back with the other. It is a use of the invisible hand that even Adam Smith may not have envisaged.

I state those figures in a moderate way, because I know that my right hon. and hon. Friends will tell me of constituents who pay £60, £70 or £80 more in mortgage repayments per month—and they are right. I gave my example to show how at modest levels of income and of mortgage the last Budget was a boomerang.

The Chancellor described his Budget last year—I noticed him in the press doing the same this year—as a milestone, but for the majority of people in Britain the Lawson milestone has become a millstone around their necks. This year's Budget offers no relief, because 1989 will be another year of mortgage misery for millions of home owners.

Of course, the high interest rate—the Chancellor's sole instrument to curb demand—increases the cost of living and makes the inflation rate worse. It is little wonder that the Treasury would like to fiddle the figures and take mortgage costs out of the retail prices index. But mortgage bills consume personal income just like any other price rise. The Chancellor constantly makes utterly spurious comparisons with other industrialised countries that do not include mortgage costs in their calculation of retail prices. However, the pattern of home ownership in those countries is very different and other forms of housing costs —usually rents—are taken into consideration in their calculations.

It is invidious of the Government to disclaim the inflationary effects of increased mortgage payments; and offers precious little comfort for hard-pressed home owners this year. The truth is that, after a decade of Conservative rule, the Prime Minister's anti-inflationary rhetoric is hollow. Her hype about zero inflation is exposed as humbug, and her Government provoke, not prevent, a spiral of rising prices.

The Chancellor's forecast of the rate of inflation has proved only slightly less reliable than his forecast of the trade deficit. Last March he said that inflation would be 4 per cent. Last September he told us that there was only a "temporary blip". But yesterday he confirmed that inflation is 8 per cent. and, even on his own estimation, it will stay high for the whole of 1989. According to the Chancellor, it will fall to 5·5 per cent., which I think even he might view as being relatively high.

To make matters worse, the Government themselves have created those inflationary own goals. *[Interruption.]* I hope that Ministers will pay attention, because this matter is one for which they are uniquely responsible. The Ministers seated opposite me on the Conservative Front Bench are responsible for heavy extra charges for water, electricity, public transport and National Health Service prescriptions. Those price rises sharply increase the cost of living. It is within the power of the Government not to have caused them and to reverse them. The Government are responsible for a very large part of the inflation from which we suffer.

It was no doubt for that reason, among others, that the *Financial Times* commented:

"Inflation is simply a headache for Finance Ministers who get things wrong."

As the United Kingdom's inflation rate surges upward, the Chancellor's headache is getting worse. One might imagine that we suffer from a world contagion, but if one examines the inflation rates of competitor and analogous countries one realises that our inflation is significantly higher than theirs. We are not receiving inflation in some contagious way from those other countries, and the Chancellor has had the good fortune to be in office during a period of remarkably low commodity prices. Inflation in this country is a home-grown phenomenon—and we are looking at some of the gardeners on the Government Benches.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer is a disillusioned monetarist who displays no real understanding of the contemporary causes of inflation. *[Laughter.]* The Chancellor may laugh, but I can easily demonstrate the extent of his lamentable ignorance. Inflation can either be demand-led or pushed by rising prices. The Government, remarkably, have achieved it with both. The credit boom and last year's tax cuts allowed demand to surge beyond the capacity of industry supply, creating bottlenecks and skilll shortages. Meanwhile, rising charges for public utilities have added price-pushed inflation to fuel the problem even more.

In a celebrated phrase, the Chancellor said that inflation would be his "judge and jury". Let us, in an exercise of charity, overlook the Chancellor's attempts to fix the evidence by arguing that mortgages should be removed from the retail prices index. However much he wriggles, he will be unable to avoid the verdict. It is not for us to suggest an appropriate sentence for the criminal, because the Prime Minister is about to inflict a very severe punishment. Few of us would relish the prospect of daily tutorials in economics from Sir Alan Walters.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is there not an element of being wise after the event in all of this? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman recall the policies that he advocated in the House on 5 November 1987 when, on an Oppositon motion, he called for significant cuts in interest rates and increases in public spending? Is it not clear that, if those policies had been followed, interest rates and inflation would be back at the levels that we associate with the last Labour Government?

Mr. Smith: I suppose that the Chancellor might be wiser after the event of his daily tutorials from Sir Alan Walters. I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's question very directly. Neither I in any speech, nor the Opposition in any motion, commended the Chancellor's credit boom and his irresponsible relaxation of credit. We voted against his

irresponsible tax cuts for the rich. As we are talking about being wise after the event, I ask the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith)—who no doubt talked about zero inflation—now that inflation is running at 8 per cent., who is wise after the event?

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): It is within my memory and that of the right hon. and learned Gentleman that on "Newsnight" last night he expressly denied that just after the stock exchange crash he called for further public expenditure and tax cuts. My hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) mentioned a motion moved by the right hon. and learned Gentleman, and I have several press releases in his name suggesting precisely that. Perhaps he would care to withdraw.

Mr. Smith: The right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that I said I was in favour of the small reduction in interest rates that was made at that time. That was made perfectly clear, and it does not do the right hon. Gentleman or the House any credit for him to try to change that. We can look at the transcript of the television interview.

Mr. Major: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is wriggling.

Mr. Smith: Treasury Ministers are experts on wriggling.

I remind the hon. Member for Beaconsfield that in the debate to which he referred massive public expenditure was called for by one of the leading apologists for the Government on the Government Back Benches.

Of course we have asked for increases in public expenditure. If well-planned increases in public expenditure had been carried out as an alternative to the misguided tax cuts made in last year's Budget, we would be able to spend today, but because the Government failed to spend we now have the ludicrous position of a Government with a surplus of £14 billion or £15 billion who are frightened to spend a penny piece of it.

Having fuelled inflation, the Chancellor now finds himself stuck with the consequences. Surely it is clear that Britain needs to invest. It needs to invest more in education and training to reduce the skill shortages by which many British companies are harmed. It needs to invest more to improve roads and railways to ease congestion, reduce pollution and promote safety. We need to spend more on the National Health Service to retain more qualified nurses and improve the quality of health care.

Every opinion poll shows that the British people want better roads, hospitals and schools. All the evidence shows that this would be good for the British economy. Above all, we need to invest in the talents of our people so that Britain produces quality goods that other countries want to buy. As we approach the 1990s, we need an economic miracle if we are to compete successfully against the Germans, Japanese and Americans in the world market place.

Labour Members make no apology for saying—we constantly insist on it—that our priority must be investment in training, education, research and regional development. The Chancellor and his fellow Ministers fail to understand that such public investment is non-inflationary and counter-inflationary. Investment that releases bottlenecks in skills is clearly counter-inflationary. Investment in the regions, where there are unused resources and unemployed people, would certainly be non-inflationary.

Public investment is not only vital to strengthen the economy but, for most of us, it is the key to improving the quality of our lives. Across the range of public services —health, education, water, the environment and transport —the effects of under-investment and penny-pinching over the years of this Conservative Government have reduced quality, safety and efficiency.

There are one or two items in the Budget that we welcome. Some 10 years after it was promised, the Chancellor has abolished the earnings rule for pensioners. He has given a tax preference to the use of lead-free petrol. He has reduced national insurance contributions at the lower end of the earnings scale. *[Interruption.]* It is of particular benefit to people on the lower earnings scale. Of course it helps people throughout the earnings scale, but perhaps some of them do not deserve as much benefit as those at the bottom end of it.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): The right hon. and learned Gentleman is being censorious.

Mr. Smith: The Chancellor says that I am being censorious, but I am only being fair. I have old-fashioned notions about relating taxation to the ability to pay. I can tell the Chancellor that I do not mind being censured for holding those views; indeed, I am rather proud to accept such censure.

The Chancellor should have done much more for the lower paid. He increased income tax personal allowances by the bare minimum he was obliged to give, as opposed to the minimum he dared to give, and by an amount less than the present rate of inflation, and below the increase in average earnings. As a result, as he knows well, the proportion of income paid in income tax, even for the lowest paid, will increase.

For many others, the Chancellor has done nothing at all. The freezing of child benefit at £7·25 a week is a scandal. Child benefit replaced the children's tax allowance, which would have been updated every year if the Conservatives had kept to an all-party agreement to do so.

While we are on the subject of taxation, I should say that one of the more sedulously spread myths of this Administration is that the tax burden has been reduced. It should be well enough known that the burden of tax as a percentage of national income is substantially higher now than it was before the present Government came to office. But I regret to say that that is still not widely enough appreciated, and I am always on the lookout for pieces of evidence in the presentation of the Government's own statistics that reveal this important fact yet again. I found one of some interest on page 18 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report"—the Red Book. In table 2.5 the Government approached this matter by assessing non-oil taxes and national insurance contributions as a percentage of non-oil-money GDP. They can do it any way they like, but it is the same question that is being asked: what percentage of income is going on taxation?

We discover that, on the basis of this analysis, the tax percentage of GDP in the six years of the present Chancellor's period of office has moved from 37·75 to 37·5 — a reduction, over six years, of 0·25 per cent. The same table tells us helpfully that in 1978-79 the percentage,

[Mr. Smith]

under the Labour Government, was 34·25. Clearly the Chancellor has some way to go to catch up with the percentage under the last Labour Government. Indeed, at this rate of progress—one quarter of 1 per cent. every six years—it would take the Chancellor 78 years to reach that level. Perhaps I should counsel the Chancellor against an excess of prudence and caution in this matter.

When we look at the effects of these tax changes and at the failure to increase benefits, we see how sad they are for many people in this country. Every time the Conservatives refuse to uprate child benefit they deny even modest help to the poorer families. We proposed that the Chancellor should increase child benefit to £8·35—what it would have been if it had been increased in accordance with inflation. We said that he should also increase personal income tax allowances above the increase in earnings, particularly for the low paid, and make radical reforms in national insurance contributions to make them fairer. Had he done so, a family with two children, earning £190 a week, would have gained over £6 per week—and it is worth remembering that nearly half the wage earners in Britain earn less than that amount. That would have been a real help to the lower-paid.

Of course, the living standards of the most vulnerable people in our society will fall still further this year because the Chancellor has chosen to increase pensions and unemployment benefit by less than 6 per cent., even though, as he told us yesterday, inflation will reach 8 per cent. But it is hardly surprising that this Government overlook the less well-off. Last year the Budget was followed by the savage cuts in social security benefits caused by the new regime for income support and housing benefit. Regrettably, the effects of that continue to be with us.

Many pensioners receiving transitional payments, which were to protect them from some of the effects of these changes, will receive no net increase in payments this year. Their transitional addition will be reduced by the amount of any uprating. My hon. Friends and I see such people at our surgeries every week. I had an unfortunately large collection at my most recent surgeries. For them, the uprating will be not just insufficient—it will be non-existent. They will have to face the relentless rise in prices caused by 8 per cent. inflation, without any help at all from the Government.

But there is one proposal, which was mentioned only briefly by the Chancellor yesterday and with which we shall deal when we consider the Finance Bill, which we believe to be not only wrong but grotesque. I refer to the strange idea that the taxpayer should find a subsidy for private medical insurance for people over retirement age.

It may be that that was not the Chancellor's idea. There was a rumour when it emerged during the health review that it was being resisted by the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Health. But, as we know, resistance to the Prime Minister does not last long in this Administration. In what we might well imagine as an exercise in the adopted royal perogative, the gentlemen concerned would have been told, "We have decided." In an exercise of a distinctly non-royal we, they would conclude, "We had better do as we are told." I am confirmed in the impression that the Prime Minister was the author of the scheme because, after all, she is one member of the Government whom we know could benefit personally from it.

I confess to having listened with some impatience over the years to lessons in the virtue of targeting benefits from the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and nearly every occupant of the Government Benches, but I confess that it is not immediately evident to my hon. Friends or to me that we should subsidise from our taxes the private medical insurance of people such as the Prime Minister who are already well provided for.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Since many thousands of trade unionists benefit from private health insurance, why is the right hon. and learned Gentleman trying to deny pensioners the same rights?

Mr. Smith: As far as I know, neither trade unionists nor non-trade unionists have been the beneficiaries of tax privilege in pursuit of private medical care until this suggestion was made in the Budget.

My constituents, many of whom, I am sorry to say, are in the poor category, when they apply for income support or housing benefit are subjected to the most rigorous tests of income and capital. For even small and modest amounts of savings, they are completely excluded from any assistance from the taxpayer because, we are told, benefits must be strictly targeted.

Why does the same principle not apply in this case? What is the justification for an open-ended subsidy for private medical care. Bear in mind that we are talking about payments made not simply by pensioners but by those who make them on their behalf, many of whom will be paying tax at the higher rate. Why should the rest of us who pay our taxes and depend, and are happy to depend, on the NHS for our medical care subsidise by 40 per cent. the private medical bills of the hon. Gentleman, the Prime Minister or anyone else in Britain?

No test of income or capital is applied in this case. There is no invidious inquiry into means. We know that every time Conservatives want to advance their own interests they forget about targeting, particularly when it helps the better-off and the object is privilege. Indeed, the arrangements are extremely convenient. People do not even have to fill in a form to ask for tax relief. According to BUPA advertising in today's newspapers, it will be deducted directly and the Treasury will then pay. That advertisement may be familiar to the Chancellor. It is a slightly unfair depiction of the right hon. Gentleman—

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Sumo Lawson.

Mr. Smith: —as he wrestles with his difficulties. All I can say is that he is in this pickle because the Prime Minister insisted that this particularly daft scheme be put into his Budget.

We know that this is not a Budget of much substance. None the less, it is highly revealing. It reveals how fearful and defensive the Chancellor has become as he contemplates the results of his misguided policies. He has been forced to promise to maintain high interest rates for as far ahead as he can see. But with falling growth, rising inflation and a worsening deficit in our overseas trade, our economy is clearly not under wise or prudent supervision.

The Chancellor yesterday did not dwell on the perils which lie ahead, but he knows only too well the dangers of being dependent on the good will of the foreign holders of

short-term money, whose financing of the balance of payments deficit he requires to secure by his policy of high interest rates, and on whose appreciation of their own interests the future of sterling depends.

This country has, under Conservative rule, not only seen the dissipation of North sea oil revenues which could have been used to rebuild our industry and achieve civilised standards of service and opportunity; we have also seen this country move from a position of oil strength to a position of dependence on short-term hot money. For that unfortunate outcome the Government will be held to account.

4.21 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Major): This is my right hon. Friend's sixth Budget. In these Budgets his measures have dramatically improved the supply performance of the economy and simplified the corporate and income tax system to an extent that few people anticipated. He has reduced the rates of tax and the number of taxes. He has abolished more taxes than any other Chancellor this century. He has reduced tax distortions and tax breaks and moved steadily towards a much simpler and more efficient tax structure. No Chancellor for generations has so reformed our fiscal structure, and that work has continued in this Budget.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said, correctly, that the tax burden has gone up. He is right about that, and I will tell him why. It has gone up because we are repaying Labour's borrowing —*[Interruption.]*—which, had we not done so——

Mr. Kinnock: Really!

Mr. Major: The Leader of the Opposition would learn something if he listened; it would be a novelty for him.

As I was saying, had we not done that, it would today amount to a PSBR of £25 billion in today's terms. That is not a burden that we are prepared to have and to pass on to the next generation, even though Labour Members were prepared to do so.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East may not believe it, but perhaps he does not understand these matters. Indeed, he has as much likelihood of understanding how the economy works as Donald Duck has of winning Mastermind— *[Interruption.]* I see the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) leaving the Chamber. If that Donald returns, he at least will be extremely welcome.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East has noticed none of these developments. He has also ignored many of the effects of the changes that have been brought about—the increased growth, the dramatic increase in investment, the greater prosperity, the rise in the number of people in work and the falling numbers of people who are unemployed.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East) *rose*——

Mr. Major: I will give way later in my speech.

Mr. Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak later. I am anxious to make some progress now.

Mr. Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) has been a Member for a long time. He knows the rules.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman has been here a long time. We welcome his presence and I promise to give way to him later.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East has been disparaging about the Budget. He thinks —I believe he has said so in explicit terms—that it is a missed opportunity. It is far from that. It is a prudent Budget, as my right hon. Friend said, and it is the right Budget to help bring down inflation, with the strong fiscal and monetary stance that the Government now have.

It is a Budget that is good for savers, is good for those in work—with a £3 gain for the vast majority of employees from the national insurance changes, is good for the elderly, is good for small companies and is good for the environment.

When in office, the Labour party produced Budgets —several a year, as I recall. People combed through them to see if anybody did not lose. One has to comb through this Chancellor's Budget to find someone who does lose. That is the significant change, and most people understand that only too well.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East had some critical things to say about my right hon. Friend's stewardship. Of course, it is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's job to be critical, and he spares no effort in being critical. He makes even less effort in being accurate. He accuses my right hon. Friend of losing control of demand, yet I return to a point that we have debated before. After the stock exchange crash, there were genuine fears of a widespread recession. At that time, my right hon. Friend relaxed monetary policy, as everybody advised him to do, but the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and his colleagues urged both cuts in interest rates and large increases in public expenditure. If we had done that—we did not increase public expenditure —the growth in demand about which the right hon. and learned Gentleman now talks would have been far worse.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has forgotten that. Indeed, he has forgotten it to such an extent that last night on "Newsnight" when I specifically asked him, he categorically denied having called for public expenditure increases and said that he had called only for interest rate cuts. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) pointed out, the right hon. and learned Gentleman not only called for increases in public expenditure but moved a motion to that effect. *[Interruption.]* Last night the right hon. and learned Gentleman denied it. Last night he neglected to remember—I remind him in case he has forgotten—that he had twice issued news releases calling for increased public expenditure and increased demand:

"Smith Urges Action to Avert Recession"

and

"Smith Calls for Boost to Real Economy".

That was immediately after the stock exchange crash. If that action had been taken then, the growth in demand and inflation and the trade gap which the right hon. and learned Gentleman attributes to the crash would have been far worse.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman's critcisms were met fairly and squarely yesterday in my right hon. Friend's Budget. My right hon. Friend explained the origin of our trade gap. Exports are at an all-time high, but imports

[Mr. Major]

have risen much faster as a result of rapid growth in general and a massive investment boom in particular. It is interesting that fully three quarters of our imports of manufactures now consist of production and investment goods. Consumer goods are only a small proportion. The trade gap is not driven by a public sector deficit; it is investment led, and that investment is the source of future growth in production, exports and jobs. That is the difference between this trade gap and its predecessors, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman should understand that.

Having explained the cause, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor explained the remedy. The right action has been taken. The only effective way to slow excessive demand is to put up the cost of borrowing. That worked before and it is working now. It will choke off inflation and the trade gap will in due course diminish, and meanwhile we have no difficulty in financing it. There is no credible alternative.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman has also been criticial of my right hon. Friend's forecasts. He had some fun with them. That reminded me of something, and I wonder whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman remembers who said this in defence of Government forecasts of the trade gap:

"Obviously these are matters which are extremely difficult to forecast. I do not think that getting them right or wrong is the prerogative of any particular Government."—[*Official Report*, 12 March 1979; Vol. 964, c. 18.]

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman remember who said that? I shall tell him [An HON. MEMBER: "Disraeli."] It was not Disraeli. It was the Secretary of State for Trade in 1979—the right hon. and learned Gentleman himself.

Mr. John Smith: Can the Chief Secretary tell me whether at any stage in my previous career I forecast a balance of trade deficit that was over four times wrong on a rate of inflation that was over twice wrong?

Mr. Major: I can tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman what happened. As I recall, he was a very distinguished Secretary of State for Trade for five months. During that period, we moved from a surplus to a deficit, inflation rose by 3 per cent. and heaven alone knows what happened to export performance: it did extremely badly. Mercifully, the general election cut off the right hon. and learned Gentleman's career at that stage.

Mr. Harry Ewing: I know that the Chief Secretary's hat is in the ring for the Chancellor's job. Given the choice that the Prime Minister must make, I would say, "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't."

The Chief Secretary waxed eloquent about repaying the national debt. Will he make it clear whether it is now part of the Government's economic policy to repay the national debt rather than investing in education, research, industry, the Health Service, the environment and everything else that improves the quality of life?

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend's Budget speech, in which he made it perfectly clear that our policy in the medium term was a balanced Budget but that it would take a period to achieve that balanced budget.

On public expenditure, the hon. Gentleman may care to recall that as a result of the public expenditure round last year there was a real increase of more than 3 per cent. in the priority programmes. That is a far more substantial increase than has taken place for many years and it was particularly well targeted. Capital expenditure rose—or, at least, it is to rise in the year beginning in April—by a record amount, particularly expenditure on the National Health Service. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] The position is as I have described it and as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor explained yesterday.

The frankness revealed in my quotation from the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East is refreshing, although 10 years on it seems to have deserted him. As we saw a moment ago, when the right hon. and learned Gentleman talked about the growth of credit, his frankness is not all that has deserted him; his memory appears to have gone, or at least become selective.

I set out our solution to the trade gap a moment ago, but what was the right hon. and learned Gentleman's solution? It was a dynamic solution. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about the Budget?"] I am coming to that: it is a very important Budget. The right hon. and learned Gentleman told the House—I shall quote him whether he is embarrassed by it or not——

"We believe that the best way to do that"—

to improve the trade gap—

"is to engage the attention of the sector working parties".—[*Official Report*, 12 March 1979; Vol. 964, c. 9.]

So that is it. All we need is a sector working party—no incentives, no productivity growth, no supply side reform, no firm fiscal or monetary stance, just a sector working party. Nor did the right hon. and learned Gentleman propose a specific remit for the working party. His ambitions were more limited. We had only to engage the working party's attention and the trade gap would disappear. Clearly, the right hon. and learned Gentleman believed in the smack of firm indecision.

Mr. John Smith: Whatever the policies for which I was responsible—I remind the House that we then had a manufacturing trade surplus—can the right hon. Gentleman tell me why, if monetary discipline, supply side reform and so on are so wonderful, a £3 billion surplus 10 years ago has been reduced to a deficit of £20 billion?

Mr. Major: The right hon. and learned Gentleman will have noticed that as a result of our policies over the past few years there has been a more dramatic rise in the living standards of people in Britain than we have experienced for many years, and that is the final indicator of the success or failure of Government economic policies.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman proposed to the shadow Cabinet a shadow Budget package of tax cuts and spending which he costed at £3 billion. That was an odd piece of costing but I shall gloss over that for today. There is a curious feature about the costing of the £3 billion package. A day or so after unveiling that package of tax cuts and spending, the right hon. and learned Gentleman criticised my right hon. Friend's Budget of last year as the cause of the growth of credit and the trade deficit. That Budget cut taxes in the current year by £4 billion.

If the right hon. and learned Gentleman believes that the £4 billion tax cut last year created the trade deficit, why did he propose in his shadow Budget a further £3 billion

tax cut this year? The logic of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's argument is that he should be clawing back last year's reductions, not proposing more.

If he really believes what he has said in recent months, he should not have proposed that package, or, in doing so, he should have said that it would worsen the trade gap. But he did not say that. The truth is that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been caught out. It is now perfectly clear that he knows that last year's Budget did not create the trade gap, despite all that he and his colleagues have said repeatedly in recent months. Because he knows that, the right hon. and learned Gentleman considered it prudent to propose a tax and spending package almost as large as last year's, and larger than my right hon. Friend's proposals this year. It simply illustrates beyond doubt the sheer brass-necked hypocrisy of what the Opposition have been saying in recent months.

That brings me to the Leader of the Opposition and what he said yesterday.

Mr. John Smith: What about your Budget?

Mr. Major: I am referring to the right hon. Gentleman's speech on the Budget. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman suggesting that the Leader of the Opposition did not mention the Budget? He said yesterday, and I agree with him:

"Governments do not have their own money . . . Governments only have the taxpayers' money."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c.315.]

He then implied, although he did not say it explicitly, that the tax burden should be reduced by taking the basic rate down by 6p, to take it to the tax burden that he believed existed under Labour.

I thought that we had found a convert in the right hon. Gentleman, but that feeling lasted only for a moment. Within minutes of allocating the surplus to cuts in the basic rate, the right hon. Gentleman was allocating it to increases in public spending. He went further than ever before and allocated all the surplus £14 billion to increases in public spending. What the right hon. Gentleman had described as the taxpayers' money did not stay with them for very long. It was soon snatched back to be spent by him. But he overlooked one thing. With Labour policies, that surplus would not exist in the first place to be snatched back.

The electorate understand that very well. Labour is the party of high taxation. We are the party of low taxation and that is why we sit on this side of the House and Labour Members sit opposite and will continue to do so for a large number of years to come.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Major: In a moment.

The Leader of the Opposition said that the Government had been a bonanza for the rich and that the top 1 per cent.—which presumably includes the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) who sought to intervene—has gained £16 billion since 1983 and £26 billion since 1979 in cumulative tax cuts. But he did not say that the same top 1 per cent. will be paying a higher proportion of total income tax in 1989-90 than they paid in 1978-79. That means that they will have paid £5·75 billion more in taxation. If they were not making that contribution, the difference would have to be made up by the other 99 per cent. of taxpayers. But that is the right hon. Gentleman's policy. The Opposition believe in increased taxation for everyone, as they repeatedly make clear.

It is not only the top 1 per cent. who provide a higher proportion of the total tax take than they did in 1979. The top 5 per cent. were contributing 24 per cent. of the total tax take then and now they are contributing more than 29 per cent.

Amazingly, the right hon. Gentleman tried to pose as the friend of the low-paid. He said that the Government has removed their rights. I shall tell the Leader of the Opposition about the rights that we have given the low-paid. We have given them the right to keep more of what they earn, and they will welcome that. We have reduced the basic rate of tax from 33p to 25p in the pound—and that is before the latest reform, which provides an extra £3 a week for most people in work.

Mr. Home Robertson: The right hon. Gentleman talks about his concern for taxpayers. May I draw his attention to what the right hon. Gentleman for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) described as the Tory tax? Is he aware that poll tax forms are being delivered to households throughout Scotland this very week? What does the right hon. Gentleman have to say about the fact that people like me, as he so charmingly put it, will end up paying less in local taxation because of that Tory tax whereas people on lower incomes throughout Scotland this year and in England next year will be paying substantially more tax?

Mr. Major: I will tell the hon. Gentleman why so many people in Scotland will pay so much in community charge—because of the reckless way in which so many Scottish labour authorities spend.

My right hon. Friend's Budget——

Mr. John Smith: I repeat the question put clearly by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), in case the right hon. Gentleman does not understand it. Why should people who are better off receive the same treatment as those who are much worse off? Can we have a straight answer to that question?

Mr. Major: The majority of local government expenditure—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] I am answering the question and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East may learn something if he listens to my answer.

The majority of local government expenditure has been met in the past, and will be met in the future, by central Government grant, which comes out of the progressive tax system. The balance is met from the community charge, and payment of this element should be according to the services received.

My right hon. Friend's Budget this year falls between the most far-reaching tax reforms for a generation and the introduction next year of independent taxation for husbands and wives. *[Interruption.]* The Leader of the Opposition is welcome to intervene if he wishes.

Mr. Kinnock: Get on with it.

Mr. Major: I am tempted to say, "Temper, temper." You will never lead the country if you cannot control your own temper.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I have no aspirations to lead this country.

Mr. Major: I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. No one would ever suggest that you would ever lose control of your temper, or anything else.

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer promised, this is a prudent and cautious Budget. It makes no reduction in the overall tax burden and provides strong fiscal backing for a tough monetary stance. My right hon. Friend continues with the policies that have produced the strongest fiscal position of any leading country. As a result, we are forecasting a further fiscal surplus of £14 billion—that will be the third successive year of surplus. As a result of these cumulative surpluses over three years, we will have repaid 16 per cent. of public sector debt and saved £3,000 million in interest payments each successive year. That £3,000 million will be available for more productive purposes than paying interest on past debts, many of which were run up when Labour was in government.

This strong fiscal position has been unmatched for decades and has enabled my right hon. Friend to promote several important themes which he has pursued steadily during his six years as Chancellor. The predominant theme continues to be tax reform, designed to improve and simplify the tax system, remove tax distortions and maximise the freedom of individuals and companies to spend their own money and organise their own affairs. In that context, the main reform in the Budget is to restructure national insurance contributions. We should be entirely clear as to what yesterday's reforms mean.

At present, people earning just below the steps for each rate band face a reduction in take-home pay as a result of an increase in their earnings. For example, someone whose earnings were near the threshold of £115 who received an increase of £1 would, as a result of moving to a higher rate of national insurance, find his or her take-home pay reduced by £1·37. That is clearly unsatisfactory. My right hon. Friend's reform has entirely abolished two of the three steps and goes even further to help those on lowest incomes. He retained the first step of £43 income a week —the point of entry to the whole range of contributory benefits—but at a much reduced rate. The initial contribution has been reduced by 60 per cent.—from £2·15 to only 86p. That is the cheapest entry fee to the highest contributory benefits since the Beveridge system was introduced in 1948. By any yardstick, it must be the bargain of the century.

The reform not only introduces this low cost contribution to benefits, but removes distortions and disincentives in the national insurance system and increases take-home pay for the clear majority of people in work by about £3 a week. Seventy per cent. of the total benefit goes to those earning less than average male earnings. The reform carries with it a substantial cost to the Exchequer of £2·8 billion in a full year. It provides a simple but well-structured system of contributions for the low paid.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): The Chief Secretary has said that people will gain £3, but those who are also on family credit and housing benefits will have their benefits deducted and will therefore lose. Simply increasing wages in this manner does not free people from the poverty trap.

Mr. Major: The hon. Gentleman is right about the impact on some benefits. As a result of the changes in National Insurance contributions, however, take-home pay will rise by £3. If we took the hon. Gentleman's view we would never either reduce national insurance contributions or raise tax thresholds, both of which the Opposition are keen for us to do.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): By laying such stress upon the £3, the Chief Secretary has led many people to expect that they will be better off in terms of national insurance contributions. Will he confirm that someone earning £70 a week—which, by my standards and his, is surely low pay—will be only 21p a week better off?

Mr. Major: Yes. The reason for that is that—with, I believe, the hon. Gentleman's support at the time—my right hon. Friend, to help those very same people, reduced the national insurance steps in 1985. People have already been paying reduced contributions. That is why I said that the vast majority will receive another £3—as I said, 70 per cent. of the total benefit.

In his shadow Budget, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East also proposed a reform of national insurance contributions, but his proposal was to abolish the upper limit on contributions. That would add massively to public expenditure on state earnings-related pensions in the long term—as I hope that he will acknowledge—unless the contributory principle was ignored, with a "shadow" upper earnings limit on pension entitlement and employees receiving nothing in return for higher contributions. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is a little unclear about that, but with a "shadow" upper earnings limit—which is presumably what he has in mind—nearly 2 million employees would immediately be worse off, with the person on about one and half times average earnings paying £3·75 a week more.

My right hon. Friend's reform maintains the contributory principle and helps the low-paid without creating losers—a much sounder system. I hope, therefore, that the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his party will support it.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Surely the Chief Secretary is not defending the national insurance contribution on the contributory principle. The contributory principle is a fraud in NIC terms. Surely the next step must logically be to go a stage further in each successive Budget to bring the national insurance contributions and income tax into the same relationship.

Mr. Major: I am afraid that I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman, although I understand his argument and am familiar with the arguments in the Green Paper. I think that the contributory principle has much to commend it. The introductory entry fee is now very low at 86p, and I think it entirely right that we should sustain the principle now and in the future.

If the Opposition support the national insurance changes, the possibility of a parliamentary novelty will be opened up—that is, the Opposition actually voting for a reform that puts more money into the pockets of those on modest earnings. They voted against cuts in the basic rate of income tax in 1979, 1987, and 1988, and we shall watch with interest to see how they vote on national insurance contributions this year.

Another significant measure in the Budget is my right hon. Friend's pensions proposals. We believe that they will make an important contribution to simplicity and flexibility in pensions provision. The change follows the

overwhelming logic of previous deregulation policies to maximise freedom and minimise Government interference. The proposals effectively take the Government out of the business of artificially limiting pension arrangements, and will leave employers the freedom to offer their employees whatever pensions they see fit to offer. No longer will their decision be determined by the tax regulations of the Inland Revenue.

The restriction that my right hon. Friend does propose is the limiting of tax relief to pensions based on earnings of £60,000, with full protection of existing rights, for existing members of occupational pension schemes. Their current arrangements will not be adversely affected. The £60,000 tax relief limit will be increased in line with inflation to ensure that it retains its value. Those earning more than that and others who find the Inland Revenue limits restrictive, will be able to receive a top-up pension without tax relief, which will not in future affect the tax privileges of the main scheme.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): On the matter of employers who would like to do something of benefit to their employees, why has the Chancellor not lifted the high burden of taxation on workplace nurseries? Does he not want to get more women back to work in Britain to fill the jobs gap? Does he not talk to the Secretary of State for Employment?

Mr. Major: I understand the sensitivity of that issue, but it is predominantly a matter for employers, not for the tax system. We look to employers and employees to make those arrangements.

Mrs. Fyfe *rose*——

Mr. Major: I have answered the hon. Lady's question and I have nothing further to say to her on that issue. I have made it clear that we will not change that tax and that it is a matter for employers and employees.

As a consequence of removing those artificial restraints——

Mr. John Smith: The right hon. Gentleman was asked a straight question by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe). He was asked to justify why workplace nurseries are the subject of taxation. That is a Treasury responsibility. Will he give us the answer?

Mr. Major: It is a benefit in kind and all benefits in kind fall into that category. We are not in the business of dividing up benefits in kind in the arbitrary fashion proposed by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East. It is not a wise way to proceed.

As a consequence of removing those artificial tax restraints, my right hon. Friend has also been able to make some other worthwhile changes in the pension regime. The rules affecting those who retire or leave early have been simplified and the arrangements for personal pensions and additional voluntary contributions have been improved. Contribution limits have been increased substantially for those over 35 and, for the first time, people will be able to manage their own personal pension investments. Taken together, those reforms will increase choice and reduce bureaucracy for employers and employees. I hope that these and earlier pension reforms will remove much of the complexity and mystery in pension provision.

Last year, the Inland Revenue published a consultative document setting out three main options for reform of the life assurance industry. As a result of the representations made, my right hon. Friend has accepted that reform was necessary but that it should be achieved within the existing system. The measures he proposes have three advantages: they remove current anomalies; they enable my right hon. Friend to reduce the rate of tax on policy holders' investment income from 35 per cent. to 25 per cent. and the rate of 30 per cent. on capital gains to 25 per cent; and they also enable him to abolish entirely life assurance policy duty. We believe that those measures will result in a fairer and more effective tax regime as well as removing uncertainty and anomalies and establishing a stable regime for a unique industry.

The second theme that runs through this and previous Budgets is the Government's determination to widen the ownership of property and capital. In this Budget my right hon. Friend has proposed a number of measures to encourage saving and capital growth through wider share ownership. Ten years ago, share ownership by individuals appeared to be a dying habit. There were only 3 million shareholders of equities, and the number was dwindling. As a result, companies found it increasingly difficult to raise equity capital from individuals. All that has changed. Partly as a result of the extensive programme of denationalisation—that is what privatisation is—there are now 9 million shareholders, one fifth of the adult population. Becoming a shareholder in industry and commerce and building up capital is now much more commonplace, and that is a welcome trend.

The Budget proposes a range of measures to give further encouragement to share ownership again building on schemes already in place. The most important of those is the personal equity plan scheme which is to be expanded by increasing the annual investment limit from £3,000 to £4,800 and by relaxing the limits on investment in unit and investment trusts. Furthermore, shares from new issues can now be held in a PEP. The scheme has been simplified and better tailored to small investors.

A further characteristic of the Budget is that it removes a number of fiscal injustices and anomalies. The most obvious example is the ending of the cliff-edge steps in the national insurance system, but there are others as well. In particular, there are two measures which will remove anomalies affecting elderly people. First, we have fulfilled the single unredeemed pledge from the 1979 manifesto and abolished the pensioners' earnings rule. As a result, pensioners who choose to go on working will no longer be penalised for doing so. It is simply not wise to inhibit pensioners from working if they wish to do so. Overwhelmingly, they have a great deal to contribute and, in future, they will have every encouragement to do so if they wish.

Secondly, we are reducing to well below 40 per cent. the marginal rate of tax in the short band of income where age allowance is withdrawn. That was the subject of many representations last year, not least from hon. Members who served on the Finance Bill Committee. I hope that the change will be generally welcomed. At the same time, we have extended the higher level of age allowance, which my right hon. Friend introduced in 1987 for all those aged 80 or over, to those aged 75 or over. As a result, those aged between 75 and 79 will be significantly better off, with a gain of £1·73 a week for a single person and £2·55 for an elderly couple. Moreover, three quarters of those in that age group will now pay no income tax at all. That is a welcome measure which matches the social security

[Mr. Major]

increase in income support of £2·50 for individuals and £3·50 for couples over 75, which comes into effect in October.

The Government's economic and fiscal objectives are clear, and the Budget reaffirms them. We wish to ensure growth without inflation and to minimise tax rates to enable the greatest possible degree of taxpayer choice. We do not believe that the Government know better than the taxpayer how to spend the taxpayers' money. We continue to move towards our objective of a basic rate of income tax of no more than 20p in the pound as soon as it is prudent to do so.

By way of contrast, the Opposition are committed to increasing tax in every way they can. They are committed to increasing tax for basic rate taxpayers, abolishing the ceiling on national insurance contributions, increasing contributions by 9 per cent. on earnings over £17,000, imposing a wealth tax and much else. All that is well documented.

In this Budget we have further reformed the tax system. We have helped pensioners by abolishing the earnings' rule. We have removed high marginal rates for those on low incomes by reforming national insurance contributions and further measures have been put in place to widen share ownership, including substantial improvements to PEPs. The taxation of pensions and life assurance has been modernised. All that has been done within a prudent and cautious fiscal framework in which we plan to make a further massive repayment of debt next year, thus providing a fiscal stance which will buttress monetary policy in its task of bringing downward pressure on inflation.

Mr. Kinnock: The right hon. Gentleman has referred several times to the great virtue of using the Budget surplus to repay the national debt. Can he confirm that that will continue to be an objective of the Government, should they have surpluses, and that it will continue until the next general election and not be impeded by any desire that the Government may have to make a tax cut before the next general election?

Mr. Major: Clearly, the right hon. Gentleman is aware of the danger to his party as the high-tax party and the support for us as the low-tax party. He is aware that we are enjoying the longest period of growth since the war, latterly combined with dramatic falls in unemployment. He does not care that our policies are working. The Budget sticks with our policies and I commend them to the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will be aware of the Royal Commission on standards of conduct in public life, especially as it applies to Ministers. I see that Rambo—the Chancellor of the Exchequer—is leaving. Recommendation No. 8052 says:

"Ministers must so order their affairs that no conflict arises, or appears to arise, between their private interests and their public duties."

In today's *Evening Standard*, there is an advertisement using a picture of Rambo—the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I wondered how much he had been paid for it, whether he had posed for it and whether he will give the money to charity. Is that where the manufacturing surplus has done? Does the suggestion of enlarged breasts imply the use of steroids? Can you investigate the matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Harry Ewing: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That appears to be a very authentic picture of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Can it appear on his security pass for circulating round the House of Commons?—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not accept any responsibility for anything that appears in the *Evening Standard.*

5 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): In my maiden speech in the Budget debate on 1 April 1974, I said:

"I have always been puzzled by the mystique which has surrounded an annual Budget."—[*Official Report*, 1 April 1974; Vol. 871, c. 946.]

Fifteen years and umpteen Budgets on, the only point that still puzzles me is why we still carry on with the pompous nonsense. But yesterday's Budget was not only the usual nonsense. It was at times boring nonsense, but more importantly, it was an affront to the impoverished in our society who have suffered so grievously at the hands of this Government and for whom this Budget does nothing. Nothing that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has said this afternoon has changed my views about what the Chancellor said yesterday.

It will come as no surprise to the Chancellor that my constituents in St. Helens have not welcomed the Budget. He knows well that the Government's policy does not put at the top of the agenda the interests of the low-paid, the unemployed and the poor, of whom there are, unfortunately, a disproportionate number in St. Helens. He knows that the interests of poor people take second place in his order of priorities to the interests of the rich, of whom there are disproportionately few in St. Helens. There is no need for argument; let us look at the facts.

Last year, the Chancellor cut the highest rates of tax for each member of the wealthy elite in this country. He gave out more than £1·6 billion to people who were already swimming in cash. This year, another year of misery for the poor, he has the effrontery to give just a fraction of the poor a few crumbs from his £14 billion surplus in reduced national insurance contributions. He calls that benevolence. It is the height of audacity to suggest that this is a Budget for the low-paid.

The litmus test of the honesty of the right hon. Gentleman's claims for this Budget is that the Government are, at this very moment, forcing through the Social Security Bill, which will force unemployed claimants to accept any low-paid, unskilled job which is offered to them, no matter how humiliating. Tory Ministers know that the people who will be forced to accept those low-paid, unskilled jobs will come from areas of the country such as mine. The Government have also made it clear that they intend to abolish the wages councils, the only protection for the low-paid in Britain and for hundreds in my constituency who are covered by wages council agreements. The Chancellor's effrontery almost beggars belief. Even the worst tinpot dictator could not conjure up a more reliable recipe for a low-wage and low-skilled economy in areas such as mine.

In St. Helens, half the population are living on or below the poverty line. Almost one in 10 people, even on the

Government's corrupt unemployment figures, are still out of work. Hundreds more are on half-baked training schemes devised by the Government at minimum cost. Real apprenticeships are a thing of the past. Investment in manufacturing, on which the triumph of the north-west economy and this country's industrial success were built, is now stagnant. On the last available figures, the fall in north-western manufacturing investment shows a net loss of one-third since 1979—33 times the loss suffered in the south-east.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, although manufacturing in the north-west may have declined, that is more than compensated for by the huge increase in the service sector?

Mr. Evans: I agree that there has been a savage decline in manufacturing industry, but the hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that the jobs in the manufacturing sector were highly skilled, highly paid jobs. Unfortunately, some of the jobs created in the service sector are low-paid, part-time and unskilled.

The United Kingdom's balance of trade in manufactures has been in deficit since 1983 and nothing in any of the Chancellor's past six Budgets has addressed the regional disparity which that has created. Almost 40 per cent. of manufacturing jobs in the north-west have disappeared since the Tory party took power—a third more than the loss in the south-east and Britain as a whole. The point is that the demand which he is now trying desperately to contain has been import-led and the consumer demand comes not from constituencies such as mine, but from the affluent south-east. He has done much to promote that demand by sweeping tax cuts for the rich. High interest rates are now hitting my constituents before they have even started to enjoy any economic upturn.

We are told that the Budget deals with revenues. I shall talk briefly about the revenues in the pockets of some of my constituents. At the social security offices in St. Helens, the amounts paid to the very needy have dropped dramatically since the Government introduced the social fund. Those people will not be affected by the changes to national insurance contributions.

At my advice bureau in Haydock last Friday night—significantly, the Prime Minister was in Haydock last Friday night, but was not speaking to my constituents about their problems—a 66-year-old widow produced her pension book to show me that in 1987, her weekly benefit was £42·34 a week, with the Department of Health and Social Security paying her rent and rates. In April 1988, her benefit increased to £45·75, but she then had to pay £4·87 for rent and rates. Her real income had slipped to £40·91—a drop of £1·43 a week. She will receive a rise in April and she had the counterfoils in her book to prove it. She will receive £46·10 a week—a princely increase of 35p a week. My elderly constituent, who is a sick woman, does not know which way to turn because she now owes more than £120 in rent arrears. I do not think that she will be interested in what the Chancellor offered yesterday.

Last Saturday morning, in my St. Helens surgery, a 70-year-old diabetic, who had his left leg amputated last December and whose wife is crippled with arthritis, informed me that their total income for two invalids was £80·43 a week. He had just been informed that his rent and rates had been increased by more than £7 a week and they simply could not afford to pay. I do not think that that couple will be interested in private medicine bonuses or personal pension equity plans.

The 4,500 unemployed in my constituency—that is the official figure, and there are far more than that in reality—will not see any increase in their weekly revenues. What has the Chancellor done for them? He has given them almost 8 per cent. inflation, but, as a Billinge pensioner protested to me on Friday night, when pensioners receive their increase in April, it will be just 5·9 per cent., based on last September's inflation rate. It has not passed them by that wealthy admirals and judges have just received their annual increase index-linked at the full inflation rate.

We are not defeatists or given to complaining for the sake of it in our region, but this Government have treated us economically like paupers in comparison with their attitude to the south-east. For all the millions of pounds spent on new roads for the south-east to ease its economic boom, pennies have gone to the north-west. Billions of pounds are to be spent on rail links in the south-east, linking the Channel tunnel to London, but apparently nothing will be spent linking the rest of Britain to the capital. That is utterly unacceptable.

New businesses have been created in the north-west, but the growth rate over the past seven years has been just 7 per cent.—half that for the rest of the nation and lower than that of any other region according to VAT registrations and deregistrations. The number of retail outlets has fallen by 6 per cent. since 1980 and there has been double that fall in the number of units in agriculture.

Living standards for those in the south-east have jumped by over 20 per cent. since the Government took office, but in the north-west we have not seen even half that level.

The Government have no commitment to the regions. They have reduced regional assistance and grants by 55 per cent. in the past few years and virtually scrapped any coherent regional policy. What happened when the Prime Minister came to Merseyside last weekend? What hit the headlines? Another 1,000 workers were laid off on Merseyside. That is what Tory policy has meant to the north-west of England.

Contrary to what the Prime Minister's propaganda machine tells us, the north-south divide not only still exists: it is still growing. We are two nations in Great Britain, and the figures prove it. Why could not some of the Chancellor's enormous surplus be spent on the many schemes that local authorities, especially in the north, are only too anxious to put into operation? I refer to just one that I have brought to the attention of Ministers in the past few months. Excellent work has been done with a relatively small amount of assistance to reclaim the derelict Ravenhead glassworks site in my constituency to bring it back into productive capacity and activity.

This Budget has done virtually nothing for the impoverished in our society. The Chancellor has, at long last, abolished the earnings rule for pensioners; I welcome that, but there could have been a real effect if he had increased pensions in line with the real rate of inflation. He could have announced that yesterday, but he did not.

The Chancellor should also have increased child benefit in line with inflation, because in my constituency over 9,000 families have children who are under five and many are desperate for help. Such an increase would have been

[Mr. Evans]

a real benefit to the poorest in my constituency. However, he did not, and I leave the House to draw its own conclusions.

If the quality of a nation's civilisation were judged on the basis of the care and attention it bestowed on its elderly and its children, most of the people of St. Helens would regard this Budget as truly barbarian.

5.12 pm

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): Tactically, I think this year's Budget well judged, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on his prudence. Those people who gaze wide-eyed at the large Budget surplus and shut their eyes to everything else in the economy are seriously out in their thinking. My right hon. Friend was far too sensible to do the same.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) was churlish about unemployment. Of course it is still high, but, as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said, there has been a dramatic fall recently and I am happy to say that my constituency still has the lowest unemployment rate in the country.

I greatly welcome the Chancellor's reform of national insurance contributions, which is an important step forward, as is the abolition of the earnings rule. If only my right hon. Friend had been able to announce the rescinding of the Government's mean and unjustified failure to uprate child benefit, tactically I could have given the Budget three cheers, but as it is, it still deserves at least two and a half.

However, strategically—unfortunately—the verdict must be different, because the Chancellor has done little or nothing to improve the competitiveness of British manufacturing industry, which should have been his main strategic objective, and because of his attitude to the balance of payments.

Once again, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor talked yesterday about the transformation of the economy, but, far from the current position being different, it is all too drearily familiar in many respects. Once again, we have a consumer boom, culminating in inflation and in a serious balance of payments deficit. We have seen that story countless times before. We are witnessing not a transformation, but yet another repeat performance.

I found my right hon. Friend's optimism difficult to square with the fact that the balance of payments deficit was 3 per cent. of GDP in 1988, rising to 4 per cent. in the second part of the year. We have had a similar deficit only once before, in 1974, when there had been a rise of over 40 per cent. in import prices. Although there has been some rise in import prices recently, there has been nothing like that rise, so there can be no such alibi on this occasion. The deficit is the straightforward result of British industry's continued failure to compete successfully, especially in its own market. Imports of manufactures have risen 12 times faster than domestic production since 1979—nearly doubling in the process.

A balance of payments deficit of the present magnitude was not foreseen by the Chancellor this time last year, and since then his response has been variously to assert that it does not particularly matter and to predict that in any case it will go away of its own accord. My belief is that he is dangerously mistaken in both those contentions.

The view that a current account deficit of the present size does not especially matter and can be allowed to continue strikes me as reckless. In the short term, there will be the perpetual risk of a run on sterling, with dire consequences for inflation. It could also lead to even higher interest rates. In the longer term, a deficit of this size means first that we shall lose the net overseas wealth that was painfully acquired in the early 1980s and, if it were allowed to continue, that we would eventually join the company of debtor nations. In any case, what possible value can a medium-term financial strategy have if it does not even try to keep us solvent? That is the policy's fundamental defect.

The external deficit will not go away or get much better of its own accord. It is no blip: it is the result of deeply entrenched adverse trends. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary was right to say that it is not the result of the tax cuts last year. It has a far deeper and more entrenched basis than that——

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one reason for the deficit is the huge increase in manufacturing investment in the past few years, which contrasts with previous deficits and suggest that in the future the deficit may go down as a result of more efficient manufacturing in this country?

Sir Ian Gilmour: I am afraid that my hon. Friend is seriously mistaken—there has not been an enormous increase in manufacturing investment. In the period from 1979 to the present day, manufacturing investment has been negative. Although it has certainly increased in the past year or so—that is encouraging—over that period as a whole it has been low. I fear that my hon. Friend's optimism is not justified.

The fact is that those adverse trends are deep-seated and our competitive performance has shown little improvement. Those trends were masked for a long time by North sea oil and then by the serious depression at the beginning of the 1980s which checked the growth of imports, but the crunch has now come. The balance of trade in manufactures has gone from a surplus of £5·5 billion in 1980 to a deficit of £14·5 billion last year, rising in the last quarter at a rate of £17·5 billion.

Oil production is now falling, and property income is probably falling also as our foreign assets run down. We cannot be saved by the service industries. I cannot speak for the north-west to which my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) referred when he intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for St. Helens, North, saying that service industries in the north-west are making up for the decline in manufacturing production. I do not know about that, but they certainly cannot make up for it nationally because the scope of any international expansion in tourism services is intrinsically limited. The Japanese or the Germany will not come to London for a haircut, so there is a limit to what can be done. In any case, the balance of trade in services has recently been falling, not rising. Manufacturing industry is absolutely vital.

What makes it more serious is that the crunch has come much sooner than it should have done, because at least when it came in 1974 unemployment was down to 400,000. Now, of course, it is only just under 2 million. Also, the crunch has come despite the fact that, in the whole period from 1979, the growth rate has been unusually slow. The growth of manufacturing output since 1979 has been the

slowest of the post-war period—that is, slower than any nine-year period before 1979. The growth of total output at about 2·1 per cent. has been the equal slowest in any nine-year period.

The motor of growth has not been chiefly enterprise or efficiency, but personal consumption swelled by credit, which has risen faster than in any previous nine-year period taking up 90 per cent. of such growth in GDP as occurred. So nine years of slow growth have nevertheless driven us to the limit of our capacity to produce. Not only has the balance of payments gone into record deficit, but inflation, as we know—that judge and jury—is still climbing. It does not look like a supply side miracle.

Mr. John Marek (Wrexham): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for saying what he has. I remember the Chief Secretary not perhaps half an hour ago saying with great pride that we have been in the longest period of growth since the war. The right hon. Gentleman, however, quite rightly is painting the true picture. Would he say that the Chief Secretary was being slightly dishonest a little earlier?

Sir Ian Gilmour: Of course I would never say that my right hon. Friend was either slightly or in any way dishonest. No doubt there are different ways of looking at these matters. I am sure that everyone in the House has the highest respect for my right hon. Friend's integrity.

Not only is my right hon. Friend the Chancellor taking great risks in allowing the deficit to continue at such a high level, but I am not at all sure that the improvement that he forecasts, such as it is, will in fact take place. He appears to be forecasting a very bumpy soft landing, with growth continuing overall but with net exports steadily taking over from domestic demand. The trouble is that high interest rates act uncertainly, randomly and perhaps excessively on domestic demand, and they act perversely on net export demand by raising the exchange rate.

The worry is that the Chancellor's balance of payments forecast looks optimistic. As I understand the Red Book, he is forecasting nearly a 5 per cent. increase in exports this year and rather more than 5 per cent. in 1990, while he is forecasting only a 2·5 per cent. increase in imports in 1990. All that is well out of line with what has happened in the past decade.

If we take out oil, from 1979 to 1988 the average yearly increase in exports was about 2 per cent. and the average yearly increase in imports was about 5 per cent. So I am not persuaded that there are strong grounds for believing that the next two years will be so very different from the last nine—or that, unless there is a slump, which would certainly improve the balance of payments, this improvement will take place.

The Red Book talks about the extra capacity available from the current investment boom, but that is only recent. The total net investment between 1980 and 1987—namely, investment less capital consumption—has been 25 per cent. lower than in the 1960s and the 1970s, while net investment in manufacturing industry has been nil or even negative. Therefore, recent investment is unlikely to make up for the previous dearth.

The Chancellor appears to be taking a big risk in permitting the continuation of such a large balance of payments deficit, and he is taking a gamble in hoping that the improvement he forecasts will take place. Over the years, my right hon. Friend has been warned by many people, including myself, that we would be in trouble when North sea oil began to run down. He ignored those warnings and now the trouble has begun he is still refusing to act to improve our manufacturing performance. That is why the Budget, although tactically excellent, is strategically a failure.

5.23 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): It is not for the first time that I have found myself in agreement with much that the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) has said. It is not without significance that there is a common thread of criticism of the Budget strategy from different parties on this side of the House and from Conservative Members who are looking to the longer-term needs of the country. I disagree with the right hon. Gentleman, however, on one simple point. He quoted the Red Book forecasts and regarded them as unrealistic. I believe that the Chancellor has now conceded that point. I assume that, by indicating in the Budget statement yesterday that there would be no improvement in the balance of payments, he had abandoned his Red Book forecasts and the process of improvement which it is alleged is imminent.

Sir Ian Gilmour: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor is reckoning on an improvement, because the deterioration was so great in the second half of last year that to keep it the same this year means an improvement.

Mr. Beith: The Chancellor hopes that the Red Book forecasts will therefore merely enable the appalling balance of payments deficit to remain as bad as it is now.

Yesterday I argued that this was the Budget of a frightened Chancellor, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) added that it was a Budget of tiny measures. I shall start with the tiny measures and, of course, not all tiny measures are bad. There are a number of quite good ones that are worth commending.

The first measure that the Chancellor announced was something that we had pressed upon him, which was that the smaller firms' rate of corporation tax should be the subject of a higher threshold so that it would benefit more firms and benefit them to a greater extent. Small firms have experienced greater problems as a result of the current interest rates and exchange rates than larger firms, which on the whole have been able to cope quite well by hedging. It is only a third of the way that we asked the Chancellor to go, but nevertheless I welcome it. The charity VAT reliefs are also welcome. Although long awaited, the abolition of the earnings rule is no less welcome. Although I would have liked to see a 15 per cent. differential between the price of leaded and unleaded petrol, I hope that the 10p differential will prove sufficient to encourage universal use of lead-free petrol.

We welcome the improvements in incentives for employee share schemes and profit-related pay, to which we have long attached importance. I was disappointed by the little that the Chancellor did for savings. We argued that his PEPs scheme—much loved by himself but little loved by anyone else—was a vehicle that could be built on. He tried to do that, but he still did not do enough to make it attractive to new savers. He made it administratively simpler for new savers to participate, but the primary attraction of the scheme remains for people who have

[Mr. Beith]

already used up all their capital gains tax relief. It does not offer sufficient incentive to attract new savers into investing in industry, which is its purpose.

One of the Chancellor's small measures is in fact deplorable—tax relief for private medicine. He has diverted considerable funds to assist people who have already decided that they can afford to fund separately access to private health care, when those same funds could have been used in the National Health Service.

This Budget is paying for last year's mistakes. It is not simply a matter of saying that the Chancellor's tax cuts last year caused all the problems, although they contributed in large measure. It was a combination of tax cuts to those whose disposable incomes were already high and who therefore were more likely to spend their increased means on imported goods, together with the big bang, the credit expansion, the increased competition in credit, the intense salesmanship in credit in that more competitive period, and, of course, the decision to delay the ending of multiple mortgage tax relief until 1 August 1988. That clearly put a great deal of pressure on the housing market in the summer months of last year. That whole series of measures added together—some that the Chancellor was doing himself and others of which he should have been aware —led to that Budget having disastrous consequences.

The Chancellor has now sought to reconfirm that inflation is his overriding priority. One is bound to ask initially how it can be a problem. All the reasons that the Government used to advance for inflation relate to matters that they reckon to have disposed of: no longer do we have a public sector deficit generating inflation; no longer are the unions rampaging around the country forcing unrealistic pay increases; no longer can it be blamed on the Labour Government; and no longer can it be blamed on those favoured villians of the piece—the preceding Conservative Government so often criticised by—*[Interruption.]*—indeed, by Conservative Members.

How could inflation have happened when the Government were doing what they now say they will do —monitoring the growth of broad money? Is not that precisely what they have been doing? However, with all those measures, we have inflation touching 8 per cent. and a very worried Chancellor.

That inflation has determined the shape of the Budget. The Chancellor's remarks in the early part of his speech gave the impression that he was reasonably confident that he could soon get on top of the inflation problem—but his Budget measures reveal a different picture, and we must judge the Chancellor by his actions, not by his words.

He has avoided, because of his fear of the inflationary consequences, measures that he either wanted to implement or ought to have implemented. We saw none of his cherished standard rate tax cuts, and no additions to tax allowances over and above those required by inflation. We see the extraordinary step of not putting a penny on any of the many excise duties—for the pure and simple reason that it is a way of holding off an increase of half a percentage point on the retail prices index. There can be no other reason.

The Chancellor has received advice from within the Government and even from the Committee whose Chairman is the Leader of the House that the duty on alcohol ought at least to be indexed and that he should probably increase it by more than that, to make up for his failure to do so in previous years. The Chancellor's decision in that respect is a more vivid demonstration of his fears of inflation and of the inflation already built into the system than anything else.

The Chancellor reaffirmed his continuing dependence on high interest rates. That dependence on high interest and high exchange rates is also about preventing the re-importing of inflation. The Chancellor is fond of saying that underlying inflation is only 5 per cent., because he does not believe that mortgages really matter in inflationary terms. We disagree with him about that. Additionally, however, underlying inflation is a far more serious problem than is shown by that 5 per cent. increase. A great deal of our inflation has been exported as a result of the pound being high. If the value of the pound were now to fall, we would see that inflation re-exported into this country and a still higher domestic rate of inflation.

In addition to the factors known to be causes of inflation, if the Government's overriding priority is to tackle inflation, why are they increasing it themselves? Why have they selected measures that will increase prices and bear most heavily on the ordinary members of the community? I refer to public sector price increases relating to privatisation. Electricity charges have increased by 6·8 per cent. this year, on top of 10 per cent. last year. However, the prices that the Central Electricity Generating Board has to pay for oil and coal are down, so now is not a time when electricity prices should be increasing by 10 per cent. one year and 6·8 per cent. the next.

Water charges will increase by 9·8 per cent. this year, but for nearly one quarter of the population they will increase much more than that, by an average of 22 per cent. That was announced yesterday. The statutory water companies have said that that is so that they can cope with the effects of privatisation and can fit themselves into the new regime that the Government are introducing in their privatisation measures. The private water companies have long charged less than publicly owned water companies, but point out that the increases they are implementing now are the direct consequence of the regime that the Government are introducing in the course of privatisation. Health charges are also being increased. We are seeing a series of Government-sponsored inflationary measures.

The key sufferers will be the low-paid. I remind the Chief Secretary that it is very misleading to suggest—the newspapers are more guilty of this than the right hon. Gentleman—that all low-paid people will be £3 per week better off in respect of their national insurance contributions. The Chancellor has not organised his reforms of national insurance in such a way that they will secure such an improvement. He has not turned the threshold into an allowance, like a tax allowance, but has retained the arrangement whereby someone who falls within the national insurance bracket will immediately pay national insurance on the whole of his income, rather than on the amount of his income that is over the threshold level.

The practical effect is that only those people who enjoy just below, around or just above average earnings will benefit by a £3 per week reduction. Most of the low-paid will be lucky to enjoy a £1 improvement. Most people with an income below £110 per week will enjoy a reduction of between 81p and £1·30. As I pointed out earlier, those who are earning £70 a week will be only 21p per week better off.

As was pointed out in an intervention earlier, a family earning £85 per week will, after benefit withdrawals, be only 26p per week better off as a result of the Budget. Who can say that that is a Budget for the low-paid? A typical low-paid family will be in a ludicrous situation as a result of the Budget.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): The hon. Gentleman gives the right figures, but there is a very good reason for the situation that he describes. A family having an income of £1 or £2 per week less than the family he cited will be considerably better off and will enjoy the full £3 reduction. It is the anomaly of sudden steps under the existing system that my right hon. Friend's new measures are designed to eradicate.

Mr. Beith: Such a family will still not receive the full £3 reduction in their national insurance contribution. If they are lucky, they might be 61p better off, or £1·41 if they receive only £80 per week. Moreover, the figures I quoted took account of benefit withdrawals. The hon. Gentleman and the Government must consider more carefully the precise effects of the measures on people whom we all agree are low-paid. The Government have not achieved the objective that they set themselves.

None of the figures I quoted take account of the poll tax, increased council house rents or mortgages, higher water and electricity charges, and the loss of transitional payments for many people who depended on them after last year's housing benefit fiasco.

As the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham pointed out, the Government have failed to address the trade deficit problem. The Chancellor forecast a £4 billion deficit, but it is now £15 billion, and he forecast the same figure for next year. What has happened to the process by which that problem was to be cured? The Chancellor, Ministers and officials argued publicly and before the Treasury Select Committee that home demand would slacken and that resources would be applied instead to exports. However, in his forecast yesterday, the Chancellor recognised that if that process takes place at all, it will be sufficient only to maintain the trade deficit at its present level for the next year. That is inadequate, and the Chancellor should have addressed ways in which industry's competitiveness could be increased to cope with the trade deficit.

What better position could one be in than a Chancellor of the Exchequer presiding over an enormous surplus? It is ironic that the Chancellor has more money at his disposal than any of his predecessors, but he dare not spend it because of the danger of destroying confidence in so many of his previous policies.

One of the interesting points about the surplus is that about half of it is the result of asset sales. I refer to the privatisation of national industries, sales of council houses, and other disposals—much of which income should be re-invested in the economy. A business that sells off its assets looks at ways that it can re-invest, to equip itself for the future. It does not fritter that capital away, and does not necessarily use it to pay off its mortgages or existing borrowings—not if it can identify useful ways in which re-investment can help it to trade effectively in the future.

It is interesting to speculate why the forecast of the future surplus is low. Some commentators believe that the surplus will prove to be much higher than the Government predict, since the Government's growth forecast is surprisingly low. One wonders whether it represents the Conservative's secret war chest, and whether the Government will use it to disburse inflationary tax increases so close to a general election that inflation will not have time to work through before polling day. The Government are certainly understating the possible future surplus. I hate to shock the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who has a wonderful, unshockable look about him, with the suggestion that political considerations might enter the minds of Treasury Ministers.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Etterick and Lauderdale): My hon. Friend said that the Budget cruelly failed to deal with any of the problems of the lower income groups. However, he has not yet noted that under the new proposals concerning pensions for those earning up to £60,000 a year, we, the taxpayers, could contribute as much as £4,800 per annum.

Mr. Beith: I am glad that my right hon. Friend has applied his mind to the details of that section of the Budget. I noted that those proposals might require more detailed study.

Some of the uses to which the Chancellor could and should have put the surplus would have had few of the inflationary dangers that are implicit in the tax cuts that he rightly declined to make. It would be interesting to know at what stage he decided against going ahead with tax cuts. Was it when he received the retail price index figures the other day? Was it a week ago, a fortnight ago or a month ago? Perhaps we shall never know until he demits office and writes a book about it.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) suggested there has been an increase in tax privileges for higher-paid people. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced a restriction. The right hon. Gentleman has got it the wrong way round and should correct it.

Mr. Beith: My right hon. Friend has worked out precisely the amount by which tax relief can accrue up to the £60,000 ceiling. I am sure that we shall have a useful seminar on the details of this at a later date. I noted that the Chancellor had placed a ceiling on it, but it was quite high. Perhaps I can encourage my right hon. Friend to join me and the Financial Secretary on the Committee dealing with the Finance Bill.

I shall give some simple examples of ways in which the surplus could have been used that many people would have liked which would do some good and would have no inflationary consequences. Why did not the Chancellor take the opportunity to increase our overseas aid budget? Many of us feel that it would be reasonable to do so, and it would not have inflationary consequences. There is surely not such a desperate shortage of potential overseas aid field workers that huge wage inflation consequences would result. If we made more effort to help other countries it might result in long-term trading advantages.

Non-inflationary measures could have been taken in the home economy that would have helped to make industry more competitive, such as investment in training, in regional policy in areas where the economy is not overheated—and there are quite a number of those—and in environmental measures. The burden of such measures

[Mr. Beith]

is at present being placed on the consumer, of which the water industry is an obvious example. Skill shortages and bottlenecks in employment occur because people are unable to move to suitable low-cost housing. Investment in communications would not have been inflationary if it had been carefully tailored.

The Chancellor could have given more help to groups whose expenditure is so close to the breadline that it is the least inflationary. They will not rush out and buy imported goods, because their expenditure is so constrained that it will provide only a little extra for food and basic essentials. I heard the hon. Gentleman mutter, "Cigarettes" sotto voce, which is an extraordinary comment to make given that the Budget failed to increase the tax on tobacco.

Mr. Major: I said no such thing.

Mr. Beith: I attributed it to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, unless there is a ventriloquist on the Government Benches.

We should have had a Budget for the future, but we have a sackcloth and ashes Budget in which the Chancellor has said, "I got it wrong." The result is a Budget of missed opportunities, which does not tackle the problems at the heart of our balance of trade deficit. It does precious little for the environment and next to nothing for the low-paid.

The confident Chancellor has been replaced by the chastened Chancellor. We have yet to see the compassionate Chancellor or the constructive Chancellor. That transformation will not be achieved by the present occupant of the office or any of the prime ministerial favourites who are sometimes discussed as possible replacements for him. Indeed, I do not think that it will be achieved under this Government.

5.43 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Like my right hon. and hon. Friends and many commentators elsewhere, I applaud my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for his unequivocal warning in the Budget that inflation is the greatest threat to this country's renewed prosperity and for his clear signal that the fight against inflation will continue to be his overriding priority.

If my right hon. Friend had not adopted such an explicit anti-inflationary stance, I am certain that the international money markets would instantly have taken a jaundiced view of sterling. If they did so, it would lead, in short order, to more costly imports and upward pressure on inflation in the sort of sprial that was uncomfortably familiar before 1979. Instead, the initial response of the currency markets seems to have been firm for sterling, which seems to suggest that my right hon. Friend's message that caution is his watchword has been well received in the quarters where it counts.

No doubt the achievements of the British economy in the 1980s's, which my right hon. Friend listed in his opening remarks of his Budget speech, will have helped to remind his wider audience how far Britain has progressed over the past decade. The longest period of sustained economic growth since the second world war, substantial improvements in productivity, capital investment outpacing consumption, higher exports and a record number of people in work are features of a healthy economy that must not be allowed to succumb again to the disease of inflation.

The dead hand of Socialism, state intervention and the mindless self-interest of undisciplined trade unions are things of the past. Britain is now confident enough to know that enterprise and individual ownership stimulate the creation of wealth, by which the nation can afford the means to care for those in genuine need. That is why growth in gross domestic product, reduction in national debt and greatly increased public spending have become a reality at one and the same time, and why inflation is rightly regarded by my right hon. Friend as a sinister threat that could undo so much of what has recently been achieved.

To the extent that my right hon. Friend left himself some room for tax changes, within the constraints of a balanced Budget dominated by such a large public sector debt repayment, he should be congratulated on targeting extra relief for pensioners and people on lower-than-average earnings. Neither group looms large in consumer spending, but both will welcome greater help.

Changes in employees' national insurance contributions are one of the most efficient ways of putting more money in the pockets of the lower-paid and alleviating the poverty trap without fuelling greater spending power among the better-off. I hope that my right hon. Friend's proposal will be the first of several steps in this direction during the remainder of this Parliament.

The earnings rule has long been an iniquitous charge on the old-age pension, which individuals have contracted in good faith with the state through regular national insurance contributions. To have that contract with the state broken and the old-age pension reduced, simply because an individual chooses to work after the statutory retirement age, has always seemed to be daylight robbery without a shred of actuarial justification. The proposal to abolish the earnings rule is long overdue. It is especially timely as the labour force of normal working age is shrinking, and active and experienced minds and hands aged over 60 or 65 will be in progressively greater demand.

The extension of the higher age allowance from those aged 80 and over to those aged 75 and above is another important move because it will bring some relief to pensioners of an age who may justifiably feel that the economic boom of the 1980s has, to some extent, passed them by. They retired a decade or more ago before the state earnings-related pension scheme was under way, so many receive no more than a token ex gratia payment from their employers, the basic old-age pension and perhaps a modest income from savings. They are just above the income support bracket and do not have an occupational pension. They are a stark exception to the Government's accurate—but in this context confusing—assertion that the average income of pensioners has risen 23 per cent. more than inflation since 1979. The average is no doubt correct, but the pensioners to whom I allude have not kept up with the average, and those who qualify for the higher level of age allowance sorely need the proposed relief.

There will be many such beneficiaries from this proposal in my constituency, who have raised families, fought wars and paid their taxes throughout their working lives without demanding a penny of social security, except perhaps housing benefit to relieve their rates bill. They deserve the extra allowance that has been proposed and I

hope that my right hon. Friend has it in mind to lower the qualifying age for the higher level to 70 and over before long to cater for women who retired at 60 a decade ago.

Of my right hon. Friend's other measures, the proposals to encourage wider share ownership, and the further incentives for personal savings, are welcome, but they will need to be promoted more vigorously than has been the case with previous schemes if they are to have the desired effect.

In the corporate sector, the changes in profit limits for small companies' corporation tax will provide an important stimulus for retained earnings in many developing businesses. By contrast, however, the changes in tax on company cars will no doubt be met with howls of displeasure in some quarters. I trust that my right hon. Friend will ignore the protests, because the benefit in kind of a company car will remain a substantial perk. I have no doubt that, even after the latest scale changes, the underlying benefit in kind is a significant addition to salary.

I hope the day will come when a purist approach to tax reform can be taken, with a much lower basic rate, funded by full taxation of benefits and the abolition of mortgage interest relief, which I raised in Committee on last year's Finance Bill. It would be a fairer system in the end, but, for the time being, some anomalies are expedient. Thus, in the medium term at least, tax relief on private medical insurance will serve to shift many people from National Health Service waiting lists to the private sector, to the immediate advantage of others further down the NHS waiting lists.

While my right hon. Friend's Budget proposals are suitably cautious for the uncertain circumstances that prevail in the face of higher inflation, it is difficult to ignore the external factors beyond his control, which could yet put a strain on our economic performance. Worries about the United States trade deficit, and an upward movement in interest rates in the United States and elsewhere, could yet put sterling under pressure, with inflationary consequences in this country, in spite of my right hon. Friend's determination to maintain high interest rates here as long as they are needed.

There are two other factors that I should like to mention. First, employers and employees will have to reach pay settlements within the rate of inflation if interest rates are to bite into consumer spending and into higher levels of personal debt. Higher pay settlements will simply nullify the interest rate medicine.

Secondly, it would be unwise to assume that the supply side transformation is by any means fully accomplished. The removal of controls, the shake-out of surplus labour and more flexible employment legislation have all been vital to business, but that does not mean that manufacturing industry can respond, at the drop of a hat, to the expected lower levels of domestic demand and achieve instant export gains in order to alleviate the balance of payments deficit overnight. As the House knows well, export markets are much more complex than that, and changes in business direction need rather more time for product planning and marketing than is sometimes suggested.

In order to complete the supply side transformation, the United Kingdom business environment still needs to step up a gear, with more skills training, more enterprising and internationalist management, and greater investment in research and development from the private sector. Further changes are needed from the Government as well, including amendments to financial services legislation, and a much more efficient transportation infrastructure—to highlight just two areas.

Much remains to be done, but my right hon. Friend's Budget proposals address the immediate inflationary circumstances with realism. They are sound measures, which are most welcome.

5.54 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): When considering the effects of this Budget, one has to take into account what the Government have done in total. One cannot isolate the Budget from the total package—the legislation that the Government have introduced and the actions they have taken over the past 10 years. This Government can no longer hide behind the Labour Government of 1974-79. They can no longer blame the previous Government. They have been in office almost exactly 10 years, and they must be prepared to stand up and defend their record—and what an appalling record it is, so far as the majority in this country are concerned.

It cannot be claimed that this is a Budget for the poor or the low earners. That would be a total fallacy. The Government must accept that they have forced people into low pay and poverty—whether they be unemployed, pensioners or, indeed, people in employment. Workers have been forced to take lower pay as a result of this Government's action over a period of years. Government Members have often said that low pay is better than no pay. While there may be some truth in that statement, I do not accept the basis on which it is made. It is time to say that fair pay is better than no pay. Fair pay and fair conditions are what we should be working for, but those things are not acceptable to Tory Members.

Let me give some examples of the way in which the Government have attacked the lower-paid over the last two years. We know what they have done to curtail the wages councils. We know what they are doing to reduce the protection afforded to some of the lowest paid. The Employment Bill, which is now going through Parliament, will result in people being denied benefit if they refuse a job on grounds of pay. Indeed, I am currently dealing with constituents who have been refused benefit because, according to the Department of Employment, under the current rules governing availability for work, they went too far by asking for £80 a week. In 1989, £80 a week is very much on the low side for a married person with a family, even in a low-pay area such as north-east Lancashire. That is what the Government have done.

In transport, let me mention the Government's competition policies. They claim that the new transport law has saved money for the country. How has it saved money for the country? By giving a worse package of conditions to the people employed in the industry. Almost all of those who work on the buses have worse conditions of employment now than they had before that legislation was passed.

Then there is the Local Government Act that was passed last year. When local authorities are compelled to go out to competitive tendering they cannot lay down any conditions with regard to conditions of employment. The sole purpose is to worsen the working conditions and reduce the pay of employees. In response to a debate in Committee, the Minister said that many local authorities

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

have to put up with restrictive practices. He said that it was appalling that people working on Sundays had to be paid double time, that competitors could get them to work for time and a half, or ordinary time, or even less. Of course there is some truth in that. The present levels of unemployment make some people willing to accept conditions that they would not otherwise accept. But that does not make it right. The Minister said that Labour Members were defending the unions and attacking people's right to work and that, in his view, that was quite appalling. So long as I am in this House—and I know that this applies to my colleagues also—I will fight to protect the conditions of working people.

The claim that this Budget will help working people is galling. A person earning £10,000 a year will be better off by £45 a year. For a person earning £28,000 a year, the saving will go up to £282. Again, the higher-paid benefit. A person on £50 a week will be £1·01 better off because of the national insurance saving. Of course, we welcome what is being done about national insurance, but it does not go far enough. A person on £600 a week will save £6·63, £1·21 of it national insurance. The Government could have increased the level at which national insurance contributions start. Yesterday, the Chancellor's excuse for not doing so was that it was a system of benefit relative to contributions, but we have always had a scale on which some people are exempt. Whether the figure is £43, £53 or £60 is something that the Government could determine. If they had wanted to take more people out of the national insurance bracket, they could have done so.

The Government could also have helped the lower-paid by increasing the single and married person's allowances more than they did. Instead, they increased them to just slightly above the minimum established by previous Finance Acts. This is not a Budget for the poor or the low-paid.

Since 1979, £23 billion has been handed out to the top 1 per cent. of taxpayers. Combining this and last year's Budget, the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers have had more handed out to them than the lowest 70 per cent. put together. That may be justice and equity for the Tory party but it is not for the majority of people.

Next month, the people of Scotland will pay the poll tax for the first time, and next year it will come into force in England and Wales. I accept that there are many anomalies in the present rating system, but the poll tax replaces a system that has existed for many years with a tax that is dearer to collect and has no fairness or equity because it does not take into account ability to pay. That must be wrong and it must be condemned. I am sure that the Government will find that the British people overwhelmingly reject it.

Some 200,000 pensioners on income support, who were on supplementary benefit before the changes introduced in April 1988, will receive no increase. The protection that they enjoyed last year, and will enjoy again this year, means that they have not suffered a cut in cash terms, but, with inflation running at 7·5 per cent. and having increased last year, they are now at least 10 per cent. worse off in real terms than they were before April last year.

A further 300,000 pensioners on income support, who were on supplementary benefit before April last year, will not receive a full increase this year, although they will receive something. Those in receipt of housing benefit transitional payments will also find that they will not receive the full uprating of benefit. They will not be very happy with a Budget that is supposed to be helping the lower paid and the poorer people.

We know that the increases in mortgage interest rates have affected many people purchasing their houses over the past year, and we know too how the Government's policies have affected rents. In 1979, my local authority in Burnley received a subsidy of £1·6 million to help those renting their houses, but for the past few years it has received nothing. That shows clearly where the pressure to increase rents comes from.

One factor that will soon have to be taken into account in considering whether people are eligible for the full housing benefit is whether they live in a bigger house than they need. An elderly couple living in the four-bedroomed house in which their family grew up may not wish to move. They will not recieve the full housing benefit because they will be deemed by the Government not to need such a big house. That may be true, but at the end of the day the Government talk of choice. People will not welcome the removal of their choice to continue to live in the house that they have lived in for many years.

When the Government talk of choice they link it with the ability to pay. That is the big qualification. What we should be talking about is opportunity—the opportunity for people to have decent education, decent housing and a decent Health Service, regardless of their ability to pay. It is particularly important that children should not have their educational rights limited because of the inability of their parents to meet the cost of student grants, or loans, as they may be in the not too distant future.

I welcome the tax concession on unleaded petrol as a move in the right direction. However, if the Government were serious about protecting the environment, they could have increased that figure. They claim to be the green party, concerned about the environment, but profitability and cost always come first for the Conservative party. They will always be overriding factors whatever is being considered.

When we consider the Water Bill, currently going through Parliament, the quality of our bathing water and beaches, the deterioration of river quality and our drinking water quality, which fails to meet the EEC guidelines, we know our failures. If the Water Bill is to be enforced through the National Rivers Authority, there will be a considerable improvement, but there have already been derogations and concessions to allow more time.

The Government know that nobody will invest money in the water industry unless they write off considerable amounts of debt and considerably relax the limits on the time allowed to deal with the problems of pollution to ensure that we bring our water, rivers and beaches and sewage treatment works up to the required standard. Unless the Government fiddle the figures and dodge the issues, they know that people will not put their money in the industry. That is why the Government announced yesterday that people will be able to put some of the money in their personal equity plans into the privatised industries. They have to do everything possible to persuade people that that is where they should be putting their money.

The Government have a surplus of £15 billion, but they are unable to deal with the problems of our water, rivers and waste tips. The Select Committee on the Environment was unanimous in its report published last week that it was

a miracle that we had not had a disaster as a result of contamination, or an explosion. That is a failure of Government. The Government will not take enough action on chlorofluorocarbons and all the other issues, because for them money is the most important thing.

Manufacturing industry still has a massive trading deficit—the £3 billion surplus in 1979 has become a £20 billion deficit. At the end of the day, the manufacturing industries are Britain's bread and butter. We must get our manufacturing industry into surplus if Britain is to have a future—that does not mean that I dismiss the importance of the service industries and tourism—they are important and we want to develop them and do well from them—but at the end of the day manufacturing is our base and our future depends on it. That is what our past was built on and we must get it right. There is no way in which the Government can do that because they do not believe that it is their problem. Until they recognise the problems of manufacturing industry, we shall not find the cure.

An increase in interest rates from 7·5 per cent. to 13 per cent. affects investment in manufacturing industry and its ability to compete abroad. Energy costs are rising again. There is to be an increase in electricity charges in excess of 6 per cent. That is at a time when the price of coal and other costs have been going down, and when the cost of energy, in relative terms, for industry should have been reduced. One of our industrialists' biggest anxieties is not wages or rates but comparative energy costs, which are far higher in Britain than elsewhere in the EEC, and they are being deliberately forced up again by the Government. In addition, a 22 per cent. increase in water charges is to be imposed by the private statutory water undertakings. The Minister said that they were already private. So they are, but they are controlled under different legislation than will be the position when the Water Bill is passed. The statutory water undertakers were asking not for 22 but 50 per cent. until the Minister intervened.

Mr. Mans: When foreigners consider investing in this country they look not only to energy costs but to industrial relations, and in the past the latter has been one of the main factors why they have refused to invest here.

Mr. Pike: That claim is exaggerated, and, being a Lancashire Member himself, the hon. Gentleman must know that our area has a history of good industrial relations. Yet Burnley, in north-east Lancashire, is the fastest shrinking town in England. It has lost 9·7 per cent. of its population because of the decline in manufacturing industry. People are leaving to look for jobs and we have many empty houses. The same applies to Pendle, Rossendale, Hyndburn and other places in north-east Lancashire.

In the way that people moved in the 1930s, so today people are moving from Lancashire to seek work in those areas which the Government are encouraging and developing. We want more jobs brought to our areas. The Government must have a positive policy of direction of industry, with proper regional policies. We must have good communications by road and rail to encourage investment in north-east Lancashire and the north-west.

We can have no optimism on that score in view of what the Conservatives did when they came into power in 1979. Having brought about industrial closures, they then created a consumer demand, which we then were unable to meet. To meet it, we had to suck in exports. We are still doing that, and the process will continue until we enlarge our own manufacturing base.

While investment is slightly ahead of what it was in 1979, there are exceptions in some parts of the nation. We have had a low rate of investment for the last 10 years in manufacturing industry. We shall have to pay the price for that in the coming years, and the Conservatives will be held responsible for that.

In constant terms, output in the north-west is 19 per cent. down. It now stands at £7·453 million, compared with £9·171 million in 1986. Investment is 38 per cent. down over the same period. Indeed, in the year 1985-86 there was a drop of 10 per cent. in investment in the north-west, that despite the fact that the north-west and Lancashire is a key manufacturing region in which we should be investing. Employment in manufacturing industry fell by 38 per cent. between 1979 to 1986. About 34 per cent. of the total work force in 1979 was engaged in manufacturing industry. By 1988, that had fallen to 23 per cent.

The EEC announced recently, under objective 2 of its regional economic development fund, wide extensions of areas for benefit, and today most of Lancashire and large parts of the north-west are covered by objective 2. That state of affairs has come about because of the failure of the Government to develop the regions to their full potential. In addition, the whole of Northern Ireland is covered by objective 1 of the EEC's regional economic development fund plans.

We have the largest share of objective 2 money of any EEC country, with 20 million people in the United Kingdom living in areas receiving objective 2 assistance. In other words, 39 per cent. of the Community population eligible for this assistance live in the United Kingdom, plus those who live in Northern Ireland coming within objective one.

We must ensure that those funds from Europe reach their target. The British Government must not make that money subject to additionality, so that we finish up losing Government resources in the way that has happened in the past. It must be additional money. The areas concerned must benefit, and the Government must not take it from them.

Considering that the Government had a surplus of £14 billion, one wonders why they have not done more to tackle the many housing problems that exist. Five areas in my part of the world—they are not all Labour-controlled; one is Conservative and one is Liberal—Burnley, Pendle, Rossendale, Ribble Valley and Blackburn, had an HIP allocation, in constant terms, of £59,730,000, but their bid in 1979 was for £67,916,000. That represented 83 per cent. of the bid. The bid for the current year for those areas is £47,709,000, and they are getting £9,900,000, or only 21 per cent. of the bid. They have appalling housing conditions and need a great deal of money to effect improvements. That is an indictment of the Government's record, particularly in view of the enormous surplus available to them.

The Chancellor is in a cleft stick. He dare not allow inflation to rise, so he cannot spend money where it should be spent. The Government are failing all along the line. That will continue to be the story until we have a change of Government and a new Chancellor.

For its inner-city programme, Burnley received in 1988-89 £1·8 million, and in the current year it is receiving

[Mr. Pike]

slightly more, £1·89 million. But that represents a cut in real terms. The eight areas in the north-west received £43,250,000 in 1988-1989, and collectively they will be receiving, in 1989-90, £42,903,000, yet the Government have declared that they want inner-city improvements to be a priority.

The Government announce new schemes and produce glossy booklets about the inner cities and so on, but as the booklets become more glossy, the packages have less content, and the problems continue to exist. When they give local authorities money to deal with local problems, they are really only returning to those authorities a fraction of what they have taken from them in the last 10 years.

Lancashire put in a bid for £34 million for its educational capital expenditure. The area is committed to spending £16 million on schools alone, yet it received an allocation of only £13·5 million. School buildings remain in urgent need of repair, yet it is well known that investment in schools has a strong bearing on the education of our children.

My area sought £27·5 million for roads expenditure, but received an allocation of £12·82 million. All around us we see decay and decline as a result of the Government's failure to tackle the transport and other problems of communication. Conservative Members may not like to hear these facts, but they are true, and they will ensure that, when the next general election takes place, the people will vote for a party and for policies which will tackle these problems and ensure that people have a decent standard of living and a fairer deal than they will ever get under Toryism.

A wind of change is blowing across the nation. People throughout the country can feel it. Only Conservative Members fail to recognise its existence. Many of them occupy marginal seats. I advise them to seek safer seats or to look for other jobs. They might then make a better contribution than they are making in the House to the well-being of the British people.

6.19 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): As I listened to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) I began to fear that indignation would inhibit peroration, but I was delighted that we were taken for a tour. The hon. Gentleman demonstrated in graphic form the values and judgments by which he hopes to fight, and triumph at, the next election. This is a Budget that is necessarily related to that future election, so we should not in any sense be self-effacing but should put our value judgments before the House, even at this early stage.

I know that there is great potential pedantry about considering Budgets present and Budgets past and I should like to make a passing reflection. Last year, when we had a Budget, we had evident and emerging inflation. We had a substantial Government surplus and a most ambitious range of direct tax cuts which, it was alleged, would be non-inflationary because of the absence of a Government public sector borrowing requirement. This year—the stage is reasonably familiar—we have established inflation and an even greater Government surplus, but there has been a delicacy, a development, a nuance. No longer are we given the prospect of substantial tax cuts to give emphasis to supply side economics. We are told that they must be reined back almost in their totality to secure a more progressive addressing of inflation.

I welcome these changes. I have no wish to be personal, but I feel as though my mere rowing boat were taking on the full complement of the Titanic. Make no mistake, the House is being asked to consider a redirection of economic policy—in a direction that is welcome but none the less offers clear prospects and disciplines to both sides of the House about the development towards a general election. There is an initial stage, which is the business of dealing with inflation at a high and challenging level and which will require compelling and consistent policies. That initial challenge successfully surmounted, we come to the second stage—how the two sides of the House will consider the use of a Government surplus which is not intended to be permanent and which exists for use in public spending, taxation and reassessed debt repayment, all of which will engage judgments that are central to the conduct of the next general election.

Opposition Front-Bench Members agree in their hearts with every word I say. What was fascinating about the speech by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) was not that it had all the advocate's professionalism but that it did not say, "Here is a cautious Administration which has the capacity to use £14 billion to regenerate the economy and bring about higher levels of activity and lower unit costs, thus having an impact on inflation." There was none of that. The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows perfectly well that he would like to sit this one out. He would like to be around to benefit from the inevitable difficulties that arise in reducing inflation. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is taking no view on the £14 billion surplus which is to be used for accelerated repayment of the national debt.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman shows good strategic sense. He leaves it to the hon. Member for Burnley—I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not leave the Chamber when all these plaudits are to be heaped upon him—and the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) who had a litany of public spending increases which they thought were instantly appropriate to deal with the current position and which were made plausible by the existence of a £14 billion Government surplus. We have been given a useful insight into the Opposition's tactics over the coming months. On the Front Bench there will be sobriety and moderation of the most impeccable kind while the rough stuff will be delegated to the franc-tireurs from the Back Benches who will argue without inhibition the true causes that they champion.

I should like to speak about the two facets of the Budget position—inflation and the Government's surplus. My right hon. and hon. Friends should be under no illusion that the present inflationary climate is serious and that its overcoming does not invite analogies with soft landings. Such analogies induce a sense of good-natured optimism about the quality of Front Benches and the general nature of good luck in public life, and on the whole are matters that we would do well without.

At 8 per cent., the inflation figure is much higher than anyone would have forecast a year ago. I take no view as to whether the Treasury is optimistic in the downward trend that has been predicted. I notice that today in *The Times* Mr. Tim Congdon, who probably has as good a track record as any commentator on these affairs, has written:

"all previous cyclical experience is that, once a credit-driven boom has started, it takes much longer than expected to bring inflation under control."

We could add to that from our anecdotal experiences.

I believe—I realise that this will not be accepted by the hon. Member for Burnley—that the labour market today tells us the story not of the 2 million unemployed, with its echoes of the 1930s, but of high levels of activity in the economy and emerging shortages of labour throughout the country. As Government statistics are somewhat at a discount these days, certainly for the Opposition—*[Interruption.]* well, "Whom God hath joined . . ."—I shall quote from the fourth quarterly survey of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce, which said:

"It is therefore abundantly clear that skills and labour shortages are widespread and not at all confined to the South East."

I understand that interest rates are the primary weapon of my right hon. and hon. Friends—it is a distinguished Treasury Bench at present. I fully understand that that has serious economic and political short-term consequences; none the less, it is the central weapon, and I believe that they are right to make it such.

I recognise that there are always siren calls about physical controls of credit, but those calls are generally made in headlines and not in footnotes. I suspect that such physical controls are inoperable as an adjunct to my right hon. and hon. Friends' monetary policy. They are unwise, none the less, to give any credence to the cruel jibe that the Chancellor has only one club in playing this game of golf —a point made last year. Therefore, I ask, what gilt funding policy will they pursue in the context of a £14 billion debt repayment, since this could well supplement interest rate policy? I hope that, before the debate is through, they will say how they interpret that situation and opportunity.

Let us consider the challenge that both parties will face come the next general election, when we shall have to decide how to present our cause and our aspirations to the public we serve. We do not know how long it will take to bring down the rate of inflation. I think that the process will be slower rather than quicker, although it is in the interests of all of us—economic as well as political—for the process to be as quick as possible. Having said that, I assume that, by the time of the next general election, there will be a genuine public debate about what we should do with a public sector repayment figure of something like the magnitude that the papers issued with the Budget suggest.

The background against which we shall fight the next election, which I assume will be in 1991, will not be the same as the background to the previous election: 1991 will not be a re-run of 1987. Let us not think that inflation will have abated only to allow a recrudescence of the consumer boom. The social and political atmosphere will be quite different, and I think that there will be a stronger case to be made for the Tory tradition of social spending than hitherto.

I yield to no one in my commitment to market economics and economic liberalism, but I have always regarded that as part of a balanced ticket—with the mechanics of wealth creation on the one hand, and what we do with wealth in the public sector on the other. A public sector policy does not undermine the free enterprise ethic—indeed, it sustains it, because we live in a society in which there is the expectation of public collective provision in social policy. I shall choose only two examples—education and health. I have studied the spending plans for 1989-90 to 1991-92, elaborated in Cmnd. 621. A look at the planning totals in real terms shows that for the National Health Service the increase is about 5 per cent. and for education there is no increase. We have in prospect a chance to remedy that. We have in prospect a chance to preach a message of collective provision and investment which stands in the long tradition of Tory Chancellors and Tory Governments.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health will have a great role to play in all this. He has taken to phrase-making—always a high-risk strategy for a politician to adopt. He talks of "wallet-reaching". The people who will have to do the wallet-reaching for the Health Service before the next general election are Treasury Ministers, and that attitude will have to be broadened to cover other aspects of social policy, including infrastructure and education. I must say to the Government and to my hon. Friend in general that if in 1991 we are not inspired in social policy by one-nation Toryism, that if we do not master the language, rhetoric and reality of one-nation Toryism, the nation will master us.

6.33 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): It seems to me that the Government rely on image and presentation. Their idea seems to be to create an initial impression—before the facts have been checked—and hope that it will stick later. No one will have been left with the impression that the social spending to which the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) referred has started with this year's Budget. The Budget was heralded in the press as a Budget for the low-paid and pensioners. The impression has been given that, although the Government did much to help the richest last year, it will be the turn of the low-paid and the pensioners this year. That argument is belied by the facts of taxation changes, compounded with social security changes.

We have made a start, at least. The Government now actually accept that low pay exists. I served recently on the Standing Committee on the Social Security Bill. It was with some difficulty that we convinced the Minister that some of the pay on offer in Britain is incredibly low by modern standards and by the standards that we ourselves would be prepared to accept. When I pointed out that in my constituency £2 an hour and less was being offered for some jobs and my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) gave similar figures, the Minister asked the civil servants to telephone the jobcentres to check whether our figures were correct. He did not believe them. Those figures have been confirmed. Nearly a third of the work force—9·9 million people—earn less than two thirds of the average wage.

We ought to scotch the rumour that this is the Budget of the low-paid and the pensioners. The Chancellor sets his speech in the context of the medium-term financial strategy. A two-tier economy is developing as a result of that stategy. On the one hand, we have those in relatively secure, reasonably paid work who may receive decent pensions while on the other we have those in part-time, temporary, low-paid work. The Budget serves to reinforce that divide in the economy.

We need to challenge the media myth that one can tackle poverty simply by reforming the national insurance

[Mr. John Battle]

contributions. The changes will not put an end to wage bunching just below the threshold, because what people will gain in earnings through the national insurance changes they will lose as they lose their entitlement to benefit.

The Government say that the Opposition have no policies. We are entitled to ask them why they have failed to do as we suggested and turn the national insurance earnings limit into an allowance. That would go somewhere near to breaking people out of the poverty trap. I note that the Chancellor steered clear of increasing allowances by any more than he was legally obliged to increase them. The Chancellor tells us that he has taken from us more than he needed but that he dare not give it back because he is scared of the effect on inflation.

Let us consider in detail the changes in national insurance contributions. Anyone earning more than £43 a week must now pay 2 per cent. in national insurance on the first £43 and 9 per cent. on earnings over that amount. It has been suggested that a step-by-step gradation is being replaced by a straight line. In fact, the earnings of low-paid workers—especially women who work part-time—will still be bunched at £43 a week and below, but they will not now be entitled to essential benefits such as maternity allowance, family credit, unemployment benefit and housing benefit. In other words, they will lose as a result of the changes. Moreover, as employers' national insurance contributions have not changed, employers will still want to keep wages below the national insurance contribution threshold. The Chancellor's national insurance reforms will give less than £1 to 5 million people earning less than £100 a week.

Our proposals for an allowance system would have nearly doubled that gain. But the injustice is perpetuated because those earning more than £15,800 will continue to pay no extra national insurance contributions on anything they earn over that amount. Last year's injustice, whereby the rich gained the most and the poor gained the least or lost out, remains built into this year's Budget. The unemployed, pensioners living on the state pension and women receiving child benefit gain nothing from the Budget. It is worth reminding the Chancellor that 48·1 per cent. of female manual workers in full-time employment earn less than £100 a week. According to the recently published new earnings survey, the bottom 10 per cent. of the earnings distribution now receive only 31·3 per cent. of the gross weekly earnings of the top 10 per cent. compared with 42·3 per cent. in 1978.

The proportion of male full-time workers earning less than the Council of Europe decency threshold has doubled since 1979. It is notable that, although the Government use the rhetoric of Europe and 1992, they are not yet prepared to accept the Council of Europe decency threshold of two thirds of the average wage as a means of assessing low pay. More than 50 per cent. of adult women in full-time employment earn less than that decency threshold. The tax burden of a married couple on three quarters of average earnings has increased. The figures that Ministers have given in answer to questions in the past weeks and months demonstrate that, although the Government have refused to acknowledge it.

Many people in Britain earn well below the average wage of £254, around which the Government base their figures and statistics. Not only are the earnings of the lowest-paid male manual workers lower compared with the average wage than they were in 1986, but the Government's failure to uprate personal allowances and thresholds by earnings levels means that an additional 160,000 families on low incomes will pay income tax. That is the economic reality of the Budget. Those people will be brought into tax because the Chancellor has done nothing to tackle the inequitable nature of the income tax structure. With a mere two bands the Government are perpetuating the injustice of a tax system operating on a huge ratchet mechanism—those at the top of the ladder get the most every time there is a step up. That has not been changed.

The Government's failure to enmesh the tax system with the benefit system through the eligibility of those in low pay to family credit and housing benefit is surprising. It is a classic case of giving with one hand and taking away with the other. Because means-tested benefits are based on net income, any rise in net income will reduce the total benefits received, so that tax cuts have little or no effect on the poverty trap as people lose access to benefit. As the Chief Secretary to the Treasury conceded in reply to my intervention, what is offered as a teaspoonful of aid will be meaningless as the Government's hand seems to be around the windpipe of the main benefits structure so that people lose.

On 10 April there will be effectively another Budget—the budget for the poor, in which benefits will be uprated by 5·9 per cent. That increase is below the inflation figure that the Government have accepted in the Budget. In two weeks' time poor people will be worse off as a result of the Budget.

To tackle low pay and end the poverty trap, we need to raise non-means-tested benefit. What could be better than raising child benefit instead of freezing it year after year in the hope that it will eventually fade away? That is the best means of tackling family poverty. Another way of tackling low pay and ending the poverty trap would be to ensure that basic wage rates increase in relation to the average wage and are not so low that people need to claim benefit to supplement them.

I do not believe that the Government intend to eradicate low pay. The Chancellor referred to the Social Security Bill, but he did not refer to the fact that the central aim of that Bill, which has completed its consideration in Committee and will soon return to the House, is to force people to accept any level of remuneration however low or they will lose access to unemployment benefit. The Bill states that the level of remuneration will no longer be a good cause for not accepting a job. That is a charter for a low-wage economy.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I am sure that my hon. Friend will recall that I told him that home workers in my constituency earn as little as 24p an hour packing Christmas cards, yet those Christmas cards were being sold in Woolworths for £1·69 a pack. That is the reality of the Chancellor's strategy for low pay.

Mr. Battle: It is worth reiterating that 24p an hour is being offered for hard work, not light work. That is a scandal and a disgrace.

The principles of the Social Security Bill will mean that people will no longer be classed as unemployed. In case hon. Members think that unemployment is not an issue in

the Budget, paragraph 3·04 of the Red Book states that employment is unlikely to rise. That can only mean that unemployment is expected to rise. That is the underlying strategy in the Budget, which is based on the fact that unemployment will not continue to go down but will rise. But unemployment will no longer be seen to rise, because those who do not accept low-paid jobs will be taken out of the system altogether. There will be no cost to the state in increased social security payments because the state will not pay. As has happened before, unemployment will become a tool to force people into work.

America now has its lowest unemployment ever, 5·1 per cent. What is the response? There is no celebration that people are finding jobs and contributing to society. The response is that there was an emerging skills shortage. Conservative Members have used that phrase this afternoon. In their terms it means that there may be increased wage demands which they see as inflationary; therefore, there has to be a pool of unemployment to drive down wages. That is the basis of the Government's strategy in the Social Security Bill, which is not about raising benefit but about building low pay into the benefit structure.

The Government's intention will be reinforced by the dismantling of the wages councils, which offer only minimal wage conditions. It is worth reminding the House of the figures. In the clothing and textile industry, the wages council level has been set at £1·99 an hour for some years. In Bramley jobcentre, in my constituency, job machinists are offered work at £2 an hour—1p above the wages council minimum. What will happen when the wages councils are dismantled? Does anyone imagine that the wages of job machinists will go up? Of course they will not; they will go down. The Government's real contribution to the low-paid will be to price more people into low pay and trap them in the part-time, low-paid temporary sector of the economy.

Contrary to what Conservative Members have said, the great weakness in the Budget is that there is no ending of the tax on child care—the one thing that would enable women to take full-time, permanent and relatively secure jobs. Women will still be trapped in part-time, temporary and low-paid work. It is not, as one journalist reported this morning, that the Chancellor's

"conscience has caught up with him".

However, the unemployed and low-paid who are forced to pay the price for the Government's policies will catch up with his conscience.

The majority of pensioners have not gained from the Budget. If the Chancellor really wanted to help pensioners, he would remove the £8,000 ceiling on savings for pensioners on housing benefit, which not only acts as a disincentive to save but means that they lose their housing benefit. If the Chancellor had restored the link between the rise in pensions and earnings, and pensions had risen at the same rate as inflation since 1979, from 10 April a weekly single pension would now be worth an extra £9·70, and that for a couple would be worth an extra £15·45.

Pensioners in our society who depend on state pensions have been short-changed for years. I received a letter from a pensioner in my constituency which said:

"If you are unlucky enough like me to be 68 and on income support you get the increase on your little pension (I don't get a full pension), straight away your income support withdraws it from you so you are back to square one . . . Seems to me Sir that those who have have more, people like myself and goodness knows there are plenty of us, will still have to struggle."

That is the equation—pensioners feel that this is not their Budget because they will be back to square one when the impact of the changes in social security and the changes in the Bill are taken into account.

The Budget contains proposals and changes for those approaching retirement and for those in work who will benefit from the incentives and the subsidies to private pension schemes, which undermine the SERPS that we talked about earlier. However, pensioners, and those approaching pensionable age, without jobs, and those in part-time, low-paid work who do not receive pension back-up will simply suffer a decrease in state pension. Therefore, I respond with some cynicism to those who say that pensioners should be allowed to work longer. It may well be that pensioners on state pensions will have to work a lot longer.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Is is not true that, later this week, a fuel tax will probably be imposed on pensioners—an unnecessary 6 per cent.-plus increase to pay for the privatisation of the electricity industry? Is it not a disgrace that such a tax should be imposed on pensioners, and that those charges do not appear in the Budget? The Government obviously hope that the general public will not notice that the tax has been imposed on them.

Mr. Battle: My hon. Friend is right to remind us of that. We face rises in the charges for electricity, gas, water and medical prescriptions. In the last year we have seen the introduction of charges for sight tests and visits to the dentist which were all well above inflation. They will all have a particularly harsh impact on people—including pensioners—who live on below-average incomes.

The Chancellor suggested that we had enjoyed one of the longest periods of strong and steady growth, but he has not chosen to ensure that pensioners have a decent standard of living in their retirement. Surely they are entitled to that. Even with present economic growth, the Government cannot sustain their promises for transitional payments of housing benefit.

It is a marketing myth to describe this as a Budget for the low-paid or pensioners. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North said that we should return to the Tory tradition of social spending. Such a tradition certainly does not start with this Budget. The people who will have to pay the price will do the arithmetic and work out that they have been short-changed by the Budget and the Government. They will know that the Chancellor had to introduce such a Budget because he needs a low-wage economy to be built under the structure of the upper-tier economy.

The buzz word of the Budget is "prudence". In the Oxford English Dictionary, that word is defined as the

"ability to discern the most suitable, politic or profitable course of action".

We should underline the words "politic" and "profitable". The Budget will certainly be profitable for insurance and pension companies, and it was certainly a politic Budget, geared towards the bribes that will be offered in the way of tax cuts in time for the next general election. In practice, the Budget may well consolidate the marginalisation of the poor by squeezing them out by means of the tax and benefits system.

[Mr. Battle]

On the BBC's "Newsnight" programme on 30 July 1985, the Prime Minister said:

"I do feel very strongly indeed that people on comparatively low wages and pensioners pay too much tax."

That concern has not percolated through to the Chancellor's Budget, and the Government should not try to pretend that it has.

The people who are being made to pay the price for the Government's approach to the economy cannot and will not be deceived and, when they get the chance at the next election, they will ensure that this Government pay the price.

6.58 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) made a sincere plea for the lower-paid and pensioners, and the House always listens with great respect to a sincere plea for the less fortunate in our community. I am sure that the Treasury Ministers will heed what he said. Certainly, his remarks about pensioners struck a chord with me. I agree that this is not a Budget for the lower-paid but it is prudent, sensible and in the nation's interests.

As all my hon. Friends who have spoken have said, I think the top priority must be the curtailment of inflation —the curse which inflicts everyone and everything in our society. The debate began with the customary vigour of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. He is one of the best Chief Secretaries that I can recall in my time in Parliament. I hasten to add that he follows the distinguished precedent of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen).

Although we realise that public expenditure is dealt with at a different time, it is fair to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary. He has succeeded in reconciling the various voracious interests in public expenditure among the different Departments because of his skill and particularly pleasant personality.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North—to whom we always listen with great interest and with whom I always seem to debate—is a most interesting man. We have been friends for a long time and I am sorry that he has left the Chamber. Following discussions that we used to have during the Wilson Administration and that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), I never thought that I would hear him making a strong plea for further public expenditure. However, he is a percipient and far-sighted man—no other hon. Member could give a more long-sighted view of the future than he, and he may well be right. His views will certainly be carefully considered by Treasury Ministers.

I said that this was a wise and prudent Budget. Let us look at the background. We need to go back to the famous black Monday, when stock exchanges throughout the world slumped, with Governments as well as City institutions showing excessive nervousness. The fire was fanned by the media, which tried to paint the inaccurate picture of a second Wall street crash. There were worldwide and hysterical fears of a major recession, and interest rates were brought down by too much. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor himself admits that, although he had to follow the trend, that was an error.

Next came the failure of the BP flotation. The building societies were awash with money, which boosted the housing market and fuelled inflation. I do not believe that the tax cuts in the 1988 Budget were the cause: I supported them at the time and still believe they were right. Although I appreciate that my right hon. Friend cannot reduce taxation in the present circumstances, I hope that the impetus for a reduction in direct taxation, which has been the main theme of this and previous Conservative Administrations, will be maintained. As I said last year, I can see no moral or merit in taking vast sums from a vast range of people, sloshing it around expensively in Government bureaucracy and then doling it out to whomever-clamours loudest. That should not be part of the Government's philosophy or of that of society as a whole.

Although dull, this Budget is wise both tactically and strategically. Within the constraints in which he has operated, my right hon. Friend has been able to find room for some helpful measures, but I shall touch on only two. The first is the encouragement of wider share ownership. I was a founder member of the movement for wider share ownership 20 or 30 years ago. In those days, we had the support of Labour Members: the present Lords Lever and Houghton were enthusiastic members. That Labour enthusiasm, however, has diminished over the years. Wider share ownership was never very fashionable, but my right hon. Friend has picked up the theme probably more than any previous Chancellor, and I am glad that he has found himself able to help the cause in his Budget. I also welcome the improvements in the personal equity grant, which had got off to a rather dull start and was not taken up as much as it should have been. My right hon. Friend has improved profit-related pay and, in particular, employee share ownership schemes.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) thought the additional incentives for people to join personal equity plans rather inadequate. Let me point out that the annual amount that can be invested—provided that it is invested in unit and investment trusts—has been quadrupled. I do not call that puny: I think it very encouraging.

Mr. McCartney: In his analysis of wider share ownership, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell the House whether he believes that the Chancellor should have made a statement about compensation for my constituents and others who took the Government's advice and put all their pension savings into firms such as Barlow Clowes and other City bucket-shop operators. Having lost tens of thousands of pounds, they are receiving no public redress for advancing their position in the share-owning democracy on the Government's advice.

Sir Anthony Grant: I share the hon. Gentleman's view. I too have constituents who have suffered from the Barlow Clowes fiasco. I am afraid that there will always be—I must choose my words carefully—people who are unsatisfactory for others to invest in, but there is always a certain number of casualties. I hope that I too brought pressure on the Government: I certainly thought that they should share some responsibility, and welcomed the news that the ombudsman was to look into the matter. I hope that reasonable redress will result from that.

Mr. McCartney *rose*——

Sir Anthony Grant: I do not want to spend all my time on Barlow Clowes, but I will give way.

Mr. McCartney: The Government launched a BP share repurchasing exercise because of the state of the market. Given that they felt that that was the correct response, should the Chancellor not use some of the £15 billion in his coffers to assist those pensioners, some of them now destitute, to provide redress?

Sir Anthony Grant: I do not want the Government to become involved, because when they do they get into a monumental mess. That is one of the reasons why I tend to agree with the hon. Gentleman about Barlow Clowes. The less the Government have to do with such matters the better, which is why I support privatisation.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) spoke of the importance of the manufacturing base. Although I do not suggest that it will necessarily make a huge difference, I believe that the encouragement of worker participation and wider share ownership can make a useful and worthwhile contribution. Enthusiastic National Freight Consortium workers made substantial sums on the corporation's flotation, which they richly deserved, and I should like that to be extended throughout manufacturing industry.

It is important to get such schemes across to the public. Let me make a suggestion, because sometimes schemes are announced in the Budget and then forgotten. Ministers —not necessarily Treasury Ministers, but certainly Trade and Industry Ministers—constantly, I hope, visit companies all over the land. I suggest that when they go in to see the company chairman—after they have been adequately refreshed in the boardroom—one of the first questions that they should ask is "What is the company doing to encourage employee share ownership schemes, personal equity plans and profit-related pay?", and they should draw his attention to the improvements that have been made in the Budget.

I also welcome the encouragement of small firms. Small firms are one of my pet causes. I was Minister responsible for them at a time when they were not fashionable. They are now very fashionable and I am glad that my right hon. Friend has helped them with his changes in corporation tax, as they have been hit hard by the increase in interest rates. Having welcomed the simplification in VAT over the years, I was very pleased that my right hon. Friend lifted the VAT threshold for small firms to the EEC maximum.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary is on the Front Bench, as I know that he is interested in this subject. The VAT threshold of £23,600 is ludicrously low. Very small firms earn that amount; for such firms—often run by a husband and wife, or indeed an individual—to have to go through all the panoply of formfilling, Customs and Excise inspections and so forth is an undue burden, even with the simplification of VAT. I make this plea to my right hon. Friends in the Treasury: will they please continue to press the EEC to show some common sense? The EEC is supposed to believe in small and medium-sized enterprises; this is one way in which such enterprises can be encouraged. If the level is lifted —to £50,000, £100,000 or whatever—it will be a tremendous boost for the small firms sector.

This is a throughly sensible if dull Budget, and is in the interests of the nation as a whole. I certainly support it, and, more important, I believe that it will be supported by all sensible and thinking people.

7.9 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I listened with interest to the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith). Whenever he accused the Government of being responsible for the 8 per cent. inflation we are now facing, I thought back to the performance of the previous Labour Government in the 1970s. I came to the conclusion that at that time neither he nor his right hon. and hon. Friends would have been so willing to accuse the Labour Government of being responsible for the inflation we were living through. I was rather surprised that his comments were not challenged instantly by the Ministers on the Treasury Bench. However, perhaps the Chancellor was remembering the comments he made yesterday. In a rather throwaway line he said that inflation was now fairly widespread and he seemed to be using that as an excuse for the inflation we are now facing. It is in direct contradiction to his comments in the 1970s when he said that inflation was the direct responsibility of the Government of the day.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that during the 1970s there was a massive world oil price increase, together with an increase in other commodity prices? That was the problem with which the Labour Government had to grapple and with which by 1979 we were coming to terms. Yet the first act of this Government was to increase VAT and start the inflationary spiral again. Today we do not have world pressure on prices. In fact, oil prices are falling, so there is no excuse, except the Government's actions, for the present inflation.

Mr. Ross: If one really wants to look for excuses, they can always be found. The hon. Gentleman's comments about oil prices are true. Today, as far as I can discover, in real terms oil prices are only about 60 per cent. higher than before the first oil price shock. I will leave the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) to argue that point himself if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will let the hon. Gentleman defend the previous Labour Government and let the Government of the day demolish that argument if they see fit.

There are several things in the Budget we should all welcome, not least the £1 billion give-away in relation to the changes in national insurance contributions. However, I am curious about whether we are seeing the first timid steps towards amalgamating the national insurance contributions and the general income tax structure. I appreciate what the Chancellor said yesterday about the contributory factor, but, despite that, surely they are both basically a tax on income. Since most benefits come from general taxation anyway, there is no good reason why we cannot look forward to an amalgamation of the two so that we can see what every individual is paying in tax as a proportion of his income.

As has already been adequately pointed out, the change does not deal with the real problem of the low pay structure found in some parts of the country, especially in the Province, of Northern Ireland where there is an over-dependence on benefits. I should like to see that swept away and replaced by realistic incomes. However, that involves another subject with which I shall deal shortly.

I welcome the fact that married women will be given their own entitlement under capital gains taxation. That

[Mr. Ross]

will help small family businesses which are so painstakingly built up. It will also help the farming community, especially in the Province where we have the peculiar situation of most farms being owner-occupied.

My party welcomes the increases in the price difference between lead-free and leaded petrol. The only sad fact is that in Northern Ireland we have only 91 outlets for lead-free petrol. I am not sure whether that problem is prevalent elsewhere in the United Kingdom but I suspect that it may be in the more sparsely populated areas. For that reason, if for no other, we should welcome the increasing differential in the price of petrol. If the difference could be increased further, it might be an added incentive, together with the other measures mentioned by the Chancellor, such as eventually getting rid of two-star petrol, to ensuring that lead-free petrol is available in every part of the country and that every petrol station has at least one pump selling lead-free petrol.

I welcome the general tidying up of fiscal policy, which covered a wide range of things and which will benefit both small and larger investors together with old people. I welcome the fact that some tax loopholes were closed. It is amazing how tax loopholes appear every time there is a change in taxation. No doubt the well-intentioned changes of yesterday will result in new loopholes which will have to be closed by subsequent Budgets.

However, there are some raspberries for the Chancellor. First, income tax starting points remain the same, except for indexation. There was some scope to go further or to reduce income tax by a small amount. I am dismayed that the Government are having to come to terms with the fact that the EEC is able to impose its demands upon the financial management of British affairs. That has not been mentioned in the debate so far and we should not allow it to pass unheeded. It is the first sign of a long shadow that will increase in intensity with passing years. More and more powers will be handed by this place to the Common Market. The end result will be that we lose all control over our Budget and the management of our economy. I see that there is some agreement for that view on the Government Front Bench and I am glad to see that. I cannot believe that the country will lightly throw away that freedom. The Prime Minister's Bruges speech some time ago was helpful in that respect. I hope that it is followed by action to re-establish the authority of the House over this country.

The EEC will eventually do this nation a great deal of damage. My party has always been opposed to it. We continue to hold that view, even if we are the only party in the House to do so. We are wholeheartedly opposed to it and hope eventually to gain a considerable number of converts from both the major parties as the real meaning of the Single European Act becomes more apparent to all who sit in this place.

I regret the failure to give further help to manufacturing industry. The manufacturing sector is about £14 billion in deficit, and I do not believe that all the talk about being competitive or about overseas investment being a help to us is good enough. Every £1 million that leaves this country and is invested in a factory somewhere else represents an export of jobs as well as capital. If we are ever to overcome the bottlenecks that have been made apparent by the deficit in our manufacturing industry, we have to become more competitive. We can become more competitive only with better machinery, and that means the expenditure of large sums of money. That is a simple fact of life if we are to improve our efficiency. If we are not prepared to do that, we can expect the gap to get wider. Since manufacturing industry is the powerhouse of our wealth creation, we will slip further down the international league, and none of us wants to see that happen.

I listened with great interest to the Chancellor's comments on the national debt. The effect of that huge burden of national debt on the national economy is not widely understood in the country. We are told that the housewife at No. 10 runs a fairly tight purse in her own establishment, but who has ever heard of a family who were happy to go on paying huge sums of bank interest without reducing the loan? If any of us were in that position, it would not be long before we were slipping quietly and circumspectly past the bank manager's door or before he was saying, "Here, boy, I want a word with you. When are you going to do something about it?" It is not right to continue to carry that huge debt indefinitely.

Every 10 years we pay out as much as we owe, which seems a crazy way to proceed. There is, of course, a long history of wishful thinking behind the desire to get rid of the national debt, which extends back to Prime Minister Robert Walpole and the National Debt Reduction Act 1786. Attempts to diminish or get rid of the national debt are not new; they are two centuries old—and probably rather older than that.

This year we have a first-time surplus of £8 billion, after the sale of various assets through the privatisation process. We were alleged to have a surplus last year, but that happened only because the Government had sold the family silver. Any family would do that in times of crisis if they were really in need of money, because silver is a mere ornament and does not make much money sitting on the family sideboard. But if one sells the family silver and then spends the proceeds on current expenditure, such as buying the groceries, one has not got out of debt. That has always been my objection to selling off assets through privatisation and never diminishing the national debt. If we sell assets that belong to the nation, we should try to do something long-term for the nation.

In considering the debt, I am considering only the rather narrow definition of national debt in the sense of central Government debt rather than the wider area of public sector debt. That is because a great deal of local government expenditure included in the wider public sector arena relates to investments in, for example, water, sewerage and housing. Such expenditure produces concrete results which will remain after the debt incurred to build them has been repaid, although at a high rate of interest.

At the end of last March, the central Government debt was about £197 billion, which was a huge sum of money. It has, apparently, been reduced during the past year. At one time it was much higher, as a nominal sum. After the war, the national debt was two and a quarter times the gross national product. It has fallen as a percentage not because it has been repaid, but because of the country's increasing wealth.

In his speech today, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury talked about reducing the borrowings of the last Labour Government. I point out to the Treasury Bench that that is not strictly accurate. In 1979-80, the debt was £95·3 billion. At the end of last March, it was £197·5 billion.

During the Government's nine years in office, the debt rather more than doubled in nominal terms—if not in real terms. It was costing us £16 billion a year to service the debt. What could the Government not do with £16 billion a year? That is the amount that we are paying year after year. This year, the Government are repaying £14 billion. They are paying back what they themselves borrowed, not what the Labour Government borrowed and the House should bear that in mind. I welcome the fact that the Chancellor is paying back money and I hope that he continues to do so.

If the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) were still here, I would try to comfort him by pointing out that he is not alone in being practical about what the Government should do with the surplus. I admire the right hon. Gentleman because he is practical and he knows that the first duty of a political party is to continue to win elections. He is clearly prepared to spend money in doing that. We can, therefore, expect a give-away Budget, if not next year, the year after that at the latest. The Labour party had better watch out because it is not in a position to spend money and it will not necessarily be spent in the ways in which it would like it to be spent.

When the Chancellor and the Treasury redeemed the £14·5 billion, did they pay back only loans that had reached maturity, or did they go into the market place and buy, at above the nominal value, debt that was carrying a high rate of interest? Was that not the best way to spend the £14·5 billion? We would be interested to hear the answer.

I noticed with considerable dismay that, having reached the happy position of being able to redeem the debt, the Chancellor did not give a commitment to eliminating it, but said very much the opposite. With the present fears about inflation, I can understand why he did not plough the £14·5 billion back into the economy, but he may be making a virtue out of necessity. It is clear that the Government got all the figures wrong last year. Nobody expected £14·5 billion and the figure was out by £10·5 billion. They cannot be any more sure about the forecast of £14·5 billion for next year unless the figures are more soundly based than in the past year. Can the Chancellor assure us that the figures are correct, or do we have to wait until next year's Budget?

I return to the Chancellor's comments about the repayment of the national debt. He said yesterday:

"I set out the principle of a balanced budget as the proper objective of fiscal policy, in these terms:

'A balanced Budget is a valuable discipline for the medium term. It represents security for the present and an investment for the future. Having achieved it, I intend to stick to it. In other words, henceforth a zero PSBR will be the norm. This provides a clear and simple rule, with a good historical pedigree.'. . .

To go further than this, and seek to achieve the maximum possible repayment of public debt, would not be consistent with the Government's policy, as it would mean deferring for a very long time the benefits of a reduction in the burden of taxation."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 297.]

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North can take comfort from those words because it is clear that the policy of reducing the national debt until it is eliminated will not continue. If I am wrong, I shall be happy to hear it. The reduction is temporary and has come about because of the peculiar circumstances in which the Government found themselves with an unforeseen and massive surplus, which they have put to good use.

We should eventually set out to clear the national debt. If we consider the £14·5 billion plus the £16 billion which we are paying in interest—and the Chancellor referred yesterday to the £1·5 billion savings that he would achieve at the end of next year on the national debt interest charges—the total is about £30 billion a year. That is a huge sum of money. I hope to see the day when we do not have to find such sums in interest charges and capital repayments to repay the national debt.

7.39 pm

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) who raised the question of the European influence on our tax system. Although I do not fully agree with him on that, some of the controversial proposals from Brussels would require unanimity, and to date the Government have said that they will not agree to a number of them.

As with any Budget, this Budget has been a balance between taxing and spending. The Autumn Statement is now an enshrined part of our financial scene—more is said about spending in the autumn than now. I have always regarded the Budget as the overture to the Autumn Statement because what the Chancellor says about the strength of the economy at Budget time is likely to tell us what we can expect in relation to spending in the Autumn Statement, six months ahead.

I welcome first the national insurance reforms. It is widely felt by the public that national insurance is nothing of the sort, but that it is merely a decision to tax and a decision to pay. I am pleased that the Chancellor has lifted a tax burden on the lower paid in his national insurance changes.

Secondly, the Chancellor has changed the tax system on unleaded petrol. He went into considerable detail on that. He has widened the gap between four-star and unleaded petrol. However, we now need a sustained advertising campaign by the motor manufacturers to get their message across and to tell us which engines will run on unleaded fuel without any changes being made. We also need to support the Chancellor's comments yesterday about the need for a complete conversion to unleaded fuel, following or running parallel with a greater availability of unleaded fuel at petrol stations.

I welcome immensely the fulfilment of the pledge to abolish the earnings rule for pensioners. That will have an additional impact on our retraining of older people, which is at last being carried out to a greater extent. However, as a result of the Chancellor's change, there will be a further demand and a further need for such retraining.

I turn now to excise duties and VAT. Before we even agree to the harmonisation or approximation of VAT with the EEC—I am not sure that we will and even if we do, it may be some years off—in my view, VAT does not have to stay at its present high rate for ever. It is possible to reduce it on certain items. Most people regard the retail prices index as applying only to essentials and they would not automatically class drink and tobacco as "essentials". Therefore, it might be possible for the Chancellor to reduce VAT in the future.

I turn now to the other taxes on spending. It has been pointed out for years that it is unfair to have a 10 per cent. car tax on top of VAT. If—I repeat if—we move to an approximation of indirect taxes with Europe, that 10 per

[Mr. David Madel]

cent. car tax will have to go and we would achieve—industry will welcome this—an approximation of new car prices in this country with those of our European neighbours.

Therefore, I hope that for the time being we shall not rule out a reduction in VAT, which would obviously help the Chancellor in his battle to keep inflation down.

There has been much adverse comment in the debate about last year's Budget and about what the Chancellor did between the October 1987 crash and his 1988 Budget. I have never joined in that criticism because I think the Chancellor was right to do things after the crash to stop us going into recession. My right hon. Friend pointed that out in his Budget statement when he said:

"Output in the United Kingdom has grown faster than in all the other main European nations during the 1980s—a marked contrast to the previous two decades, when we were bottom of the league".—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 294.]

In other words, the last thing that we needed in late 1987 and in 1988 was action by the Chancellor to tip the country into recession. My goodness, we needed to get to the top of the European output league to improve our manufacturing base and to provide more employment.

I can remember reading—I was not a Member of the House then—that the then Mr. Harold Wilson hugely enjoyed himself in the 1960s when he referred to the late Mr. Harold Macmillan and Mr. Selwyn Lloyd as "Stop-Go and Son" in relation to their Budget policies. No such criticism could be levelled at my right hon. Friend the Chancellor today. There has been no stop. There has been an improvement in output and investment—something that we have all wanted—and, above all, that has created more jobs and improved our competitiveness.

As my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is in his place, I should like to raise the question of tax relief for people who are seconded from industry into education or business. The Government have just announced a welcome new scheme, which they call Bridge, which is Government and business investing in each other. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs sent us all a letter, stating:

"We also want to see more people from business getting first-hand experience of working in Government Departments."

Obviously, the Government want to see more civil servants going into business but I was interested to read about business people going into Government Departments.

I raised that issue with my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary earlier this year in relation to tax relief for such people. In his letter to me of 11 January 1989, my right hon. Friend stated:

"Any costs which a company or individual trader incurs in connection with the employment of the person on secondment (and in practice this is likely to mean mainly the cost of his or her salary) are allowed as a deduction in calculating the profits of the business for tax purposes."

The new scheme is about secondment and we should welcome the move to get business, the Civil Service and Government working more closely together. From what my right hon. Friend stated in that letter, I assume that tax relief applies, but further tax incentives may be necessary to encourage firms to release and second people into the Civil Service so that Government and business can better understand what each is trying to do.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East referred to the challenge to industry and the need for us to be much more competitive. Page 26 of the Red Book states:

"The maintenance of competitiveness in the year ahead will depend on success in restraining unit cost increases."

Because of 1992 we must see the challenge to our manufacturing industry in European terms. Although we have greatly improved our performance, there is a considerable way to go in terms of output and fixed investment in manufacturing.

Because of the changes in the labour market, trade unionists and employees are in a strong position, not because we have suddenly tipped out the important reforms on trade unions that were made in the early 1980s, but simply because of the state of the labour market and the growing skills shortages. That presents a great challenge to management in responding constructively and effectively to what the Chancellor said about the need for increased competitiveness. There is an obvious need for a better use of machinery at work and for a change in working practices—in other words, for better organisation of how we work.

There is also a need to take full advantage of the Chancellor's changes on share option schemes for employees, which he went into in considerable detail yesterday. In my view, there is a need to move to two or three-year wage deals rather than having the annual difficulty and tug-of-war about what should be paid. I hope that as an employer, the Government might feel that in some areas they can move towards such two or three-year wage deals.

If we are to improve our competitiveness, much will depend on the speed with which we can retrain our people when new industries appear. Although industrial relations in this country have improved, in many industries there is an armistice rather than a lasting peace. If we are to move to a German standard of industrial efficiency and output, we must also have a German standard of compromise and co-operation between management and employees. That still eludes us in some industries and it damages our competitive performance. A terrific challenge now faces management, the unions and employees to get industry better organised because nothing can change the fact that 1992 is rushing upon us with all the challenges to industry that that will entail.

I shall just say a word about Government spending. As I said, the Budget was a balance between taxation and spending. The Chancellor referred to that in relation to the repayment of debt. He said:

"net debt interest costs will be lower by over £1·5 billion a year.

This saving is being put to good use, allowing extra spending on departmental programmes within our overall public expenditure constraints."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 296.]

The question is, are the public expenditure constraints too tight? My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) mentioned health and education as two matters requiring increased but careful, planned public expenditure.

I shall give one example. Each year Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools issues its annual report which is entitled "Standards in Education" and the latest one for 1987-88 has just come out. In that report, the inspector says:

"In many ways, then, the education service is well placed to face the future with some confidence. But some old, familiar problems persist. Pupils and students of below

average academic attainment continue to get a generally poor deal. Accommodation in many secondary schools and in some FE colleges is in poor shape, shabby in appearance and deteriorating as repair and maintenance are further delayed."

It is true that the Secretary of State for Education and Science has made provision for increased expenditure, but, when the next annual HMI report comes out, I hope that the inspector will not use those words, but he will be able to say, "Some old and familiar problems are diminishing as the Government get to grips with the questions of accommodation for our secondary schools and equipment in secondary schools and in further education."

I am not suggesting that we can cure it overnight, but after 10 years in government, what will help the party and the Government is for such independent reports—which are so crucial for our children—to point to a steady improvement in what we are providing for the state education system rather than saying pessimistically, "Old and familiar problems exist."

Another item of public expenditure to which the Government will soon have to turn their mind is the community charge and the revenue support grant that will be needed to underpin it. This is the time of year of the Grand National. As the Government rush around the legislative track, in 1990 there is this Becher's brook of the community charge to be jumped. I beg my right hon. Friend to err on the side of generosity when fixing the revenue support grant for local authorities for the first year of the community charge in 1990. I did not vote against it; in fact, I supported the Government on the community charge, because, as long as the flat rate is reasonable, I believe that it will be acceptable to the public. I know that it is early days for the public expenditure round, but now is the time for us to put in our bids and draw attention to what we believe will be contentious matters.

I regard this as a safety first Budget, but "safety first" is not a bad slogan. it was used by the Conservative Government in 1929. Before historians leap to their feet and say, "But Mr. Baldwin lost that election by using 'safety first'," I shall point to one historical fact. The evidence is that the Conservatives lost the 1929 general election because they were not perceived to be doing enough to cure unemployment. I believe that we can use "safety first" again. We certainly have a good safety first record on defence, a safety first Budget and prudence with Government finances.

However, we want to avoid what happened in 1929, albeit on a different matter. We do not want the public to say, "We are not too sure about you, because you are not paying sufficient attention to certain public services." I have mentioned the education service and other hon. Members have mentioned the National Health Service. If the public see that we are steadily attending to what needs to be done in those aspects of Government expenditure, safety first will pay off and we shall be returned to power in 1991.

7.41 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel). Since coming to the House in 1974, he has been one of those hon. Members who have diligently argued for the education and employment services. It is a sad reflection on the Tory party that he has never achieved office—perhaps that was because he stuck to his principles, unlike many others. I certainly agree with his comments about needing more investment in the public services.

I believe that the best way to test this Budget is to show how it would affect my constituents. What would have happened if the Chancellor had delivered his Budget last year and this year to the Reddish or the Denton pensioners associations? If the Chancellor had gone to those two groups of pensioners, they would have torn him apart. They are extremely bitter about the way the Government have treated the average pensioner. Last year, they were insulted by the slogan that it was a give-away Budget, because for almost all the pensioners in my constituency there were no give-away provisions. They did not benefit from the Budget, but they were almost all caught by the social security changes that followed. They knew that they were the people who last year were paying the price for that give-away budget with cuts in their social security, pensions and housing benefits. Not only did they pay last year, but they are now paying because of the inflation that that Budget stoked up. They have actually been asked to pay twice.

Last year, because of the outcry from the Opposition and from those outside the House, in the end the Government came up with transitional benefits to ease the cuts for pensioners. However, all they have done is delay those cuts for a further 12 months. Therefore, this year many of my pensioners will receive no increase at all in their pensions. If the pension is increased, not merely will it be increased by only 5 per cent. when the actual inflation rate is 8 per cent., but for many of them the extra that they receive in their pensions will be taken straight away by the loss of their transitional benefit.

People talk about 8 per cent. inflation, but it is much higher than that for many pensioners. They are the people who have been or will be on the direct end of those price increases that have been deliberately engineered by the Government. They are the people who are having to pay higher prices for their gas because of the Government's privatisation programme. They are the people who will have to pay higher prices for electricity when the electricity industry is set up for privatisation. They are the people who will have to pay a levy on their electricity prices to sort out the mess that the Government have caused in the nuclear industry.

They are the ones who will have to pay higher water charges. As residents in Stockport and Tameside, many are extremely bitter about the fact that over the years they have invested in the water activities of their local authority, originally through their water rates. They saw good reservoirs and, in many instances, good supply systems built. They believe that those are their systems. They do not see why they should now be sold for someone else to make a profit. Not only will someone else make a profit, but they will have to pay higher water rates.

Many of my pensioners are concerned about the way in which the Government changed the rules about the television licence. They believe that the Government were mean in taking away from people in sheltered housing the 5p licence and substituting the £5 licence. One of my constituents moved from an upstairs flat to a downstairs one in a sheltered scheme because the stairs were difficult to cope with; because of that, she became liable to the £5 rate.

Many of the pensioners in my constituency will feel bitter about the Government's action. They looked to this

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

Budget for some concession. They would have liked the Government to attempt to restore the link between pensions and earnings. They feel, as I feel, that if the country is doing well—the Government claim that the country is doing well—they should be sharing in some of that general prosperity. However, as long as the Government maintain a link merely with prices rather than with earnings, they are excluded from any share in that extra wealth.

My constituents continually remind me that, if the link between pensions and earnings had been retained, the single pensioner would be £9·70 better off and the married couple £15·45 better off. Many pensioners in my constituency are caught by the savings rule. To some, £8,000 may sound like a lot of money, but pensioners who have been forced out of their homes because they can no longer afford to maintain them and who move into sheltered housing find that even if they have relatively small savings, they are not eligible for state benefits.

My constituents ask also about the Christmas bonus. The Government constantly parade the fact that they restored the Christmas bonus, but it has been steadily devalued in real terms. My constituents ask why it cannot be uprated. If the Government cannot do that, why not provide a television licence concession for all pensioners, rather than for just those living in sheltered housing?

My constituents view with some cynicism the abolition of the earnings rule, because many of them were forced out of work by the Government long before they reached pensionable age, as a result of the way that the Government have destroyed jobs in my constituency over the past 10 years. My constituents would have loved an opportunity to continue working until pensionable age, so that they could have saved a little as a hedge in their old age. For them, that was not possible. Very few of my constituents will benefit from the abolition of the earnings rule, and the Reddish and Denton pensioners associations will be quick to point out that it is people such as the Prime Minister who will benefit most from that measure, rather than the ordinary pensioner.

They will make the same comment about private health insurance tax relief. A number of pensioners in my constituency have been waiting years for hip operations and treatment for arthritis and cataract operations. They feel that it is totally wrong that they should subsidise out of their taxes people who are rich enough to afford private health care and to jump the queue. My constituents will be very bitter about that. They will not greet the Budget with any enthusiasm.

A large number of my constituents are low-paid. They are already bitter at wages councils being abolished and at the way in which the Government are pushing the country into a low-paid economy. My constituents await with dread the imposition of the poll tax. For those on low pay, it will make a swingeing cut in their living standards, however generous the Government may be. The low-paid have already suffered because of increased prescription charges, and they have also lost because of higher council rents and the imposition of sight test and dental examination charges. Many of them are caught in the poverty trap, which the family credit system does little to overcome.

The low-paid are the people whom an increase in child benefit would have done most to assist. One of the meanest tricks played on the low-paid with children was the Conservative view that it would be better to replace tax relief for children with a child benefit allowance—and having done so, to renege on the promise to uprate the allowance in line with inflation and to freeze it instead.

Last year's tax give-aways meant nothing to the unemployed in my constituency, but the social security squeeze made a great deal of difference to them. A substantial number of people are receiving reduced benefits because they are repaying loans to the Department. The same applies to young people aged between 16 and 19 who have lost benefits altogether, and those same young people, perhaps because they have fallen out with their parents, face considerable difficulty in obtaining accommodation.

In particular areas of my constituency such as Brinnington, debt management problems for people on low incomes are substantially increased. The Government have done nothing for them. Some of my constituents have at least turned to self-help schemes. I was delighted to pay a visit at the weekend to the launch of the Brinnington credit union, established by people wishing to overcome the credit problems that the Government have created and by moneylenders' extortionate interest rates.

It may be thought that a mortgage interest rate of 13 per cent. is horrific, but some moneylenders in my constituency charge interest of 35 per cent., 40 per cent. or 50 per cent. to people who cannot afford repayments in the first place. I am delighted that my constituents have established a credit union that will help to channel local savings into relieving poverty there. It would have been nice if the Government could have provided help for such credit unions, because existing operational restrictions on credit unions are harsh.

For my constituents, the re-creation of full employment and of well-paid jobs would probably be worth more to them than anything else, yet the Government have been destroying jobs for 10 years, and today's high exchange and interest rates make it extremely difficult for the successful companies in my constituency to expand. A company's investment programme for the year ahead may comprise three or four schemes as the subject of investment. When interest rates are as high as 13 per cent., a board may approve the first scheme on the list but not the others. If this country is to return to full employment, and if there is to be the investment that will help us pay our way in the world and which will help my constituents to secure well-paid jobs, we must ensure that firms are encouraged to make the maximum investment in new schemes.

I turn to environmental matters. Reddish vale has been well preserved by the local authority, and the opening up of the vale by Greater Manchester council was a great achievement. It is spoiled only by the River Tame that flows through it. It is not the most polluted river in the country but certainly it is one of the most polluted. Government financial assistance to make it possible for effluent to be treated by the companies that are pumping it into that river, or to local authorities to ensure the efficiency of their sewerage works, is minimal. The Government trumpeted the Mersey basin scheme, but much of that money was spent on the lower parts of the

Mersey. If one wants clean rivers, it is better to start cleaning operations at the river source rather than lower down.

There is great concern in my constituency about the lack of Health Service provision. More and more of my constituents are resorting to raising funds for local hospitals. I admire them for holding raffles and other fund-raising events, but that also fills me with horror. I thought that, when the National Health Service was established in 1947, it would provide proper health provision for all, and that it would not need to rely on raffles for its funding. I admire the work of fund raisers, but greater Government resources need to be pumped into the Health Service. The same is true of the schools in my constituency.

The Government's refusal to allow local authorities to build houses means that more and more young people in my constituency are unable to obtain the housing that they need. A substantial number of elderly people who are in the wrong housing could be moved from family housing to sheltered housing if it were available. The Government must make it possible for local authorities to build housing to rent if they are to relieve misery in areas such as mine.

The Budget has failed my constituents. There is nothing in it for pensioners or the low-paid and there is little for those on average earnings. Nothing in it will encourage my constituents to believe that the shortcomings in the Health Service, pollution in rivers or the housing crisis will be resolved. It is high time that the Chancellor and the Government went and we had a Government that cared about ordinary people rather than the extremely rich.

8 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I should like to speak about the impact of fiscal measures in successive Budgets on employment. Then I shall touch briefly on two unrelated tax concerns.

I firmly believe that in the long term unemployment is not caused primarily by macro-economic factors. It is possible to find countries that have been prosperous for a long time yet still have high unemployment, of which America of the 1960s and 1970s is a good example. It is possible to find countries with low standards of living yet little unemployment. Korea is such an example, but before it is said that Korea has had high growth for a long time, there are other countries that have a low growth rate and low unemployment, of which Sweden is an example. The key causes of unemployment lie not in macro-economic but, micro-economic factors. There are many but I shall dwell on fiscal ones, especially the fiscal balance between tax treatment of capital and labour.

If we take a long view of unemployment in the United Kingdom, smoothing the economic cycle by taking a five or six-year moving average, we find that unemployment rose slightly in the 1950s, rose slightly faster in the 1960s, accelerated in the 1970s and early 1980s, peaked in 1986 and fell.

It is interesting that 1979 was the watershed in macro-economic policy. The Government followed a quite different policy from their Conservative and Labour predecessors. The watershed in the fiscal treatment of capital and labour was not 1979 but 1984, as I shall try to show. It is why I believe unemployment turned round much later than the general economy—in 1986—and why it will continue to fall sharply.

In the framework that we inherited in 1979, which was bequeathed to us as much by previous Conservative Governments as Labour Governments, a number of features were biased to capital and away from labour, such as 100 per cent. capital allowances and regional grants which were paid indiscriminately for investment in capital goods. Even if such investment was purely labour-saving and would not have a chance of standing up on normal market grounds, it may have been profitable because of the combination of 100 per cent. first-year allowances and lavish regional grants. Furthermore, we had penal rates of personal taxation and employers' national insurance contributions were 13·5 per cent. As a result the gross cost to the employer of providing even quite a modest net wage was extremely high.

In the 1960s and 1970s, successive Governments built up a strong bias in the economy against employing labour and in favour of investment, resulting in a steadily rising rate of unemployment. I firmly believe that a high level of investment is a feature of a successful economy, but it does not follow—and I have never discovered any evidence throughout the world—that the artificial subsidy of uneconomic investment by Government is a short cut to prosperity.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): The hon. Gentleman said that he has considered different models throughout the world. Has he considered the Swedish model? Conservative Members may scoff, but full employment is the centre of its policy and it is accepted by capital and labour.

Mr. Brazier: I am not an expert on the Swedish economy, but if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me I shall make a number of points about other countries a little later.

In the first five years of our term of office, while I wholly supported the transition to what are generally called dry macro-economic policies, we did little about the balance in tax treatment between labour and capital. We made a little progress with basic rates of income tax and employers' national insurance contributions, but, unfortunately, it was partly outweighed by a failure in one Budget to index personal allowances and a rise in employees' national insurance contributions. The big change occurred in 1984, with a clear commitment to phasing out 100 per cent. first-year capital allowances so that investment would have to stand on its merits and not be subsidised by the taxpayer. It was followed by further cuts in income tax and employers' national insurance contributions and the abolition of indiscriminate regional grants, which were doing more harm than good. If I had more time I could cite one or two examples in which, for relatively short periods, factories benefited from those grants, which led to unfair competition and some of those factories subsequently folding.

In 1988, those cuts in personal tax were boosted by almost doubling benefits to the working poor by replacing family income supplement with family credit. Finally, this Budget made a considerable reduction in employees' national insurance contributions.

The net result of those changes over the past five years is that we have completely restored the balance between labour and capital. Although growth rates throughout Europe over the past 10 years have been comparable, our unemployment, according to the figures of the

[Mr. Brazier]

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, is about 7 per cent. and falling, while the average for the rest of the EEC is about 11 per cent. and rising. Most of southern Europe heavily subsidises capital, especially through regionally directed subsidies. Most of northern Europe, especially Germany, has heavy social charges, which are the equivalent of employers' national insurance contributions. Thus Europe has not righted the imbalance, and in some countries the figures are rising.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): While the hon. Gentleman is giving us this geographical tour, will he admit that the reason for the introduction of new capital and technology in northern Italy—whether it be Tuscany, Emilia Romagna or Veneto—and in Germany is that there is co-operation between management, capital and labour? Labour is involved through participation schemes or co-operative ventures in the introduction of new and flexible techniques of production.

Mr. Brazier: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I said that there are other micro-economic factors involved besides fiscal factors but all the parts of Italy that the hon. Gentleman mentioned are outside the regions at which grants are directed. Most of the grants are directed at southern Italy, where, despite them, unemployment continues to worsen.

I shall make one final geographic point to complete a quick Cook's tour. America has moved dramatically in the same direction as us. It has undergone considerable tax restructuring, which in some respects is following ours. It has managed to get rid of most of the market-distorting, investment-directed tax breaks for companies. As a result, companies are paying much more tax. At the same time the Americans have substantially reduced the burden of personal taxation. The net result across the Atlantic has been a reversal of what the previous generation experienced. In other words, America has much lower levels of unemployment than continental Europe.

For all these reasons, in addition to a 10-year period of sound macro-economic policies, we now have five years of sound fiscal balance in the treatment of capital and labour, of which this Budget's changes in national insurance contributions represent the final building block. I congratulate the Chancellor of the Exchequer on that.

I want to move very quickly to the two specific measures that I mentioned earlier. The first concerns armed forces housing—a subject on which I have touched in a ten-minute Bill. The heart of the property-owning democracy that this country has seen develop over the past 10 years is the ownership of a home. In the civilian population as a whole, home ownership is now running at 63 per cent.

The sad fact is that the armed forces, in particular the Army and that section of the Air Force that deploys heavily in Germany—mostly personnel involved with the Harrier and the Tornado—have not shared in this. The very simple reason it is not possible for them to do so is that over half of our Army is abroad, and the rest is very heavily dispersed with soldiers seldom going to the same place twice—so it is impossible for a serving member to become a home owner. He can, of course, become a house owner and be an absentee landlord, with all the problems that that entails—and, by God, I have a thick file on those problems: tax, tenants and, even worse, no tenants. Such a person cannot be an owner-occupier.

I hope that my hon. Friend will convey to my right hon. Friend the suggestion that he consider whether, in the PEP scheme that he is developing, provision could be made for a special scheme for members of the armed forces, to enable them to accumulate, in a tax-effective manner, a capital sum that they could use to buy a home on retirement. The MIRAS advantage that is available to the civilian population should be extended to the housing payments of those members of the armed forces who do not own houses. Payments could be made into a PEP scheme to make that possible.

The second of my two points concerns the Merchant Navy. It was very disappointing that an otherwise excellent Budget did not touch at all on the present very sad state of our merchant fleet. I am relieved to hear that numbers of some categories of ships are now stabilising, but at a very low level. I remind my right hon. Friend the Chancellor that the early-day motion on this subject, which was tabled only two or three weeks ago, already has the signatures of more than 170 Members from all parts of the House. I put it to my right hon. Friend that fiscal and other measures, but especially fiscal since we are talking about the Budget, at a minimal cost—such as extending roll-over relief to three years, or extending the upper limit for the BES as it applies to merchant shipping—would make a very big difference to ship owners, at a very small cost to the Exchequer.

Overall, though, I believe that this is a very good Budget on both macro-economic and micro-economic grounds.

8.14 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Yesterday's was a standstill Budget from a boxed-in Chancellor, making a mockery of his claim to be a Chancellor who concentrates his attention on the supply side of the economy. He found himself boxed in by supply side constraints that are quickly snuffing out his economic boom. The two major constraints, of course, are a lack of productive capacity in manufacturing industry and, equally, a lack of skilled and properly educated labour to man that capacity. The consequence is a British economy throttled by bottlenecks. Of course, the biggest bottleneck has been in the south-east, whereas constituencies like mine, where unemployment is rising again, are not getting even a glimmer of the prosperity of which we hear so often from Ministers. That is why regional policy must be at the heart of any credible economic strategy.

It is the effect of this and past Budgets on the regions that I want to talk about. This Budget is a testimony to failure—the failure of the Government to promote balanced growth and balanced development in Britain. It shows that Thatcherite free market policies have led to gross overheating in the south-east, while the rest of the country has been crying out for more activity.

It is also a Budget of fear. Despite having accumulated a surplus of some £14 billion over the past year, the Chancellor has had to run away from his own goal of lowering the overall burden of taxation. He was too scared yesterday even to increase the tax on cigarettes. The only cure for these supply side constraints on productive capacity and skilled labour is supply side investment. This

is not just a private responsibility but also a public responsibility—it is a responsibility of government. This, I feel, is the crux of the divergence between the Opposition and the Government—not just in respect of this Budget, but in respect of a succession of Budgets and Autumn Statements.

In the past, the Government's policy has been to fuel the demand side only, with their tax cuts for the rich and their irresponsible and inflationary credit booms. The Opposition have called instead for investment in the supply side of the economy, investment in the prime factors of production—machinery and men. That is why we call, for example, for measures to improve investment in manufacturing industry, and it is a disgrace that, even now, manufacturing investment is below the level of 1979. That is why we have called again and again for investment in education and training. It is a disgrace that access to higher education—universities and polytechnics—and to colleges of further education has actually diminished during this Government's period of office.

I want to spend a moment on that subject. I see that a quizzical look is coming over the Minister's face, but I can tell him that that is true, that access to education has fallen at a time when industry is crying out for more skills. *[Interruption.]* I am referring to the ability of people in the relevant age groups to enter higher education.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): The proportion?

Mr. Macdonald: Yes, the proportion. It is astonishing that the Minister does not know the effects of his own policy on higher education. *[Interruption.]* Well, I refer the Minister to the response to a question put to the Secretary of State for Education and Science last month by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith). The Government's own figures show that the percentage of 18 to 24-year-olds entering first degree courses—universities, polytechnics, colleges of further education—actually fell between 1979 and 1987. In 1979 it was 1·95 per cent. *[Interruption.]* These are the Government's own figures.

Mr. Lilley: Including polytechnics?

Mr. Macdonald: Including polytechnics. Access to polytechnics has increased by 28 per cent., but access to universities has fallen by 17 per cent. The percentage of 18 to 24-year-olds entering these forms of higher education fell from 1·95 per cent. in 1979 to 1·92 per cent. in 1987.

Mr. Brazier: Let me give the hon. Gentleman the actual percentages. The total proportion of people going into all forms of higher education—universities and polytechnics —when the Government took office was about 12 per cent. That has risen to about 14 per cent. and it is on target to rise to 18 per cent. in five years through a combination of extra places and demographic changes.

Mr. Macdonald: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the figures given by the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science for the percentage of 18 to 24-year-olds entering first degree courses in Great Britain in universities, polytechnics and colleges of further education. The situation is the same in Scotland as in England and Wales.

It is the grossest hypocrisy for the Secretary of State for Education and Science now to make pious statements of his intention to increase access to higher education when he is part of a Government who have systematically reduced that access. Moreover, they have done that at a time when there was an opportunity to increase access because of the fortuitous biological fact that that part of the population was increasing. Therefore, the Government had the opportunity to increase the number of people with skills and training. I see all kinds of hurried consultation on the Conservative Benches.

The Government's policy over the years of focusing on tax cuts has exacerbated the problems being experienced by the regions and the problems caused by the dismantling of regional policy. This Budget and last year's Budget taken together have given the great bulk of the tax cuts to the south-east. That is simply because on average the south-east has the people with the highest incomes and it is they who have been helped by the tax cuts. Fifty-two per cent. of all top rate taxpayers live in the south-east.

This year's standstill Budget has hardly begun to make up for last year's Budget when top rate tax cuts simply fed the consumer boom in the south, giving the rich money which they simply spent on imports. The south-east alone saw 57 per cent. of the 1988 tax handouts for the rich compared with just 3 per cent. for Wales, 3 per cent. for the north, 5 per cent. for the west midlands and 6 per cent. for Scotland. This year there have been not so much tax cuts as new tax loopholes, new perks and old ones being widened, which again benefit the richest, and consequently the south-east, disproportionately.

The tax concessions on personal equity plans have been widened. There are tax concessions on the purchase of shares in privatised industries. Yesterday we had the most scandalous single item in the Budget—the introduction of tax concessions on the purchase of private health insurance for the over-60s. Contrast that with the Government's failure to do anything about what we can call the toddler tax, the tax on workplace nurseries. Toffs who ride around in company cars can continue to enjoy their tax reliefs. Toffs who send their children to Eton can continue to send them to a tax-free institution. But ordinary working people who send their toddlers to workplace nurseries continue to be hammered.

It is scandalous that the Chancellor is continuing to lavish such largesse on the south-east when regional aid to industry has been slashed mercilessly in recent years. Aid to the north has dropped from £325 million in 1979 to £108 million today. Aid to Scotland has fallen from £314 million when the previous Labour Government were in power to £152 million today. That policy of giving money to the south-east is not only unfair: it is economic nonsense when the economy is overheating.

Mr. Lilley: When is the hon. Gentleman going to compare public expenditure per head in Scotland with that in the United Kingdom? Since that is 28 per cent. higher in Scotland than in England, does he think that that is unfavourable to Scotland?

Mr. MacDonald: I should love to have a proper analysis of that figure, since it does not include defence expenditure. If Scottish public expenditure included items such as mortgage tax relief and defence expenditure and it was compared not with the United Kingdom—because the north is also badly done by—but with the south-east, we would have a different story. The Library tells me that such an analysis would be enormously difficult, but I am working on it.

[Mr. MacDonald]

The policy of giving money to the south-east when the economy is overheating is economic nonsense, yet that is done despite 2 million unemployed, even on the Government's own figures. We need a rebalancing of demand away from the overcrowded south-east to the regions, where more activity is needed. That is the only way to secure sustainable balanced growth without creating a balance of payments deficit and rising inflation.

8.26 pm

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I want to make a few comments on this year's Budget and, more specifically, on some of the national indicators that lie behind it. Before, doing so, I want to consider some points made by the hon. Members for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) and for Burnley (Mr. Pike), from my part of the country—the north-west.

It never ceases to amaze me that Opposition Members, particularly from the north-west, always seem to talk down the area. The fact is that there is a good success story to tell in terms of increased employment throughout, much higher than the increases in employment in many other parts of the country; increases in manufacturing industry, on which I shall have something to say in a minute; and, more specifically, big increases in a widely expanding service sector, particularly in areas such as Liverpool and the area in which I live, the Fylde.

One could say that we in the north-west are suffering —at least in some areas—precisely the same skills shortages that exist in the south-east. Therefore, some of the comments, particularly those made by the hon. Member for St. Helens, North, are pretty wide of the mark and do not encourage employment in areas such as my own, giving a false impression of what it is like in that part of the world.

We in Lancashire have the largest concentration of aerospace factories this side of the Atlantic. It is a highly technical and highly skilled industry, where skill shortages are building up. That contrasts starkly with the picture painted by Opposition Members about the economic viability of the north-west.

The hon. Member for Burnley mentioned Lancashire and education. I want to try to put the record straight. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has given Lancashire this year a grant 40 per cent. higher than the average for shire counties throughout Britain. Indeed, the grant is the second highest of any shire county. That shows that the Government care about education, a subject to which the hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) referred.

Mr. Caborn: Will the hon. Gentleman explain why the European Community, in designating objective 2 of the regional fund, decided that 36 per cent. of the total funds available should come to the United Kingdom? The criteria for receiving that assistance is unemployment and a declining industrial base. In Lancashire, Accrington, Blackburn, Bolton, Burnley, Bury, Liverpool, Pendle, Rochdale, Wigan and St. Helens are all now included in objective 2 because of their rate of unemployment and declining industrial base.

Mr. Mans: By far the majority of the towns the hon. Gentleman mentioned are not in Lancashire, so I cannot comment on the point he made. I assure him that a number of other areas in Lancashire did not get the grant.

I had intended to make the main point of my speech the merits of employee share ownership plans, but following the Budget statement it is clear that much of what I wanted to see achieved in that context has been achieved. I am pleased about that, because it represents an important step forward in this area of industrial development. I shall deal with that issue later, but I wish first to refer to the various national statistics, in particular the manufacturing output statistics, on which the Budgets are based.

Members in all parts of the House pay great attention to those statistics, but they are relied on particularly by Opposition Members, who regard them as a good guide to the general health of the economy. I do not attach the same importance to that set of statistics because manufacturing industry is becoming more sophisticated. Peripheral activities such as design, marketing and training are gaining in importance at the expense of the core manufacturing activity on which the statistics are generally based.

In some areas—for example in the manufacture of computers—the peripheral activities, which may in a sense be considered to be in the service sector, are now taking a larger share of the total value of the product than the product itself. Manufacturing output statistics are no longer accurate because certain items—for example, design, marketing, training and software production—may or may not be included in the statistics, depending on whether they are carried out by the manufacturing company; in other words, whether they are in-house or contracted from outside.

If such activities are carried out by the company producing the product, they are included in the manufacturing output statistics. But if, as is increasingly the case, firms go outside for those activities, they are not included in the figures. They are, nevertheless, an important part of our total wealth-creation machine, and that is why I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Burnley on this point and why, as I say, I do not attach as much significance as many people do to that set of statistics.

Consider, in that context, such mundane items as employees' canteens. If they are provided within the firm, they count as part of the total manufacturing output of that firm in terms of the statistics. But if that activity is contracted out to a firm in the service sector, they are not, so there is a distortion in the figures. We should either modify the statistics extensively in the near future or pay less reliance to them and use instead statistics that take into account advances not only in the manufacturing sector but in the service sector as well.

Another set of statistics is the balance of payments, which again, I argue, is becoming increasingly difficult to compile accurately. The removal of exchange controls was one step in the direction of uncertainty, and in 1992, with the creation of the unitary market, it will become incredibly difficult to decide what our balance of payments are on a monthly basis.

For that reason, one must ask whether, after the creation of the unitary market, there is any point in deciding the relative trade balance between London and Paris, for instance, any more than there is in deciding the relative trade balance between London and Birmingham.

As a guide to the viability of the economy, slavish regard to what the balance of payments is saying for a specific month is no longer the right way forward. I suspect that the financial markets already realise this, considering the way in which they understand that Britain continues to be a good place in which to invest.

In considering the balance of payments, one must also consider the nature of the deficit itself. Here I disagreed with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour). He maintained that our present deficit was similar to deficits which occurred in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, that they were composed largely of an imbalance of consumer goods and that we were importing more consumer goods than we were exporting.

I suspect that the deficit this time is not quite the same. It is made up this time of a much higher percentage of industrial—capital—goods and items which fall between the two sectors, items such as photocopying machines and office equipment which has traditionally come from abroad but which is necessary for the future to create the right productivity increases in that sector of industry.

I suspect that my right hon. Friend was right when he said, in answer to my intervention, that in the last two years industrial investment has increased substantially. In my view, that is significant. There is a clear parallel between that and the fact that our balance of payments deficit has increased during those two years.

I believe that a high percentage of the deficit is composed of capital goods and that, rather than being similar to deficits we experienced in the past, our present deficit is similar to the deficit Japan had in the 1950s and 1960s when it was successfully rebuilding its industry. We are seeing the results of that rebuilding now.

When trying to rebuild the industrial base to produce tomorrow's rather than yesterday's goods, it is vital to equip it with first-class and world-beating machine tools and other capital goods, even though they may come from abroad. That is what I believe is going on now, and from that point of view I suspect that from 1990 onwards we shall see a rapid improvement in our balance of payments, when our consumer goods become as competitive as those from the rest of Europe and other parts of the world.

In relation to employee share ownership plans, I am delighted with the progress that has been made in the Budget, particularly in connection with profit-related pay and in the tax relief given to payments by companies to ESOP trusts. I should like to see those moves go further. While I realise that that may not be possible this year—because of the complications in organising the tax regime successfully—perhaps we shall get next year or the year after some roll-over relief for capital gains tax when applied to employee share ownership trusts.

In creating the right environment for the new vehicles of wealth creation to prosper, we should not be too rigid about the type of model that we want. The historical and large model of worker ownership in the Soviet Union has been a monumental failure and is rapidly being dismantled, to be replaced by a model similar to those that exist in this country.

On a smaller scale, we have the evidence from the late 1970s when the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) tried to set up a workers' co-operative at Meriden. That showed that we must not specify too much the type of model in which we want people to be involved. It must be left to people to decide the type of employee share ownership scheme best suited to their needs and those of the industry. I suggest that we should create a tax environment that takes account of as many different models as possible and that we allow individuals to decide which one to follow.

The Budget recognises that the thrust of economic policy must be to continue to fight inflation and recognises the increasing importance of demographic changes and the environment as factors in economic decision making. I am especially pleased with the comments made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on unleaded petrol. This tax reduction is a beneficial environmental move which I hope will result in a large uptake of unleaded petrol in the coming months.

The most important feature of the Budget is that it will be remembered as the one that finally put employee share ownership schemes on the map.

8.42 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): I endorse everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said, because he reflected many of the worries in my constituency both before and after the Budget. As an inner-city seat, my constituency faces all the major social problems that my hon. Friend described.

I want to deal with regional policy, the north-south divide and the structural weaknesses in the economy, especially our manufacturing base. We hope that the Single European Act will work to our benefit, but I have grave doubts about the Chancellor's short-sightedness in looking only at the straight balance sheet rather than to this country's future and ability to create wealth. As the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) said, we must make our economy and industrial base much more competitive and productive. There are major discrepancies in our transport infrastructure alone. A golden opportunity was lost to upgrade that infrastructure so as to move goods to and from the continent as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The Channel tunnel project could have as significant an impact in our northern regions as the French wish it to have in their northern regions. They have tackled infrastructure development with considerable public investment. In the United Kingdom, however, the Opposition struggled five times to include in the Channel Tunnel Bill provision for consultation with British Rail and the Channel Tunnel Group on the tunnel's impact. We see no light at the end of that tunnel and no sign that the Government will move in a concerted way to ensure that the regions are serviced by that innovation.

There has been a decline in training and education. On average, people involved in management have about two days' training a year. We are woefully lacking compared with our major competitors. We are bottom of the league in terms of ability to co-ordinate on technology transfer with industry, academic institutions, local authorities and trade unions.

Conservative Members have argued about investment in small and medium-sized businesses, especially in the venture capital market. Only yesterday an article in the *Financial Times* on British venture capital groups stated:

"Mr. John Nash, chairman of the British Venture Capital Association, said yesterday that the rise in the volume of investments outside the south-east of England was encouraging, but there had been a drop in the percentage of funds going to technology-related companies from 16 per cent. in 1987 to just 9 per cent. last year.

[Mr. Richard Caborn]

> The fall in technology-related investments emphasised concerns the association had about the number of new, innovative, wealth-creating companies being generated in the UK, Mr. Nash said. The association has begun a study of the difficulties of finding high-risk seed-capital finance for small and technology-related projects.
>
> The announcement of the investment patterns of venture capitalists came a few days after Lord Young, Trade and Industry Secretary, criticised venture capital organisations and the banks for failing to invest enough in high-technology business."

That is a statement by those who are trying to organise venture capital, yet the reduction of nearly 50 per cent. in one year does not bode well.

The Minister said that public expenditure in Scotland per head of population was 28 per cent. higher than in the rest of the United Kingdom. I suggest that he look at the form of many of the grant regimes for Scotland resulting from the work of the Scottish Development Agency, which has been effective in co-ordinating an overall strategy. In England, the regional grant regimes have been abolished and there has been a reduction in grant in real terms. There has been a reduction also in local authority expenditure —£22 billion since 1980—much of the money having gone previously into infrastructure development of education, transport and so on.

The Government talk of their great plan for the inner cities and of urban regeneration, but we have merely seen two or three Ministers throwing a few crumbs from the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Employment or Department of the Environment and going round developing task forces or urban development corporations. The Government's inner-city policy has been unco-ordinated and expenditure has been reduced. When departments have not been able to tackle the problems, they have abrogated their responsibilities by handing them to the private sector. As even Conservative Members have emphasised, training has been put wholly into the private sector's hands.

Last week, the European Commission was considering the European grant regimes for the next three or four years. Objective 2 concerns eligibility criteria, unemployment, the severity of industrial job losses and industrial decline. The Commission laid down the criterion that only 15 per cent. of the population of the Community should be covered, so that the money could be targeted. We find that the funds cover 50 million people in the Community of whom 20 million are in the United Kingdom. That means that about 37 per cent. of that part of regional structural fund expenditure is coming to the United Kingdom, simply because our industrial base has been undermined to such a large degree that even the Commission has decided to try to come to the rescue. The Government's policy is totally unco-ordinated.

The Government make much play of partnerships; they rely heavily on that concept. Opposition Members have nothing against partnerships—we encourage partnerships between the private sector and local authorities or trade unions and try to make them work—but in some areas partnerships have difficulty in developing because of lack of resources. I would go further than that. Many of the developments in the regions are based on the old transport and education infrastructures and we are having difficulty in replacing that infrastructure so that we can develop new ideas for the 1990s and beyond. Technology transfer, cabling Britain and so on, are all essential not just in the interests of northern regions seeking to attract resources away from the south-east but because of the competition that our industry will face in 1992 and beyond with the implementation of the Single European Act.

It is not true to say that investment in the south-east has centered on the entrepreneur alone. One has only to think of arms procurement, on which £8 billion is to be spent. The success of the M4 corridor—the silicon valley of the United Kingdom—has been born out of public sector-led financing, especially in arms procurement. Transport is another example; again, a disproportionate amount goes into the south-east. The vast majority of the £6 billion in mortgage interest charges is going into the south-east.

Entrepreneurs have fed off public sector-led investment. There may be nothing wrong with that but it is worth comparing with the system operating in the Lander. Public sector-led investment has been dispersed around the Lander and the country. The Germans have invested in areas of growth and centres of excellence and the development of wealth creation has been more evenly spread around the country. Germany is not suffering from the overheating that the south-east is experiencing, which is no good for the south-east and certainly no good for the northern regions.

In the not too far distant future, decisions on investment will be influenced by the existence of the Channel tunnel. Investors will not come to the south-east because it will be too costly. They will not come to the north of England because we do not have the infrastructure—the means to get goods in and out of the area, the training, the technology or the cabling. Investors may well decide in favour of northern France or northern Europe, which will have built the infrastructure necessary to sustain an advanced economy.

Yesterday's Budget will do nothing to regenerate the north of England. I make my plea for the regeneration of the north not just on behalf of people in the north, but because it is in the interests of the economy as a whole. An opportunity has been missed. Partnerships exist in many areas of England; there is one in my own city of Sheffield, where there has been development in the transport infrastructure. An investment bank has been set up and work is being done on combined heat and power. Yet that partnership, and all the others like it, are struggling in the absence of central Government support.

In 1991, Sheffield is to host the second biggest sporting event in the world—the world student games. The event is to be three times bigger than the Commonwealth games, with 125 countries and 7,500 sportsmen participating. Sheffield will be a window to the world, yet we have already been told that no money will be made available from central coffers. The Government say, "We are not prepared to put in any cash. You must do it all through the private sector." No other country in western Europe would take such a negative attitude.

Let me compare the problems with which British industry must contend with what happens in one of the richest parts of West Germany. I was recently in Badenweiler and I spoke to the Conservative Leader of the Lander government. An innovation technology company has been set up which commands about 2,000 experts on a consultancy basis—a service paid for by the Lander itself. The Lander is spending 21 million deutschmarks on innovation technology to be matched by technology transfer units and again to be supported by the Lander.

When the innovation has been developed and the technology transfer has taken place and the company goes into production, it can go to the Lander bank and borrow at subsidised interest rates of 4 or 5 per cent. over 8 to 10 years. At federal level, the reconstruction bank of Germany will also put money in at 5 per cent.

Compare those rates with the figures in the venture capital statement and with the experience of any company in the United Kingdom seeking money to develop new technology. British companies pay 12, 13 or 14 per cent. The examples that I have given come from one of the richest parts of Germany. I asked the mayor the simple question, "Why do you do it?" After all, it is, in effect, a Conservative administration. They said, "We must keep ahead of the game. Entrepreneurs do not always deliver and we have to push them. To that end we are prepared to support our industry, either from the Lander bank or from the federal bank." The support for industry extends not only to hardware but to training, to the development of transport infrastructure and so on.

If we ask our industry—particularly small and medium-sized businesses—to take part in technology transfer schemes from our academic institutions with the necessary training without central Government support, we are tying not one of the entrepreneur's hands behind his back, but both. The Budget will be seen as a missed opportunity, especially as we move into the much more competitive era following the implementation of the European Act in the 1990s. The Budget will have failed the nation.

8.58 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): This year's Budget has produced even more confusion of thought and mind than is normal on the Opposition Benches. Some have reproached the Government for allowing inflation to gain the upper hand; others, totally ignoring the inflationary implications of what they are suggesting, have called upon us to spend some of the massive surplus that has been accumulated. The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) asked, "Why cannot some of that enormous surplus be spent?"

The confusion reached its apogee during the speech of the Leader of the Opposition yesterday afternoon. In the course of one and the same speech he reproached the Government, claiming that last year's Budget had allowed inflationary pressures to build up, and then went on to call for the spending not of part of the surplus, but, as I understood him, of the entire £14 billion.

One must make allowances. Rapid economic growth and a massive budgetary surplus are not characteristics associated with the financial stewardship of Labour Governments. It is not particularly surprising that Opposition Members, finding themselves in a new and unfamiliar landscape of high economic growth and a massive Budget surplus, become somewhat disoriented and confused. No doubt they feel more at home with high interest rates and a large balance of payments deficit, but there are major differences between the high interest rates and large balance of payments deficit prevailing now and those associated with Labour's term in office.

The current interest rates squeeze has crucial characteristics which mark it out from earlier interest rate squeezes under Labour Governments. When Labour was in government, interest rate squeezes ravaged industry and led to sharp and immediate cuts in industrial investment. Not so this time. During this interest rate squeeze, exactly what the Chancellor intended is happening. Interest rates are having their principal effect on the personal sector. The corporate sector—and certainly the larger companies—has ample cash balances. Investment by our main-line companies is holding up well. That investment by main-line companies is the key to our industrial success. High levels of investment have continued for some six months after interest rates were raised substantially. The adverse balance of trade we are now experiencing is characterised by a large element of imported capital goods. That is a reassuring feature.

Table 3·4 of the Red Book sets out the percentage increase in the volume of manufactured goods year on year. The table shows that in 1987 and 1988 imports of capital and intermediate goods have recorded substantially greater percentage increases than consumer goods. In the short term, those imports of capital goods place a strain on our balance of payments, but in the longer term they mean that British industry is putting on muscle and becoming better equipped to meet demand in future.

It has been claimed that the Chancellor has been forced to rely solely on interest rates to curb inflation. That is not so. The massive Budget surplus is in itself disinflationary. I have no doubt that in the particular circumstances of this year it is right to run a Budget surplus of such a size because it restrains domestic demand, helps maintain confidence overseas and reduces the interest on the debt that the Government will have to pay in future years.

However, I am glad to see that paragraph 2.29 of the Red Book states:

> "The Government intends to move gradually from the present surplus towards a balanced budget over the medium term."

A substantial surplus is absolutely right for now, but it will not always be so. We do not want the Government to fall into what might be termed the GEC syndrome. The time will come when it will be appropriate to use that surplus for cuts in direct taxation which increase choice, act as incentives and help to generate the economic growth which augments Government revenue. In addition to tax cuts, I hope that future Government plans for reducing the surplus will include increased public capital expenditure. I stress the word "capital". Public sector investment is needed to complement rising investment in the private sector.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) mentioned expenditure on education and health. I have in mind expenditure on transport. Economic growth manifests itself rapidly in increased traffic movement and congestion. If our economic growth is to be sustained, we need to ensure that our transport infrastructure can cope. Otherwise, growth will be held back. Industrialists in my Ipswich constituency and in other parts of Suffolk are already telling me that their operational efficiency is being hampered by inadequate transport infrastructure.

Running a budgetary surplus and determining how to apply it is a novel experience for a post-war British Chancellor. It shows just how far we have travelled on the road to economic success. For the moment the watchword is and should be "caution". A massive budgetary surplus is clearly right—but as the Government move towards their medium-term target of a balanced Budget, what is required is a judicious mixture of income tax cuts to

[Mr. Michael Irvine]

increase incentives, combined with increased capital expenditure carefully targeted where it will best assist continued economic growth.

9.6 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): An effective Budget should combine social justice and economic efficiency, and this Budget does neither. It starts with the junk statistics that we have come to expect from the Treasury, to which attention has been drawn by advisers to the Select Committee. The Chancellor claimed:

"we have experienced the longest period of strong and steady growth since the war."

We note that he made no international comparisons. That is not surprising, because at 1980 prices the average annual growth of GDP between 1979 and 1987 was 1·8 per cent. for the United Kingdom and 2·6 per cent. for the rest of the OECD. In Japan, with which the Chancellor is glad to make comparisons on productivity based on a few years' figures, the average growth in GDP was 4·5 per cent.

The Chancellor claimed:

"Between 1974 and 1979 inflation had averaged more than 15 per cent. Over the past six years it has averaged 5 per cent.".

If we put that on a comparable basis for the lifetime of the Government, between 1979 and 1989 annual inflation averaged 6·7 per cent.—more than one and a half times the figure quoted by the Chancellor. We now know that it is set to rise again, so the long-term trend is not moving towards zero but is heading for 8 per cent.

The Chancellor claimed:

"our productivity growth in manufacturing has exceeded even that of Japan."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 293-94.]

That is true for certain years, but its aggregate productivity growth is not the issue when comparing our manufacturing performance with that of Japan. The key comparison is with the exporting sector in Japan which, as is well known, accounts for only about 12 per cent. of the economy. The amazing productivity of Japan's giant companies, the Kairetsu, is beating us hands down in world markets and in our own market. If there is such an economic miracle, why is the regeneration of the British Motor industry being carried out in Sunderland care of Nissan, and in Austin Rover care of Honda? The Japanese are efficient. Our productivity is rising, but some of the rise is due to Japanese companies in this country.

The Chancellor continues to claim that he has effected a miracle, but a miracle means helping the sick take up their beds and walk, not helping to walk off with the beds of the sick. A miracle means sustained domestic and export growth and full employment—not a go-stop growth of 2·7 million people unemployed, a balance of payment deficit of £14 billion and a currency standing only with the crutch of an interest rate of 13 per cent.

The Chancellor claimed yesterday:

"The role of fiscal policy is to bring the public accounts into balance and to keep them there, and thus underpin the process of re-establishing sound money."

He said:

"Inflation is disease of money; and monetary policy is its cure."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 293-4.]

That sounds fairly familiar. Perhaps the Chancellor is trying to prove that he is still a monetarist. He certainly echoes the claims made by Milton Friedman:

"Inflation starts in one place and one place only—national treasuries"

No doubt the Chancellor has read that—he certainly seems to believe it.

Away from the footlights and television cameras, in a major statement in 1969 Professor Friedman said of the correlation between the money supply and inflation:

"changes of money income mirror changes in the normal quantity of money. But it tells us nothing about how much of any change in income is reflected in real output and how much in prices."

In other words, there is no cause and effect but it is all done with mirrors—that is the essence of the monetarists' claim to superior scientific status above the derided economics of Keynes.

Mirrors are hazardous. If an ass looks into one, how can a brilliant Chancellor look out? Yet the Chancellor is doing precisely that—he is trying to do it by mirrors in a "now you see it, now you don't" type of policy. We can judge from the junk statistics. Since 1979 there have been 24 changes in the unemployment figures and only the first change put the figures up. Publication in *British Business* of the share of multinational companies in our export trade, or the share of leading firms in our export trade has stopped. The last figures were published in 1981. No wonder there is a problem about the nature of the balancing item. When 75 firms account for half our trade and 220 firms for two thirds of our trade, when 85 per cent. of our exports are by multinationals, the transfer pricing which those multinationals can employ is likely to be one of the major factors in that grotesque balancing item, which is bigger than the Budget deficit.

Another example of the mirror policy was the Government's attempt to revise the trade deficit just before the Budget and to take the mortgage rate out of the RPI. This is not the economics——

Mr. Lilley *rose*——

Mr. Holland: I am taking a note from the book of the Chief Secretary who accepts interventions in his time.

Mr. Lilley: Did the hon. Gentleman say he was following my right hon. Friend's good example? I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. The hon. Gentleman has just suggested that the balancing item is due to the understatement of the value of exports by multinational companies. Is he saying that the balancing items should be largely attributable to reducing the balance of payments deficit?

Mr. Holland: I do not know why the Economic Secretary had so much trouble making his point. Transfer pricing by multinational companies, which dominates our trade, means that our trade statistics are opaque. A standard means of transfer pricing is to inflate and overstate import prices. We should expect economic integrity from any Government and should be able to trust their figures, but such integrity is absent from this Government. Their economic policy is one not of integrity but of a massage parlour. They massage the figures to reduce the number of unemployed, to disguise the trade deficit and to understate the real trend in inflation. They massage the rich to get them to work and massage foreign investors by putting interest rates at a level that will support the pound.

Does the Chancellor remember the cost-push, demand-pull debate which was taking place when he was a student?

Does he not know that the simple argument on demand-pull is that of too much demand chasing too few goods? Does he not recognise that this is precisely what is happening in the economy today—irrespective of money supply—because he did not slow down his pre-election boom last year?

Has the Chancellor forgotten the basic principle of cost- push inflation, which is that pressure on capacity enables firms to push up prices because other firms are willing to pay a premium for components, rather than find their own production grinding to a halt? Has he never read Adam Smith's "The Wealth of Nations" which states:

"people of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment or diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public or in some contrivance to raise prices"?

Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer not realise that market forces are at work and that inflation cannot readily be wrung out of a booming economy by macro policies alone? Does he not know that coping with inflation in an overheated economy demands other measures, involving not only the structure of costs but also the regional and social distribution of demand and supply?

As for the argument that inflation should take priority over all else—which hon. Member would thank a doctor for reducing a patient's temperature if it resulted in rigor mortis? Why should we thank the Chancellor for his counter-inflationary measures which, through penal interest rates, will kill off many small and medium firms?

Let us consider interest rates. Is the Chancellor really unaware of the unequal impact which his policies have? The wealthy can invest their savings and therefore benefit by higher income at higher interest rates, while the less well-off—who accepted his invitation to join the democracy of property owners but then lost their jobs or the family wage earner or fell ill—could not meet their mortgage payments and were dispossessed.

Is the Chancellor unaware of the inequality of the cost of borrowing at higher rates on big and small businesses? Unequal competition for funds means that bigger businesses can borrow at lower rates than smaller businesses. The price-making power of the big firms gives them the ability to pass on higher interest rates in the form of higher prices. High interest rates may be not disinflationary but inflationary. Big businesses can operate self-financing to cover the major part of their investment needs—often up to 85 per cent.—without access to external finance. Small and medium firms cannot do that. Higher interest rates will not hit the big league but will penalise the small firms—that is quite apart from pricing techniques which are used to understate real profits, to which I have already referred.

Is the Chancellor or his Treasury team unaware that interest rates are both unequal, and relatively ineffective, as the major instrument of demand management? Does the Chancellor not realise that in using them to choke off demand he is strangling many small and medium entrepreneurs—the serving of whose interest once appeared to be the Tory party's main mission in government?

The Chancellor does not face simply the problem of fiscal drag, and whether he is a fiscal drag artist. The Government did not, at first—between 1979 and 1981—succeed by raising interest rates. Their subsequent policy of fail, fail and fail again is no way to run the economy. By raising interest rates nine times, the Government have shown that their fiscal stance is really horizontal. The Chancellor is no longer the go-go Chancellor of yesteryear but the full stop Chancellor of today and tomorrow. His Budget was less a baleful admission from yesterday's whiz kid of the need for a soft landing than an ignominious belly flop. As several hon. Members have said, the Chancellor has the money but he cannot spend it.

Yesterday, using a vivid metaphor, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition asked why the Chancellor could not spend the money and referred to the numbers on the notes. Number 1 dealt with overheating. Where does that occur? It occurs in the south-east and parts of the midlands but not—as several of my hon. Friends have said—in the north-west, north-east, Northern Ireland or Scotland. An uneven and unbalanced regional distribution of growth is an essential part of the problem.

The Chancellor said that how soft or hard the so-called landing would be was not in the hands of the Government alone. One thing that the Government are clearly not prepared to handle is an effective regional development policy. They blithely abolished location controls through industrial development certificates; they blithely reduced regional development grants. They then cut the ground from under regional enterprise boards such as those in Lancashire and the west midlands. The result is that, while half the country is overheating, the other half is left out in the cold. The massive resources of the regions are being wasted, while the economy as a whole grinds to a halt.

Let us examine the numbers on the other notes. Let us take capacity utilisation. Of course there is pressure on capacity for some companies in some areas. For all the rhetoric about the supply side, the Government have no real supply side policy. Like President Reagan, the Chancellor appears to have fallen for the so-called economic theory behind the words "supply side"—used by Mr. Laffer, who drew a curve on the back of a napkin in a restaurant for President Reagan which claimed that people would work harder and pay more tax at lower tax rates.

The incentive effect in the Laffer curve is simply laughable: it is a bad joke. As John Kenneth Galbraith has rightly pointed out, first the argument assumes that the rich are idle, not working hard enough—some Opposition Members may share that premise. Secondly, in the United States the already rich could not find real investment outlets for their windfall tax gains and simply put those gains, through lower taxes, on the stock market. The result was a massive inflation of stock market prices, contributing to the crash of October 1987.

The fact is that the Chancellor cannot increase capacity use in the short term because the Government deny the relevance of a medium-term industrial strategy. In short, they will not plan. Yet every enterprise plans, more or less, the broad balance of its income and spending. Every manager plans if he deserves to survive the annual meeting with the firm's accountants. All our leading competitors plan—whether they use that wording, as France, Italy and Japan do, or whether they use words such as "investment co-ordination" as West Germany does.

Only our Government, with the worst structural deficit on the non-oil visible account of nearly £25 billion, fail their own industry, management and workers, because "She who must be obeyed" thinks only that "plan" is a four-letter word.

[Mr. Holland]

Let us deal next with the public sector debt repayment on which the Chancellor so prides himself. Here again we see the "home economics" policy of the Prime Minister, in practice reflected in her adage that

"every housewife knows that if by the end of the week you have spent more than you earned you are in trouble".

Let the Government tell that to the banks, the building societies or the investment trusts, all of which know that the role of credit is what distinguishes big business from a corner shop. Even more, it is a key difference between an advanced and a primitive society.

If the expansion of an economy were limited to retained earnings, without external borrowing, no economy could fully achieve the potential increase in productivity made possible by new technology. Not least, all our leading competitors in OECD countries—other than the United States which faces similar problems to our Government in relation to competitiveness—use public sector credit institutions to ensure that their societies can invest in their own future and that low household savings, such as we now see in the Unted Kingdom, can be offset by public credit agencies.

Paying off the national debt is like putting money in the bank and telling the bank manager not to lend it. It is even worse than putting it in a current account, because once repaid it earns no interest for those who lent it. Nor does it earn real interest for society as a whole, in terms of public funds for investment in the nation's future.

The real reason why the Prime Minister wants to repay the national debt and has told the Chancellor to do it lies not simply in her ignorance of its real role but in her blatant prejudice again . all things public and her gross praise of all things private. That brings us back to the real guru of the Government's economic policy, Milton Friedman—he who argued that public spending drains the private sector, and who spoke of "crowding out". In those arguments Professor Friedman is simply wrong.

Let us take the construction of council housing in the British economy. In England and Wales in the last decade, private contractors have built up to 95 per cent. of all council houses. In Scotland it is up to 98 per cent. That means that, of every £100 of public money that goes into council house building, between £95 and £98 goes straight into the pockets of private contractors. That public spending does not drain the private sector: it sustains it.

Likewise, cuts in the council house building programme do not simply hit the direct labour organisations that the Prime Minister hates so much; 19 times out of 20 they hit the private builders, the Rotarians, the local Conservative association members and the big building firms, many of which must be wondering why they put so much money into the Tory party's pocket when the Tories—with cuts of two thirds in the housing investment programme since 1979—have been taking money by the handful out of theirs.

The same applies to the National Health Service. In this country, not a hospital is built, not a ward or operating theatre equipped, not a drug prescribed that is not supplied by the private sector. Cuts in the NHS are actually restricting the growth and expansion of the private sector, not merely in the construction industry.

I grant the Chancellor that he has a problem with the Prime Minister. There is certainly no evidence that she has ever opened the main volume by the man whom she most loves to hate among economic theorists, Maynard Keynes. Had she read it, Keynes could have warned her of the consequences of the policies that the Government are now pursuing when he wrote:

"the more virtuous we are, the more determinedly thrifty, the more obstinately orthodox in our national and personal finance, the more our incomes will have to fall when interest rises . . . Obstinacy can bring only a penalty and no reward."

When they came to office the Government said that they would cut waste from higher education, public services and the National Health Service. In office, they have laid waste to higher education and public services, and they now plan to lay waste to the National Health Service. The Budget, with its implicit admission of errors on a massive scale, will penalise not only the poor but the entrepreneur.

Before long the electors will look back on the present Government and ask, "How could they have wasted so much that was on offer from North sea oil? How could they have missed the chance to use those funds to dynamise British industry? How could they have divided the nation so completely between rich and poor regions, rich and poor people, haves and have nots? The prejudice against public spending typical of this and the last Budget recalls the images of Eliot's "The Waste Land". It is the wasteland of our blighted inner cities, our derelict industrial areas, our closed hospital wards and our underpaid and overworked hospital staff. While for other countries 1992 means opening up Europe, this Government, with their penal interest rates and with this Budget, are closing Britain down.

Much has been said, in this debate and also in the report of the Treasury Select Committee, about junk statistics. We are less concerned with junk statistics than with the Government's junk policies. If any message is to reach the gilded salons of No. 10, it should be that the Prime Minister should junk the Chancellor before the British people junk the Government.

9.28 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): We have heard a number of interesting speeches and I was struck by the fact that hon. Members on both sides of the House managed to find aspects of the Budget to which they responded favourably. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was good enough to praise the abolition of the earnings rule. The hon. Members for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), together with my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) and others, praised the differential that my right hon. Friend established in favour of unleaded petrol. My hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) made a powerful speech giving strong support to what my right hon. Friend has done on company cars. I was especially grateful to him, because of his background in industry, knowing that it is not always the easiest policy to put across.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) caused a mild frisson on the Front Bench by prophesying that Ministers on the Treasury Bench might later have to reach for their wallets. However, he made a powerful speech with his usual eloquence and he warmly welcomed the fiscal stance in the Budget and underlined the need, above all, to get on top of inflation.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) divided the Budget into two halves—a tactical half and a strategic half. At least he was able to give the tactical part two and a half cheers, and for that we are extremely grateful. However, I do not agree with everything that he said about manufacturing industry. There has been a great structural change in the country in manufacturing industry but I cannot go along with the prophecies made to my right hon. Friend.

Throughout the debate there was a strong feeling, echoed on both sides of the Chamber, that it was, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West said, a safety first Budget. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed felt that in that respect we were making up for the mistakes of last year. That is a message and an argument that I, together with my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) reject strongly. Last year's tax cuts were right, they remain right and they will be seen more and more to be right. The tax cuts introduced last year will improve the competitiveness and the supply side of the economy. I have no doubt that in the long run they will also generate more revenue. I look forward to the day when we will be able to demonstrate that—I am confident that we will be able to do so—from the Dispatch Box.

If last year's tax cuts had been wrong, we would have been reversing them. In fact, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was confirming them and in his Budget, he made further remissions of some £3 a week for the majority of people in work. It seems an extraordinary view that if one does not take immediate action again this year to cut taxes, it means that last year's tax cuts were wrong. That view is obvious nonsense and the fact that it is nonsense was confirmed by the way in which the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) put forward his shadow Budget, with a package of measures costing some £3 billion. He was the man who advanced the argument that last year's tax cuts were wrong. If they were wrong, surely he would not now be advocating further measures totalling some £3 billion, which is not far short of the total of which he was so strongly critical last year.

Through the years my right hon. Friend and his predecessor have altered expectations as to what Budgets should be like. It is an unusual criticism and I do not find it a fierce criticism to be told that the Budget was boring or dull. Many of us would have been happy if some of the Budgets introduced by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) had been boring or dull. They were far from dull and they were very frequent. One of my hon. Friends turned up for me in a 1976 newspaper a cartoon of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East introducing one of his 1976 Budgets—his November Budget. The right hon. Gentleman was dressed up as Father Christmas, which is the way Chancellors tend to be dressed in cartoons. But in the cartoon, the taxpayers were queuing to give their presents to Father Christmas. That is how Budgets and Chancellors used to be seen. It is very different today, but we cannot always meet all the extravagant expectations that are sometimes built up.

Opposition Members have also complained about the increase in the tax burden. I find that a surprising line of approach for them. It is rather difficult for anybody, except perhaps for a member of the Salvation Army, to believe in overnight conversion. I find that concern with the tax burden extremely astonishing. The Opposition hooted with laughter when my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, when replying to the question of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East about the burden of taxation, pointed out that in our first years of office, we spent our time reducing debt and putting Government finances on a much sounder footing. That is why the tax burden, as a proportion of GDP, went up. It has been going down since the early 1980s, but it did go up as a result of the measures that we took in 1979 and the early 1980s. We have emphatically reduced the burden of income tax as a proportion of GDP and, furthermore, we have reduced income tax as it affects the ordinary citizen.

The Opposition, again, rather surprisingly, trying to have things both ways at once, like to argue that the burden of taxation has increased, although they always argue in favour of higher taxes. If the average amount of taxation has increased at all, it is only because real take-home pay has gone up so quickly under this Government. That is why average rates of tax may have increased. If we had simply taken the Labour Government's thresholds and tax rates and merely adjusted them for inflation, there is no doubt that a man on average earnings would today be paying about £18 a week more in taxation than he is doing now under this Government. If the Opposition think that the burden of taxation is too high—and I think that it is too high and we want to bring it down—why do they vote against year after year when we put forward measures to reduce the basic rate of income tax?

We have been told that this Budget does nothing for that mythical thing, the real economy, and that it does nothing for the current account. But the main problem is not the current account, but inflation. The measures that my right hon. Friend has put forward in his Budget are consistent with the steps he has already taken to get inflation down. It is a Budget that takes no risk with the anti-inflation strategy and it underpins the measures that my right hon. Friend has already taken on the monetary front. The trade balance will be the last indicator to respond, but it will certainly eventually do so.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: If, as the Financial Secretary says, the real enemy is inflation, why have the Government deliberately allowed water prices and electricity charges to go up? If the Government were really keen to tackle inflation, they could have stopped both those increases.

Mr. Lamont: Both those charges are going up because of the needs of those industries for investment. The fact that particular prices go up is not inconsistent with the Government's overall determination to bear down on inflation in general and it is monetary policy and the monetary framework, whatever may be happening to individual goods or commodities, which will bring down that rate.

Mr. Holland *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I want to move on because I have one or two announcements to make. However, I shall give way.

Mr. Holland: We look forward to those announcements. The Financial Secretary reminds me of President Charles De Gaulle who once said that a president should be concerned with inflation, not the price of eggs. Perhaps we have some sympathy for him there. But when will the trade deficit improve? We have had forecasts of this and

[Mr. Holland]

that, but when will we get a J-curve effect on the export side—or is it really an S-bend and is the Financial Secretary going down the tube?

Mr. Lamont: As my right hon. Friend made clear in his Budget statement and in the Red Book, the size of the deficit this year is expected to be broadly the same as last year's. However, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham pointed out, that is likely to mean that towards the end of the year things will begin to improve somewhat.

There is evidence that interest rates are already beginning to have their desired effect. That is obvious from the fact that the monetary aggregates, M0, and figures to be published next week, are likely to show an annualised growth rate over the past six months of below 3 per cent. It is evident from the housing market also that interest rates are beginning to have their effect.

The result of that prompt and effective action will be that inflation will come down. While getting inflation down is primarily a task for monetary policy, it is vital that fiscal policy supports it. That is why my right hon. Friend has budgeted for a third successive year of debt repayment, something unprecedented since the late 1940s. The debt that we are now repaying has been built up by years of excessive Government borrowing. Not only have we put an end to that excessive borrowing, but we are now lifting the burden of debt and the interest payments that go with it from taxpayers now and from generations in the future.

When the Leader of the Opposition responded to my right hon. Friend's answer to his private notice question, he said that it was the people's debt, not the Government's debt. Of course he is right, but repaying debt is not just an abstract idea of no benefit to anybody. It is the taxpayers who pay the interest, and as a result of the repayments in the past two years and the repayment in the next year, the Government will be saving taxpayers the equivalent in interest of £3 billion per year. That is dead money and dead expenditure—of no benefit to the citizens of this country.

As my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury pointed out in his Autumn Statement, he was able to give some increases to the priority areas in the public spending round because of the savings in debt interest. In that way, the programmes that Opposition Members regard as important were helped by what my right hon. Friend achieved on debt interest.

To listen to the Leader of the Opposition—no one imagines that he will ever confront the problem of a surplus—it was clear that he could not wait to get his hands on the £14 billion. Education, health, transport, pensions and welfare payments were all things on which, according to him, that £14 billion could be spent. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman got very close to the £20 billion of extra public expenditure that only a short time ago the Opposition were denying existed in their manifesto. However, after what the right hon. Gentleman said, there can be no doubt that the Opposition are committed to a lavish and expansive programme of public expenditure.

Although, for reasons that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made clear, we have not been able to cut the basic rate of tax in this year's Budget——

Mr. William Ross: Do the Government intend eventually to eliminate the national debt or not?

Mr. Lamont: It is not necessarily the Government's intention to do that. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made it clear that the objective is a balanced Budget. Indeed, my right hon. Friend explained that extremely clearly and the hon. Gentleman can read about it in the Red Book as well as in the report of my right hon. Friend's speech.

Although we have not been able to cut the basic rate this year, in this year's Budget we have been able to make a number of valuable reforms. The most costly—the one that allows people to keep more of their own money—is the reform of employees' national insurance contributions —something that has been welcomed by even Opposition Members. This year we have been able to finish the reform of employees' national insurance contributions that was started in the 1985 Budget. In that Budget we were able to reduce the size of the disincentive for people to work, but only by introducing more steps into the system.

In the Budget my right hon. Friend has been able to complete that reform and to remove those steps. The effect is to give people at the lower end an incentive to work, or rather it avoids that trap where people actually lose money by increasing their earnings. At the same time it is a measure that has given £3 a week to everyone earning more than £115 a week, which is 40 per cent. of average earnings.

In addition, we have been able to make some important improvements to the tax treatment of savings. I should like to comment on the alleged crisis that was mentioned by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed. The total saving in the economy—that is, the private and public sector combined—is about 2 per cent. higher as a proportion of GDP than in the 1970s. It has remained unchanged since 1986. Even the fall in personal savings—about which I assume hon. Members are concerned—is more than accounted for by increased personal borrowing, which is what my right hon. Friend has already taken steps to deal with through his action on interest rates.

I have said that the Government have taken a number of steps to increase savings and especially share ownership. Earlier today I announced in a written answer the results of the latest joint Treasury and stock exchange survey of individual share ownership in the United Kingdom. That shows that in the past 10 years the number of shareholders has trebled. Nine million British people now own shares, and about 10 million have either shares or savings in unit trusts. The overwhelming reason for that change is the direct result of Government policies—notably, privatisations, employee share schemes and personal equity plans. I am sure that my hon. Friends will agree that what is especially encouraging about the survey is that it shows that, despite the stock market crash, the level of share ownership—which has dramatically increased under the Government—has kept up and small shareholders have continued to be shareholders.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) mentioned what the Government are doing for wider share ownership and especially employee share ownership plans. My right hon. Friend announced in his Budget a new tax relief for employers wishing to promote employee share ownership. ESOPs involve trusts set up for the benefit of the company's employees. My right hon. Friend has removed any uncertainty by providing that corporation

tax relief will be due for payments made to ESOP trusts that satisfy certain requirements—for example, that the trust invests in shares promptly and distributes them within a reasonable time to all employees on a similar terms basis. I regard it as especially important that this tax relief is properly targeted to ensure that our objectives are met. If, therefore, the trustees fail to distribute shares within a reasonable time, or to meet other requirements, they will be taxed at 35 per cent.

I should emphasise to my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre that the Government have taken a comprehensive approach to dealing with the problems of encouraging ESOPs. Company law currently restricts the extent to which companies can give financial assistance to ESOP trusts. My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry expects, if some technical difficulties can be resolved, to table amendments to this year's Companies Bill to help ESOPs and to relax those restrictions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, and several other hon. Gentlemen asked what we are doing to improve the personal equity plans. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed somewhat under-estimated PEP's impact. In 1988, 115,000 plans were taken out, and that was after the worst stock market corrections or crash—as we are now allowed to call it—since 1929, and 270,000 were taken out in 1987.

About £700 million has been invested in equities, which is not an insignificant sum of money. I am confident that by allowing the amount that can be invested in unit trusts and in investment trusts to increase, we shall make PEPs much more attractive to the market. My hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle said it is extremely important that managers should be motivated to market PEPs. The response we have received is that they will definitely do so, and I am confident that that will be so.

We introduced a number of simplifications as a result of consultations with managers. We abolished the minimum holding period, and plan managers will no longer have to maintain separate portfolios for different plan years. Other changes made as a result of those consultations include changing from a calendar year to a tax year basis, and a reduction in the degree of information that plan managers must give to the Inland Revenue. I am confident that all those changes will reduce the cost of PEPs and make them more attractive to managers.

It was interesting that when the Leader of the Opposition responded to the statement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he came to life when talking about PEPs and water privatisation. I was surprised that the idea that PEPs should be opened up to new issues and to privatisations, like any other new issues plainly shocked him. I can only ask, "Why not?" We want to encourage privatisation and new issues as well.

Last July, the Government issued a consultative document that considered the possibility of simplifying the rules determining residence in this country for tax purposes and of relating liability for United Kingdom income tax more closely to the degree of an individual's connection with this country.

It has always been recognised that any changes must take account of the wider economic implications and ensure in particular that our tax environment is broadly comparable with that of other developed countries. The United Kingdom derives considerable benefit from people who come here from overseas to carry on business and other activities. We have no wish to see them leave. I am grateful for the many responses that we received. They expressed a variety of views, and considerable concern was expressed about the implications of moving to a world income basis of liability for certain categories of people not domiciled here.

We decided that the world income approach would not provide a satisfactory basis of taxation for non-United Kingdom domiciled foreigners who are resident in this country. Therefore, we do not intend pursuing it, and in those circumstances it is not our intention to bring forward any proposals at this time. I may say that we received representations from members of the Labour party as well as of the Conservative party on that matter, and they were both in the same direction.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East is interested in the cost of private medical insurance tax relief. It will cost about £40 million in its first year. In arriving at that figure, we presume additional take-up of 10 per cent. in the first year, 1990-91. I expect that in later years take-up will exceed present levels by a considerable margin. The exact figure will depend very much on the extent to which the medical insurance industry meets that new marketing challenge. As take-up increases, the diversity of private medical provision and choice should increase. At the same time, the greater proportion of people electing to take their medical treatment privately will help relieve pressure on the Health Service, to the benefit of those who continue to depend on it for their treatment.

Mr. John Smith: If the presumption is that the increase in take-up will only be 10 per cent. despite a 40 per cent. subsidy being offered, may I take it that if there is 100 per cent. take-up, the cost will be £400 million and not £40 million?

Mr. Lamont: We presume that there will be a 10 per cent. take-up, but——

Mr. Smith: Why?

Mr. Lamont: Because take-up depends on how strongly insurers market insurance. It will take time for plans to be marketed and for the figure to rise. Obviously, it will not be high in the first year, but it will increase in the second, third and fourth years. Opposition Members have suggested that the burden on the taxpayer could be about £500 for each 65-year-old, which almost exceeds the cost of National Health Service care. Their arithmetic is no better now than when they were last responsible for the economy. The average cost of tax relief for each individual's cover is expected to be under £100, while spending per head on National Health Service care for the elderly is almost 10 times as much.

In the Finance Bill, we are bringing forward measures based on recommendations of the Keith committee. The main proposals deal with the system of interest and monetary penalties for tax offences. They will, inter alia, bring PAYE into line with the changes already enacted for VAT and corporation tax. Together with the measures in the past two Finance Acts they complete our programme of reforms of the administration of income tax, capital gains tax and corporation tax, except for the recommendations on the administration and conduct of appeals, which will be the subject of further consultation.

[Mr. Lamont]

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East has been jumping up and down and putting questions to us, which is proper because it is his job. We have heard remarkably little about what the Labour party intends to do about taxation. Labour Members have been remarkably quiet since the last election, when the exposure of their commitments to clobber all taxpayers ensured their defeat at the polls. Their addiction to taking and spending other people's money cannot be suppressed for long, as has been apparent from their remarks today.

The salary-snatchers are at it again. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has already committed the Labour party to the abolition of the upper earnings limit on national insurance contributions, which he confirmed last week. It would increase marginal rates by nine percentage points for 2 million people, thus making them worse off at a stroke. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) wants the top rate to be 60 per cent., which, together with the abolition of the upper earnings limit, would imply a new top rate of 69 per cent. Labour Members also want to reimpose the investment income surcharge, which would lead to taxes on savings at a rate higher than 69 per cent. Labour Members have been saying that they want a Budget for savings. Their Budget for savings would include increasing taxation to a confiscatory level.

In an interview on 12 February the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East admitted that he would increase income tax for many basic rate taxpayers. We still have not received answers to the two big questions, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues repeatedly refused to answer—by how much would the Labour party increase public expenditure, and, to pay for it, by how many pence would it increase the basic rate of income tax? We have put those questions repeatedly, but answer comes there none.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister agree that many ordinary people, earning ordinary incomes, think it fairer to give cuts such as those given last year by increasing allowances rather than reducing the top rate of taxation? Would such a cut not be much fairer, if that is the direction the Government want to take?

Mr. Lamont: I am sure that those people welcome what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has done to national insurance contributions, which is by far the most effective way of directing help to the lower-paid.

The essence of the Budget is that the medium-term financial framework should be used to continue a more stable economic climate. Confidence and certainty should be confirmed through careful budgetary control and economic management. There will be possible reductions in taxation in future years. There will also be a fundmental improvement in the supply side of the economy. This is a Budget that builds on a decade of economic success and financial prudence. It is a Budget that recognises the tremendous advances made in tax reform over the last decade. It is a Budget that recognises the new concerns of the environment and the elderly as well as the saver. It is a Budget that may be cautious but, above all, one that is sensible and constructive, and I commend it to the House.

Debate adjourned.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the two remaining motions on the Order Paper.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Representation of the People

That the draft Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 16th February, be approved.

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 16th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Moray Coastguard (Peterhead)

10 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, and that of the House, I beg leave to present a petition from John D. Buchan, former chairman of the Peterhead harbour board. The petition is signed by 350 fishing skippers from the north of Scotland, and supported by fishing organisations and harbour boards representing over 1,000 boats.

The material allegations in the petition demonstrate the overwhelming opposition of the Scottish fishing fleet to the proposed closure, at the end of this month, of the Moray coastguard sub-centre at Peterhead and express the serious concern of the coastal communities that such a closure would adversely affect marine safety off the north-east coast of Scotland.

The prayer reads:

To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of fishermen's organisations, harbour authorities and skippers sheweth that Moray coastguard (Peterhead) provides a vital service to mariners, coastal dwellers and holidaymakers alike, and is currently threatened by cutbacks in the resources available to the service.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House ensure that Her Majesty's coastguard receives the resources necessary to the maintenance of a full and thorough rescue service at the port of Peterhead and in the Moray coastguard area.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Tourism (Northumberland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Allan Amos (Hexham): The purpose of this debate is to draw attention to the House to the enormous and exciting potential for tourism in Northumberland. It has all the ingredients for success. There is an amazing array of natural advantages in the county. There is need for agricultural and rural diversification. Tourism is labour-intensive, and the tourist industry is based largely on self-employment and small-scale units. My hon. Friend the Minister is already a frequent visitor to the region, and I am grateful to him for his genuine interest in the area.

As I am sure you know, Mr. Speaker, Northumberland is a beautiful land. The sheep are succulent, the people are proud, pleasant and prosperous, the cows are contented, and the scenery is stunning, staggering and spectacular. Let us look very briefly at the national context within which Northumberland has to operate. Last year was the best ever, nationally, for tourism: 15·4 million overseas visitors spent £6·2 billion, and domestic visitors spent £7 billion. The British tourist industry supports 1·4 million jobs, and about 40,000 new jobs are created each year. The annual turnover is equivalent to about 4 per cent. of GDP, and Britain is fifth in the world tourist earnings league. Nearly £7 of every £100 spent by world travellers is spent in Great Britain, and, significantly, every 1 per cent. increase in the British world market share would lead to an increase of £1 billion in earnings and 40,000 new jobs.

The role of the British Tourist Authority is to

"encourage tourism throughout the country, particularly in areas of tourism potential with higher than average levels of unemployment."

That applies in particular to a county like Northumberland, so let us look now at a recent profile of holiday visitors to the Northumbria region.

In 1987 4·3 million visitors spent £265 million in the region, sustaining 34,000 jobs. In 1988 tourism was worth £300 million to the region. The largest proportion of Northumbria's visitors, some 69 per cent., were from managerial and white collar groups who were particularly keen on our heritage attractions. A higher than average proportion of visitors were under 45. The 35 to 44 age group was the most evident and represented some 30 per cent. of our visitors, compared with only 17 per cent. nationally. Two thirds of that category had children and, in particular, they liked Northumbria's heritage attractions and tended to stay in self-catering accommodation and caravans. The area attracts large numbers from the south-east, London and east anglia. Those people stayed slightly longer than average and spent well above the average.

Overseas visitors were 15 per cent. of the total, and they also spent more and stayed longer than the average. Twenty per cent. were from north America, 35 per cent. from the EEC and 17 per cent. from Norway and Sweden —all countries with high income economies. The potential for expansion there is exciting. Altogether they spent £100 million.

Other characteristics of tourism are that 80 per cent. of our visitors come by car. The most popular pastimes are sightseeing, motoring, historic attractions, rambling and sea bathing. On average, holiday visitors stayed six days within an overall holiday period of nine days, whereas overseas visitors stayed nine days out of an overall 16-day holiday. A high proportion of our visitors simply stay overnight.

The characteristics and behaviour of visitors to Northumberland, a part of the Northumbria region are similar. They tend to be middle-class; relatively few stay with friends and relatives. Fewer than average for the region come from overseas. They are more likely than average to come from the north. They are particularly interested in historic sights, sightseeing and rambling. Ninety per cent. come to the area by car. They spend more each day per person than in the rest of the region, and a greater proportion of those people in Northumberland as opposed to Northumbria plan their visit by seeking information in advance.

What are the sources of that information about the region? It is a case of seeing is believing. Forty per cent. of the information comes from friends and relatives and 30 per cent. comes from previous knowledge. The region sells itself. Once people know about the region they come back time and again.

What, then, are the attractions of Northumberland? I shall have to curtail the list and simply point out some of them. The uniqueness and diversity of the region are important. First, the recent official designation of Hadrian's wall as a world heritage site and the Roman heritage generally is a prime attraction. I am not one to boast, but Kielder water is the largest man-made lake in Europe and Kielder forest is the largest man-made forest in Europe. We have border castles galore. There is the Christian heritage. The area is the cradle of Christianity. There is the historic cathedral city of Hexham. There are historic and charming small towns such as Allendale, Blanchland and Bellingham. With Government assistance we have seen the rebirth of a village at Allenheads with its heritage centre.

We have the south Tynedale railway and the Wentworth leisure centre in Hexham. We have sports centres in Otterburn and Ponteland, and we have a new international golf and hotel complex at Slaley hall. The Northumberland national park speaks for itself, as does the quality of the unspoilt environment generally.

The Metro centre is on the doorstep. That is the largest covered shopping centre in Europe. The area is a vast hinterland for Scandinavian shoppers to Newcastle, and there is plenty of lead-free petrol if they want it. We welcome visitors from across the North sea. Unlike hundreds of years ago, they now pay for what they take home.

What is the way forward? There must be an acceptance that tourism represents one of the most dynamic and exciting opportunities for the creation of jobs and wealth for the foreseeable future. Secondly, we must accept that tourism is a proper industry. It is highly competitive, it is consumer-led and it is having to meet rapidly changing tastes and fashions. There is a need, as in all other industries, for a better trained, qualified, educated and skilled work force. That is not an unnecessary expense but an essential investment.

I would welcome the role of the Department of Employment in that. The tourist and training initiative is to be greatly welcomed, as is the education and training group from the National Economic Development Office. The new GCSE in travel and tourism, the growing number of BA degrees at universities and polytechnics and better

[Mr. Allan Amos]

schools careers guidance to increase awareness of the opportunities in the tourist industry are all welcome developments.

Tourism is largely a private sector industry, but the Government have a role to play. Their job is to create the conditions for expansion, including help with promotion and infrastructure. The Government should be, and are, a facilitator and encourager, so I have two pleas to make to the Minister. First, might we, as soon as possible, end the suspension of section 4 grants? The Northumbria tourist board told me only yesterday that it is receiving 50 applications a month which cannot be dealt with. It would be helpful if we could end this period of uncertainty.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): As the hon. Gentleman knows, my constituency shares the beauties he has described, but it also shares the belief that section 4 grants should be reinstated. This is felt particularly keenly in my constituency, on the border with Scotland. Grants continue to be paid by the Scottish tourist board on the other side of the border, while people on my side of the border feel increasingly that they are being left behind while the review takes place.

Mr. Amos: These grants are important to the industry. They are being strategically targeted into new areas of unrealised tourism potential. They are most effective. They generate private investment with a leverage of seven or eight to one, which is an enormous ratio. They are especially important for smaller scale developments. That applies particularly in Northumberland. This shortage of section 4 grants is hitting self-catering, where the situation is already near capacity.

My second plea is to complete and implement swiftly the latest tourism review. Again, uncertainty adversely affects the finance and confidence of the industry. The structure and framework of the industry is about right. It now needs to be enabled to get on with the job.

The Government's help is also needed with the promotion of new products and sustaining and developing existing ones. The aim for domestic and overseas visitors must be to identify the market, to anticipate market trends, to stimulate quality and to spread the benefits away from congested London to the regions, where we have clean air and plenty of space. In such a diverse and dispersed industry, it is vital to target our resources and effort well. But we need to know visitor profiles and patterns—who is coming, what they are looking for and what type of holiday is being sought.

Identification of the various market sectors is an essential prerequisite for successful marketing. We must accept that the vast majority of people who visit the countryside come on day trips. We need to know if there is a potential demand for specialist interest holidays, such as the Christian heritage or the Roman heritage, what proportion are on second or third holidays, what proportion are on short breaks and how many people are going on caravan holidays.

There is a growing demand for self-catering and day trips, and that is well documented. Stays in the area of between one and three nights have been increasing significantly and will continue to do so because they represent the increasing affluence and leisure time of the majority of the population. But we must accept all the time that we are competing with the rapid growth of holidays abroad. Equally, we must promote two-centre holidays away from London. I accept that London will always be a magnet, but Northumberland is a magnet in its own right.

It is vital, therefore, that information is readily available in advance from the Northumbria tourist board for visitors, and from the tourist information centres on the spot, and we have good ones in Hexham and Haltwhistle in my constituency. The role of tourist information centres is crucial and they should be kept open to suit the demands of the consumers.

Charges for book-a-bed-ahead should not fall unfairly on guest houses and hotels, which are often small establishments operating on low margin. They need to be encouraged, not put off. The locations of tourist information centres can make all the difference,. They should be, and are, at airports, transport termini and in the high streets, and other agencies have a role to support this activity—for example the Rural Development Commission.

Marketing and market information depend on investment in the latest information technology. The efforts by various local authorities must be co-ordinated to avoid waste and unnecessary competition. Marketing Northumberland is easy. We have so much to offer: people will love the area and we must tell them about it. You, Mr. Speaker, are always welcome to visit Northumberland. You will get a warm welcome, and I look forward to seeing you there.

The Government can help with improving quality. I commend the crown classification scheme, although I wonder about the possibility of merging it with the AA and RAC star system to establish clarity in the public's mind. It is important throughout the industry to get value for money, to raise standards and to improve training for staff to get a more professional service. That applies to every catering and accommodation outlet. For example, we need more rooms with private facilities. That is what the public want and what we must provide for them.

The Government can greatly help also with infrastructure. Most visitors come to Northumberland by road and travel within Northumberland by road. The county has an extensive and well-maintained road network, but it is 300 miles from London, so quick and convenient access is especially important. We need the dualling of the A69 west of Hexham, a major caravan route and a winding road on which it is difficult to overtake. We need bypasses for villages such as Haltwhistle and Haydon Bridge to facilitate travel within the county and to protect the environment. We need a good motorway to the north-east, a reliable and punctual rail service and a direct link to and from the Channel tunnel—on that point, I strongly support the move to have the terminal at King's Cross.

We also need deregulation of European air fares to get greater use of regional airports such as Newcastle and to get cheap fares.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): What about Manchester airport?

Mr. Amos: I thought that the hon. Gentleman would say that.

We want greater use of Newcastle international airport and the Tyne seaports for direct entry from north America and Europe. The majority of foreign visitors arrive

through London if they are coming by air, and through Dover if they are coming by sea. There is tremendous scope for improvement.

I ask also for help on signposting. A simple principle is involved: people will not use facilities if they do not know that they exist or do not know where they are. Northumberland has large stretches of open road. More signs will not be any distraction or danger for the driver, and it is absurd to suggest that they will be. Brown and white signs are welcome but at about £500 a time are far too expensive for most ordinary people in the tourist industry. We need flexibility and common sense. As the British Tourist Authority says:

"signposting is an important part of a successful visitor service."

Of course, the signs must be environmentally sensitive, informative and properly designated. Unless we get this right, the problem will seriously hinder tourism development. For example, Mr. Moss, in my constituency, who opened tea rooms near Shotley Bridge, creating jobs, is about to close because no one knows that he is there as he cannot have a sign. Authorities at Vindolanda, a principal Roman site, battled for years to get a signpost. This is absurd. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to take up these matters with his colleagues in the Department of Transport.

I ask my hon. Friend also to take up another matter —help with obtaining EEC assistance under objective 5b of the European regional development fund and reformed structural funds. The problem is simple. Other rural areas get funds that Northumberland does not, even though, as most of Northumberland is in a rural development area, it has the benefit of a national grant aid scheme. The Northumberland rural development programme committee and I have been pressing the Government to notify the EEC that this area is under a national grant aid scheme in order to qualify for the extra EEC funds. We meet all the necessary criteria. Therefore, I believe that we are being discriminated against. The regional office of the Department of Trade and Industry is sympathetic to the submission for assistance.

Northumberland is creating and establishing an identity for itself. It is waking up to the possibilities. In 1987-88, 26 tourism projects were recommended for grant approval at a cost of £1·5 million. That is a sign of vibrant and exciting activity. The Northumbria tourist board has invested £4 million in the region through its support of local projects. The Northern Consortium continues to launch effective promotional campaigns in the region, and the private commercial sector is now more closely involved in the management of the Northumbria tourist board.

The stimulation of desirable and relevant investment in tourist facilities has been identified by the local authorities —Northumberland county council and Tynedale district council—as being of major importance to the economic prosperity of the area and to the quality of life. Attention is being paid to the provision of public facilities, such as public loos, museums and art galleries, to environmental matters, such as street cleaning and litter collection and to recreation and leisure facilities, such as picnic areas, parks and access to viewpoints.

The work of other agencies is also to be commended. They include the Rural Development Commission, the Countryside Commission, the county council and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which has provided grants for on and off-farm developments. The Forestry Commission also has a role, and the Northern Development Company has a vital part to play in promoting the region.

Rural tourism development action programmes have been designed to create working partnerships between local authorities, the private sector and the tourist boards to implement key schemes to increase tourism and create jobs. There was one at Kielder, in my constituency, assisted by the National Tourist Board. The Keilder forest park TDAP—in existence from 1984 to 1987—was a great success. The rural tourism development strategy, launched by the Rural Development Commission last year, recognised tourism as a growing part of the rural economy.

County council structure plans have a vital role to play. There is enormous scope for partnership between the public and private sectors in marketing and funding and for co-operation between the various agencies. Airlines and car rental companies, for example, can sell the region as well as their own services.

The success of tourism depends on an integrated and co-ordinated approach to the development and management of tourist potential. It needs a lead—and a clear sense of direction within a clear strategy. We must maximise the use of our resources and avoid duplication. Tourism is a dynamic and vibrant industry in which we must grasp opportunities and challenges to maintain healthy growth and, in an environmentally sensitive way, to preserve the fragile beauty of our area.

We want to extend tourism into a year-round activity. The opportunity is there. In January last year, for example, hotel room occupancy was 44 per cent.—a figure that is staggering but true—and higher than in most other regions. In September, with 73 per cent. hotel room occupancy, we were up with the leaders.

Years ago, Northumbrians, under foreign direction built a wall to keep out the barbarians. Now we welcome all suitable visitors and we want them to stay as long as possible.

It would not be fair for me to conclude without congratulating the Government on the commitment that they have shown to tourism by allocating more resources and by giving us a special Minister responsible for the industry.

10.23 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on securing an Adjournment debate on a subject that is becoming increasingly important to his constituency and his region, and I thank him for his comprehensive speech. I am especially pleased that a number of other hon. Members are with us—not least the Opposition Chief Whip, the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster), and the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who take a great interest in tourism matters in their own region.

In previous tourism debates I have begun by talking about the healthy and dynamic state of our domestic tourism industry. I am glad to say that tonight's debate will be no exception, and that I can report further encouraging signs of the buoyancy of tourism in this country.

Figures released last week show that 1988 was another record year for United Kingdom tourism, with a total of

[Mr. John Lee]

15·7 million visitors from overseas during the year, surpassing the previous record total in 1987. Prospects for 1989 look even better. Many tour operators are reporting a significant upturn in domestic holiday business. Some operators have seen increases of as much as 50 per cent. in forward bookings for the year compared with 1988. This very heartening state of affairs shows that the foresight and confidence of investors in the industry is beginning to pay off. In the second half of 1988 investment in major tourism projects under way or completed also reached an all-time high of over £2·5 billion, which represents an increase of 25 per cent. on the previous six months.

It is therefore very gratifying to hear that advance bookings for the 1989 season show a very definite consumer preference for what I might term the quality end of the market. Britain is developing a quality image, and can more than match what our overseas competitors are able to offer without some of the attendant problems such as airport delays which many package tourists suffered last year. I believe that those who have invested in new facilities, or have upgraded existing facilities, will see a rich return from that investment in the coming years.

Having outlined the national picture, I should like to focus on tourism in Northumberland. It is estimated that there are more than 1 million visitors a year spending at least one night in Northumberland, generating a total tourism spend of over £60 million. A recent survey of Northumbria tourist board members indicates that 1988 was the best ever year for visitors. Once again the customer emphasis was on quality, with many visitors attracted by the area's incomparable Roman and early Christian heritage. I am glad to say that I will be adding to this year's visitor total when I take my family to Northumberland for part of our Easter holiday later this month.

Investment in large-scale projects in the Northumbria tourist board area totalled £110 million in the second half of 1988, an increase of 34 per cent. on the same period in 1987. Admittedly, most of that investment went into projects outside Northumberland, but we are now starting to see some major developments in Northumberland itself coming on stream, which bodes well for the future.

One development which is already completed, although I understand that further expansion is planned, is the £1·4 million Amble marina, which provides berths for more than 200 boats. The marina's first maritime festival in September 1988 attracted 5,000 visitors in a single weekend, which shows the potential for extending the tourist season beyond the traditional high summer months. Amble was also the only northern port to win a Tidy Britain Group blue flag award in 1988.

I am also glad to see that the project at Slaley hall, near Hexham, which my hon. Friend mentioned, is now very much on the go again, after some initial difficulties. This planned £8·7 million project, which will include a 140-bed hotel, a conference centre, timeshare lodges, a golf course, and other leisure facilities, will bring some 200 direct jobs to the area.

One particularly interesting development is at Cragside hall in Rothbury, the first house in the world to be lit by hydro-electricity, which I visited last year. The National Trust has spent £167,000 on restoring the hydro-electric machinery and on creating a "power circuit walk" to entertain and instruct the 100,000 or so visitors who come to the hall each year.

On that same visit to Northumberland I also saw the very successful house of Hardy Fishing museum in Alnwick, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), which is attracting a good deal of overseas interest. Visitors to the museum can also tour the factory and see craftsmen demonstrating their traditional skills. I have no doubt that other businesses in the country would benefit from catering for visitors. I have made the promotion of modern industrial tourism something of a personal crusade. That is why I welcome the forthcoming industry-tourism conference, which is being organised by my Department, the Department of Trade and Industry, and the CBI, among others, to be held later this year in the region.

I mentioned earlier that heritage is one of Northumberland's strongest suits. That fact was given international recognition when UNESCO designated Hadrian's wall a world heritage site. The Roman forts along the wall, Housesteads, Vindolanda, Chesters, and the Roman Army museum at Carvoran together attract well over 300,000 visitors a year, showing the importance of the wall to Northumberland's tourism industry.

Indeed, the North-East regional tourism co-ordination group, which is chaired by the Employment Department's regional director, has set up the Hadrian's wall marketing group. This group has already carried out a review of signposting in the vicinity of the wall, and has agreed a strategy for co-ordinating the signposts to the various attractions along the wall. Other initiatives on the heritage front include the production of a leaflet called "Great North Houses", a first-ever joint effort by English Heritage, the National Trust, and the Historic Houses Association. There are now further plans to set up a Christian heritage trail, which would include such major heritage attractions as Lindisfarne priory, which now has a new £250,000 permanent exhibition of monastic life.

Those and other initiatives illustrate the partnership approach which is beginning to achieve success in Northumberland. It is good to see that public sector bodies are getting involved in the development of tourism, and are working more closely with the private sector. The county council and all six district councils in the county belong to the regional tourist board, and many now have their own tourism officer and tourism strategy. The county council has set up a marketing campaign, using the slogan "England's Border Country", and the Northern Development Company has launched its Great North campaign, emulating Glasgow's highly successful "Glasgow's Miles Better" campaign. My Department has given financial support to the Great North campaign during the last two years.

I am also pleased to see that commercial members of the Northumbria tourist board are now represented on the board's executive committee. However, as it has only 600 commercial members—one of the lowest memberships in the country—there is still considerable scope for increased commercial membership of the board, and for greater private sector participation in its work. I look forward to the publication of the board's tourism strategy for Northumbria, which I understand is due to appear later this year.

Another example of fruitful collaboration between several organisations is the Kielder tourism development

action programme, which brought together, among others, the English tourist board, the Northumbrian water authority and the Countryside Commission. During the action programme's period of operation, from 1985 to 1987, investment in the area increased sevenfold to £1·5 million, leading to the development of water sports facilities, a visitor centre, sports centres and allied activities.

Let me finally refer briefly to the section 4 scheme—the suspension of which, as my hon. Friend will know, was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment on 30 January. The future of the scheme is one of the issues currently being considered as a result of the recent review of tourism policy in the Department of Employment. An announcement about the outcome of that review, including the future of section 4, will be made in due course. In the current financial year up to January 1988, offers of assistance totalling nearly £800,000 were made to 34 projects in the Northumbria tourist board area and offers totalling almost £1·5 million made to 37 projects in 1987-88. However, it is important to put section 4 grants, totalling about £13 million per annum nationally, in the context of a £2·5 billion capital investment programme. It is clear that the vast majority of projects would have proceeded in any event.

In covering the main developments and issues pertaining to tourism in Northumberland, I have attempted to paint a picture of a county that is blessed with many natural assets, with its beautiful coastline, marvellous, grand, unspoilt countryside, and its Roman and early Christian heritage. The area's tourism potential has perhaps in the past been rather neglected, and has rather fallen behind other areas which in recent years have discovered the benefits of marketing themselves as tourist destinations. Things are now changing for the better. What is needed now is a concerted effort to develop the sort of attractions and facilities that today's visitors require, and to put Northumberland firmly on the tourism map.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 16 March 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL
Orders for Third Reading read.
To be read a Third time on Wednesday 22 March.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (HULL) BILL *(By Order)*

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL *(By Order)*

WENTWORTH ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Wednesday 22 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Marketing Board

1. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Milk Marketing Board; and what matters were discussed.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor: I have regular contacts with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss various issues affecting the dairy industry.

Mr. Morgan: When the Minister last met the chairman, did he discuss the matter raised this week by Malcolm Stewart, one of the members of the board who said that treating cows with bovine somatotrophin was a disaster in marketing terms? Does the Minister agree that the British consumer has the right to know whether the milk that he or she buys comes from cows which have been treated with that artificial hormone? Does he further agree that the consumer has a right to expect that any milk which comes from BST-treated cows will be labelled to make that fact plain?

Mr. MacGregor: We did not discuss that issue at our last meeting. As the hon. Gentleman knows, ministerial responsibilities on test certificates—the stage that we are at—are guided by the Medicines Act 1968. Under that legislation, we receive advice from the veterinary products committee, which gives clearance on safety and all the other criteria laid down by the Act before a product can go ahead for field tests.

Separate labelling has proved to be pretty well impracticable in terms of field tests. There are no licence applications for full product approval before Ministers at present, but obviously many factors would be taken into account in considering them.

Mr. Hunter: In his dealings with the Milk Marketing Board and other parties interested in the dairy sector, has my right hon. Friend encountered the same general confidence and buoyancy as is found among the majority of milk farmers in Hampshire?

Mr. MacGregor: There is a good deal of confidence in the dairy sector at present. There is no doubt that dairy incomes have been rising and that that sector of agriculture is in good heart.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Minister deny that at its meetings in June and July 1988 the veterinary products committee considered and rejected an application by Monsanto for a product licence for BST on grounds of safety and that that fact is confirmed in its minutes of September 1988? Will the Minister now call a halt to the experiment with BST?

Mr. MacGregor: When the veterinary products committee considers a product licence, it has to consider many factors. It may have to engage in prolonged discussions with a company before it makes any recommendations and before anything comes before Ministers. Moreover, the same product also has to be scrutinised at European Community level. I repeat that nothing has yet come before Ministers in terms of applications for product licences. There would be a lengthy process of scrutiny before any recommendation was made to Ministers as to whether a product should be approved.

Mr. Marlow: As a libertarian who would obviously set his face like flint against a nanny state, will my right hon. Friend confirm that he will not prevent free-born Englishmen from drinking unpasteurised milk if they wish to do so?

Mr. MacGregor: I acknowledge that there are some difficult issues. I am very much on the side of wishing to give absolute freedom of choice wherever possible. We came to the conclusion that we should propose a ban for unpasteurised milk but not for products made from unpasteurised milk on two grounds. We did so, first, on advice from the chief medical officer and on medical advice generally that there was no way of making the product safe for consumers except through pasteurisation and, secondly, on the experience in Scotland, where the product is already banned. There has been a big reduction in the number of food poisoning cases there compared with England and Wales. It was not an easy decision and it is one where there must be a balance of considerations.

Food (Legislation)

2. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement about his proposals to change the legislation relating to food.

Mr. MacGregor: Work on the review of food legislation that we announced in October 1987 is well advanced and I hope to come forward with proposals for new legislation as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

Mr. Hinchliffe: As the Government consider that cook-chill catering is safe if the 1980 guidelines are followed, what action are the Government taking against those supermarkets which are plainly breaching those guidelines in selling cook-chill food?

Mr. MacGregor: We are doing a great deal of research in that area. We are working with retailers and manufacturers to ensure that the processing is sufficient to kill listeria and that subsequent handling is at temperatures that will prevent reinfection. In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health is preparing to consult shortly, as required by the Food Act 1984 on the draft regulations and he is proposing to apply temperature controls at all stages in the distribution chain, including retail shops.

Mr. Boswell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the principles underlying his new legislation should be the maximum consumer information through labelling and the minimum statutory interference and control, which must be only on essential food safety grounds?

Mr. MacGregor: The principle of maximum labelling and information to the consumer is one that we already follow in operating all our many food safety procedures under existing legislation. There are, however, gaps in the existing legislation—not least because of the advances in food technology, processes and products. That is why we took the view that it was necessary to carry out a review of existing food legislation and to consider what further steps would be required to ensure that we have all the necessary mechanisms to protect the consumer throughout the food chain.

Mr. Ron Davies: We have not heard a great deal recently from the Minister about his 17-point plan to deal with salmonella in eggs. Will he confirm that many of the items in that programme require parliamentary legislation, which has not been brought before the House, so the programme is not being implemented? Will he explain his Department's tardiness in preparing the orders and tell us when we can expect to see them in the House?

Mr. MacGregor: If the hon. Gentleman has not heard a great deal, it is because he has not noticed that legislation is being produced and in many cases is before the House. We are proceeding rapidly with the 17 measures. Some still require quite complex statutory regulations, which is being prepared, and in some cases there has had to be consultation. Quite a number of the regulations, however, have already gone through or are currently going through the House, and the rest will be before the House shortly.

RSPB

3. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; and what matters were discussed.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Richard Ryder): My right hon. Friend the Minister and I met the chairman of the RSPB council on 17 November, when we discussed the RSPB's consultation paper on the reform of the common agricultural policy.

I had a separate meeting with the chairman on 3 November, at which we discussed a wider range of issues. Both those meetings were extremely helpful and constructive.

Mr. Paice: When the Minister next has the chance to discuss matters of mutual interest with the RSPB, will he stress the beneficial effects of Government policy such as the farm woodland scheme and the new capital grant scheme? Will he also explain to the RSPB the Government's views on the European Commission's draft directive on habitats, which would mean that much of the rest of Europe would be forced to follow our excellent example in habitat protection?

Mr. Ryder: The latest issue of the RSPB publication, *Birds*, congratulates the Government on the farm woodland scheme and the farm and conservation grant scheme to which my hon. Friend referred. As my hon. Friend may know, this Government together with all Governments in the European Economic Community unanimously rejected the habitat directive when it was discussed by the Council recently. However, there is wide support for a British idea and we hope that our European partners will support us. We have much to teach them on the subject and I believe that that is recognised by the RSPB.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not wish to be critical, as I know that there are difficulties, but will the Minister investigate the conditions under which birds are imported from Amazonia and West Africa? Will he also look into the increasing theft of rare parrots, which is quite improper? It may be difficult to do anything about this, but does he agree that it is at least worthy of ministerial attention?

Mr. Ryder: It is indeed worthy of ministerial attention and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall look into the matter.

Council for the Protection of Rural England

4. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Council for the Protection of Rural England; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Ryder: I met the chairman and other leading figures in the Council for the Protection of Rural England on 7 November. We discussed several countryside issues at what was a very helpful and constructive meeting. Subsequently, Fiona Reynolds, assistant director of the CPRE, kindly addressed a meeting of my constituents in Norfolk on 27 January.

Mr. Hanley: Does my hon. Friend agree with the CPRE's concern about rural housing? Does he believe that our right hon. Friend the Chancellor's recent Budget Statement about land for the development of low-cost housing being free of capital gains tax will receive a warm welcome, and what does he estimate will be the take-up in the coming year?

Mr. Ryder: I hope that the whole House will welcome the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to which my hon. Friend refers. I am due to meet the CPRE again soon and I shall be surprised indeed if it does not express wholehearted support for that measure.

Mr. Martin Jones: Did the Minister discuss with the CPRE the possibility of water authorities in England demanding a percentage of the environmentally sensitive area payments from their tenants? Is he aware that that is what the Welsh water authority is doing in Wales, and does he agree that it is deplorable? Has the Minister received any representations about that?

Mr. Ryder: I have not discussed that matter with the CPRE, but I will raise it at our next meeting.

Mr. Hicks: Can my hon. Friend assure the House that in any discussions that he has with any organisation about the countryside and the rural economy he will place great emphasis on the decisions recently taken by my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Environment to give positive encouragement to the provision of low-cost housing for local people in rural areas?

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend has highlighted two important decisions taken by my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Environment. I should be surprised if anyone living in a rural area did not fully support those announcements.

Mr. Home Robertson: Has the Minister given any explanation to the CPRE for the Government's merciless hostility towards people who live and work in rural Britain? How are people living and working on farms supposed to keep their heads above the cost of privatised water, let alone get involved in popular capitalism, when their incomes are not even keeping pace with the Chancellor's 8 per cent. rate of inflation? In particular, how does the Minister suppose that the 552 people working on farms in the vale of Glamorgan will cope with the Government's viciously anti-rural poll tax when it is introduced next year?

Mr. Ryder: The people living in the constituency to which the hon. Gentleman refers will return the Conservative candidate at the by-election. Indeed, if the level of debate in that campaign is comparable with that of the hon. Gentleman's question the Conservative majority will undoubtedly be increased.

Sir Michael Shaw: Does my hon. Friend intend stressing at his next meeting with the CPRE that everyone should have the utmost sympathy for planning applications made by hard-pressed farmers seeking to diversify their activities?

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend may be aware of the new planning guide for farmers that the Department issued in January. I shall be happy to make copies available to my hon. Friend's constituents. We have received a large number of requests for the guide, which is proving a great success throughout the country.

Food (Labelling)

6. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he is having in the European Community with regard to the labelling of food.

Mr. Ryder: A "common position" has been reached on proposed amendments to the food labelling directive. Those are now with the European Parliament before returning to the Council for final adoption. Proposals on nutrition labelling are also being discussed in Brussels.

Mr. Flynn: Has the hon. Gentleman discussed with his fellow EEC Ministers the practice of labelling eggs for sale as being "salmonella-free"? Is he aware that that practice continues in this country and many consumers are being misled because no scientific test for salmonella can be carried out without destroying the egg itself? What does he intend to do to stop the practice?

Mr. Ryder: The hon. Gentleman is correct. Without breaking the egg, there can be no guarantee that it is salmonella-free. In a European context, the matter is being discussed by European vets, who decided to put it on the agenda for their meetings at the beginning of December.

Mr. David Nicholson: Did my hon. Friend receive any representations from our EEC partners about the British practice of labelling green-top milk? Will he confirm that, with the possible exception of Denmark, no other EEC country bans the sale of unpasteurised milk?

Mr. Ryder: As my hon. Friend is aware, my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture and the Secretary of State for Wales published a consultation document on that issue. We look to organisations representing the industry and consumers to respond as soon as possible before a final decision is taken.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Minister discuss with our European partners the labelling of food used in airline meals following the serious report submitted to his Department by the three environmental health authorities at Heathrow which reveals that a quarter of all the airline meals sampled were contaminated with potentially dangerous bacteria and at least four were contaminated with salmonella? Given the international implications of carrying meals on airlines, does the Minister agree that meals should be labelled correctly and that the methods of cook-chilling and re-heating meals on aircraft should be standardised?

Mr. Ryder: I agree with the hon. Lady that every effort must be made by authorities, organisations, firms and airlines to ensure that the food served to airline customers is safe. I will certainly do my best to look into the matter.

Hedgerows

7. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further action his Department is taking to protect hedgerows and to encourage the planting of new hedges.

Mr. Ryder: The new farm and conservation grant scheme makes generous provision for the planting,

replacement or improvement of hedges. That work may include hedgerow trees and any necessary protective fencing. Through the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, we also offer advice on trimming and maintenance of hedges, and on the time of year when cutting and trimming is best carried out for the benefit of wildlife.

Mr. Corbyn: I am sure that the Minister accepts that the presence of hedgerows is important in protecting wildlife and providing refuge, as well as in preventing soil erosion by wind or water. It is therefore important to increase the number of miles of hedgerows in this country, not decrease them. Will the Minister bring in statutory controls so that hedgerows cannot be removed without special permission? Does he agree that it is necessary to increase the upland hedgerow grant, which has been cut? Will he also agree to give sufficient training to farmworkers, as well as money for that training, so that the skills lost by the removal of so many hedgerows can be replaced? Does he acknowledge that hedgerows are a vital part of the countryside and of our ecosystem that we all need and enjoy?

Mr. Ryder: Legislation may have its attractions to some people, but controls of the kind suggested by the hon. Gentleman would be wholly impractical and unworkable. We have increased grants for the planting of hedgerows in lowland areas, because it is in those areas of Britain—notably East Anglia and the east midlands—that most hedgerows have been lost in the past 40 years. That is why hedgerow grants for lowland areas have been increased to 40 per cent., and why there has already been considerable uptake of the new grant scheme.

Sir Anthony Grant: Will my hon. Friend give a word of praise to those farmers in East Anglia who have spent a great deal of money and effort in replacing trees and hedgerows and who are just as concerned about the environment in which they live as are the town folk of Islington and elsewhere?

Mr. Ryder: As an East Anglian I am only too happy to respond positively to my hon. Friend. There are many parts of East Anglia where, throughout the course of the past 10 years, enlightened farmers have planted trees all over the place. The grants which we have made available —the 40 per cent. to which I have referred—should be taken up by more farmers in East Anglia because more trees should be planted there.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister accept that, ecologically, the existence and protection of hedgerows is of considerable importance and has been neglected? Does he accept the Prime Minister's estimate that 120,000 miles of hedgerow have been destroyed and, in view of that assessment, does he share my regret at the Prime Minister's insistence that my Hedgerows Bill should continue to be blocked?

Mr. Ryder: The hon. Gentleman is a distinguished member of the council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and I should be grateful if he would pass on the congratulations of the House to the RSPB in its centenary year—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question".] With regard to the hon. Gentleman's Bill, as I said to his hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), it would be wholly impractical and unworkable to enforce legislation on the lines that he set out. That is why the Government are not prepared to support the Bill. I have seen a copy of the letter that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister wrote to the hon. Gentleman earlier this week. The arguments set out in that letter represent the arguments of the entire Government.

Egg Industry

9. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the present position in the egg industry.

Mr. MacGregor: Contacts with major packers indicate considerable variations in sales but overall these may be about 75 per cent. to 80 per cent. of levels experienced in November. Packing station throughput has fallen by about 13 per cent. The balance is going for export and into egg products. Total returns to producers, including bonuses, are about 34p per dozen—still considerably below production costs, which are currently rather more than 40p per dozen.

Mr. Townend: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the slaughter policy for salmonella-infected chickens, which was advocated by me and by many of my hon. Friends, has been warmly welcomed by the industry?

Is he further aware, however, of the serious anomaly in the compensation scheme whereby the compensation for laying birds is the same as for breeding birds, although the latter are worth four times the former? That seems most unfair. Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the matter with a view to increasing the compensation for breeding birds?

Mr. MacGregor: I confirm my hon. Friend's first point and I am grateful to the industry for welcoming the slaughter policy. On the second point, my hon. Friend will know that under the Animal Health Act 1981 the Government are required to pay compensation whenever compulsory slaughter is imposed. We propose that compensation will normally be assessed by reference to a scale of values which takes into account the fact that the birds are from a flock known to be infested with salmonella. I do not wish to raise any expectations on the part of my hon. Friend, but I shall be happy for him to write to me on the point about which he is concerned.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister give a clear, unequivocal guarantee that it is okay to eat Cadbury's Easter eggs this year without having to boil them first?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes. Sir.

Mr. Knapman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that eggs remain a very valuable source of protein at a modest price?

Mr. MacGregor: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I can assure him that my family and I—like the large number of families that I have met in recent weeks—continue to eat eggs in the way that we always have done, taking into account the chief medical officer's advice about raw eggs.

Mr. Mallon: Does the Minister agree that when setting up the working party to examine all aspects of egg production and hygiene it was a mistake not to include someone from the Department of Agriculture of the North of Ireland? Does he agree that it would make sense to learn

from the experience of Northern Ireland, where egg production has been kept salmonella-free and has left us able to say that we in Northern Ireland are the good eggs?

Mr. MacGregor: The working party was considering what further information and research on salmonella was required. As that related to the position in England, Scotland and Wales particularly, it was right to draw the working party's members from each of those areas. I assure the hon. Gentleman, as I think that I have done on other occasions, that we try to learn what we can from the experience of Northern Ireland, which, as he says, is salmonella-free.

Dr. David Clark: Will the Minister confirm that the egg and poultry industry has failed to provide funds for the continuation of research into reducing salmonella at the Institute of Food Research at Bristol? Does he not agree that it is a scandal that the three members of staff working on the competitive exclusion project at Bristol will be made redundant as from tomorrow?

Mr. MacGregor: We have made it clear many times that the decisions about that project were made before the recent concern about salmonella, and were based on the view that the fundamental research work had been completed. As the hon. Gentleman knows, some companies are using that research to develop projects in the market place, and I hope that others will continue to look at it. That is the present requirement.

We spend considerable sums each year on more general salmonella research. The money that will no longer be provided for the Bristol research project that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned will be applied to other types of microbiological research where it is needed, and I am now actively reaching my final conclusions on the working party's recommendations on further research into salmonella.

Fraud (EC)

12. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with his colleagues in the European Council of Ministers concerning fraud within the European Community.

Mr. MacGregor: I have regularly raised in the Agriculture Council the problem of fraud within the European Community, most recently in the November 1988 and February 1989 Councils.

Mr. Skinner: Did the Minister tell the people in charge of the corruption department in the Common Market that the British taxpayer is fed up to the back teeth with having to dole out something approaching £6 billion last year for the Mafia to make money out of olive trees that do not even exist? Is it not a scandal that, when every family in Britain is paying £16 a week into the common agricultural policy, £5 a week of that is going on fraud? The money should go into the pockets of the farmworkers, who have just been offered a miserly 7 per cent.

Mr. MacGregor: By definition, we do not know the exact scale of money involved in fraud in the European Community, although various estimates have been made. This is, however, a historic occasion: for once I can agree with part of what the hon. Gentleman has said. I think that it is the first time that that has ever happened.

Mr. Skinner: Can I have that in writing?

Mr. MacGregor: It will be in writing. I entirely agree that wherever fraud exists in the Community—and it almost certainly exists on too large a scale in the CAP—it is important for us to take all possible steps to eradicate it. The British Government have taken the lead in arguing for that, and in putting forward action programmes to deal with the problem.

Mr. Gill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, contrary to the belief of the Opposition parties—who would have us think that more inspectors and auditors would prevent fraud—the answer is to reform the system? That is what we are now doing. The reduction of beef intervention to 200,000 tonnes is a step in the right direction, although the complete answer is the obviation of beef intervention altogether.

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly agree that changes in various policies and schemes in the CAP will go a considerable way towards reducing opportunities for fraud. As well as the proposal that my hon. Friend has mentioned, we are strongly urging the elimination of monetary compensation amounts by 1992, which would also be very helpful.

I think, however, that it is also necessary to have the apparatus to check, control and monitor what is going on in the system, and that is why we supported the setting up of the anti-fraud unit in the Commission.

Mr. Hardy: While welcoming the Minister's view of fraud in other member states, may I ask him to comment on the situation in this country, where a person involved in grain storage confessed in a Central Television programme to the most outrageous practices? Many people expected a prosecution to follow and still cannot understand why confessions in such public conditions should not have resulted in a prosecution.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall have to look into that case. I have not seen the television programme to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I assure him that we follow up all cases of suspected fraud. Successful action was taken between 1984 and 1988 in 41 cases of fraud under the CAP; 19 were prosecuted and the others were settled out of court. Of the 19, there were nine prison sentences and fines of up to £40,000. I also assure the hon. Gentleman that the question of identifying checks on CAP products, particularly with a view to tracing fraud, is now a high priority in the current Customs and Excise management planning programme. We are anxious to ensure that we carry out the proper checks and follow them up in this country.

Potato Producers

13. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of potato producers and distributors; what was discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend met the National Farmers Union and the Scottish National Farmers Union on 1 March 1989 and the Potato Marketing Board and the Potato Processors Association on 8 March 1989, to discuss

their responses to the Government's consultation paper on future potato market policy. All responses are now being considered and a decision will not be delayed unduly.

Mr. Tredinnick: Will my hon. Friend assure consumers that whatever his decision on the Potato Marketing Board, there will continue to be a plentiful supply of first-class potatoes at a price everyone can afford?

Mr. Ryder: I am happy to give my hon. Friend that firm, unyielding commitment.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Is my hon. Friend aware that in the west midlands, in my part of the world, both the large-scale professional potato growers and the small-scale growers are of like mind that the third option of his consultative paper would be the right way to go in that it would remove the public money dimension? Would it not be advisable to give the industry the solution that it would prefer?

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend is tempting me to comment on each of the three options before a decision is taken. Alas, I cannot do that, but I assure him that a decision will be taken soon and that the views of hon. Members will be taken into account.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

16. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ban the sale of those organs from all cows and sheep that are known to carry the viral agent which causes bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): On the advice of the Southwood working party, the carcases of cattle suspected of having BSE are destroyed as a precautionary measure. In addition, from 18 July 1988 the Government introduced a ban on the use of ruminant-based protein in feed rations for ruminants, since this is the most likely cause of the disease. Scrapie has been present in this country for at least 200 years without any evidence of a risk to humans. Neither has research identified such a risk. In the circumstances, the ban which has been suggested would not, therefore, be appropriate.

Mr. Davies: The Southwood committee, to which the Minister referred, recognised that there was a danger to human health from the consumption of infected organs. The Minister said that scrapie had been endemic in this country for 200 years. But is he aware that there have been incidents of BSE only since 1987? Given the fact that the agent responsible both for scrapie and BSE has demonstrated its capacity to cross the species barrier, does the hon. Gentleman agree that his Department is being complacent in not banning the sale for human consumption of all those organs which have the potential for holding the reservoir of this infection?

Mr. Thompson: The hon. Gentleman does well to take this mater as seriously as the Government take it. We shall not accept any charge of complacency on the issue. Indeed, the Southwod report congratulated the Government on the speed with which we acted, and I congratulate Opposition Members on the responsible way in which they have acted in relation to that report. The Southwood report concluded that it was most unlikely that BSE would have any implications for human health, and the measures that we are taking are procautionary only. We have now set up the Tyrrell committee, which will advise us on further measures that should be taken. We shall act as quickly on those measures as we have on those contained in the Southwood report.

Mr. Colvin: My hon. Friend's reply shows why there is a growing need for fully trained vets in the United Kingdom. Is he aware that the Unifed Kingdom is importing one vet per day? Will he take this opportunity to turn down the recommendations of the Riley report suggesting that we close the vets colleges at Cambridge and Glasgow?

Mr. Thompson: I have listened very carefully to what my hon. Friend has said. I have answered questions which have given him the information which he has just recycled. However, the Riley committee is a matter for the Department of Education and Science, not for us.

Food Contamination

17. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to reduce the contamination of food.

Mr. Ryder: In implementing our food safety policy my Department and the Department of Health will continue to ensure that we get the facts, that we have the best scientific assessment of them and that action is taken wherever changes are shown to be necessary.

Mr. Buckley: In view of the relevance of the statement by the Minister and the continuing increase in radioactivity in the sheep flocks in Cumberland, is it not time that we had a survey? Since the Chernobyl accident happened three years ago, why do we not have a national survey of radioactivity taken from the aerial surveys of the whole country?

Mr. Ryder: The area concerned is being surveyed and monitored all the time by Ministry officials.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. Friend aware that in my constituency D. B. Marshall, which is a large chicken processing plant employing over 1,000 people, is deeply concerned at the dramatic reduction in sales that has occurred following the hysteria over chickens? There has been a drop of 20 per cent. in sales of fresh chickens and of 30 per cent. in sales of frozen chickens. This puts at risk many jobs. A total of £5 million has been spent on this plant in recent years to make it the most modern and up-to-date in Europe. Consequently, we now want some sanity on this matter and some clear evidence that processors are producing chickens of the quality required.

Mr. Ryder: I am sure that my hon. Friend is correct. That is why sales of eggs are gradually recovering and sales of poultry are increasing and have been during the past few years.

Farm Woodland Scheme

18. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made with the farm woodland scheme.

Mr. Ryder: There has been a very encouraging level of interest shown by farmers in the farm woodland scheme.

In the first five months of the scheme over 750 farmers have applied to plant 5,300 hectares of trees throughout the United Kingdom. A high proportion of the planting will be with broadleaved trees.

Mr. Brazier: This is welcome news indeed. Can I ask my hon. Friend whether MAFF is co-operating with the Department of the Environment in its review of tree preservation orders, as this will offer an opportunity to increase protection of our broadleaved forest and expand its acreage?

Mr. Ryder: Indeed, I have had a meeting with my ministerial colleagues in the Department of the Environment to discuss this matter and their review will be taking into account for TPOs not only trees on roadsides and so forth but trees in hedgerows.

Grain Stocks

19. **Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many days' supply of grain he estimates will be in store at the end of July 1989 *(a)* in Britain and *(b)* in the world.

Mr. Ryder: The International Wheat Council currently forecasts closing world stocks for cereals for the 1988-89 crop year at 229 million tonnes, or around 60 days' supply. Intervention stocks of cereals in the United Kingdom currently stand at 1·1 million tonnes, or around 22 days' supply. The total quantity of cereals in store at the end of July 1989 will depend principally on the level of exports over the rest of the present marketing year and the level of commercial stocks being carried over to the next harvest.

Mr. Howell: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does he think these stock levels are adequate or does he agree with FAO that they are likely to be dangerously low?

Mr. Ryder: I do not think that my hon. Friend should be lulled into the belief that there is not a surplus in Europe at the moment. The Government are getting to grips with that surplus through stabilisers and other means of reforming the CAP, which I know he supports.

Milk

22. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received any representations from farmers who took advantage of the milk outgoers scheme who now wish to return to production following the Mulder case.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has been approached by more than 400 farmers, most of whom took part in the 1977 non-marketing of milk and dairy herd conversion schemes, following the judgment of the European Court.

Mr. Nicholson: I hope that my hon. Friend will continue to listen carefully to those farmers who wish to return to production, because there is some pressure in our constituencies for that to be granted.

Mr. Thompson: We shall examine every case as carefully as possible as 600,000 tonnes of new quota is to be created, but it would be wrong for anyone to think that they can put one across with the tribunals and be included in the allocation.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 March 1989.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with the Hungarian Foreign Minister. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Kilfedder: When the Prime Minister met the Foreign Minister of the Republic of South Africa yesterday, did she receive a satisfactory reply when she urged the immediate release of the long-suffering Nelson Mandela and the abolition of the obnoxious Separate Amenities Act? Given Moscow's new approach to violence and the African National Congress, did she emphasise that now is the time for South Africa to reach a rapprochement with people inside and outside the republic?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman said, I repeated once again that we wish that the South African Government would release Nelson Mandela, as then the atmosphere would change completely and it would be possible to start negotiations between the Government of South Africa, the black South Africans and other coloured people in South Africa. A number of people in very high places in South Africa take the same view, but they have not yet been able to achieve that. However, I remain optimistic that before long they will be able to do so because it is vital that voluntary negotiations get started.

Mr. Kinnock: Can the Prime Minister tell us how increases in water charges of between 10 and 43 per cent. help Britain to proceed towards zero inflation?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, we shall need increases in water charges, not for privatisation, as he will say, but to provide the capital to spend on the required increased quality. We have already spent far more than any previous Government and we have got rid of much of the previous backlog of things that needed to be done. It is totally unrealistic to suggest that we can have higher quality without extra expenditure.

Mr. Kinnock: It is right to want higher quality and it is obvious that that will have to be paid for—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: How is that desirable objective to be assisted by the creation of private monopolies?

The Prime Minister: Because the private sector will have far greater access to investment and carries out far more research and development. It has been proved in France on many occasions that a privatised water supply is very much more efficient than a public organisation. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will remember that only yesterday he was complaining that prices of certain commodities were not going up.

Q2. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martin: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the initiative of the South African Government to bring peace to Mozambique? Added to the agreements on Namibia and on the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, does that not show a constructive approach to solving the problems in southern Africa?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. The agreement on the United Nations resolution and the proposal to implement it and to have elections in Namibia in November, is very good news. It could not have been achieved without the overwhelming co-operation of South Africa; nor could the Cuban troop withdrawal have come about in Angola without that co-operation.

We are also very interested to learn of a proposal for helping Mozambique to overcome some of its internal problems, particularly the problems caused by the constant activities of Renamo, which upset so much of the good work that is done there. That all augurs well for the future of Southern Africa as a whole.

Mr. Ashdown: Why is the Prime Minister's first reaction always to shoot the messenger rather than listen to the message?—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Interruptions take up a lot of time.

Mr. Ashdown: Why is the right hon. Lady's first reaction always to shoot the messenger rather than listen to the message? When will she realise that it is not so much her eight Environment Ministers but the privatisation of water that is balderdash and bunkum?

The Prime Minister: I have very good messengers and they have a very good message. The privatisation of water is a very much better deal for the consumer. Twenty-five per cent. of it is already privatised. It is far better to have regulation and production separate. For the first time we shall have a National Rivers Authority and a Director-General of Water Services. We shall get much more investment, which will lead to much more research and technology. Of course, much depends on the latest technology when dealing with water. There will be a consumers' charter. It will be very much better for the environment. That is the message.

Mr. Gow: Does my right hon. Friend recall the manifesto commitment of the Opposition that a new Labour Government would call a national economic—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member's question must relate to the Prime Minister's responsibility.

Mr. Gow: —that the Labour party would call a national economic—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not good enough. The hon. Member must ask a question about the Prime Minister's responsibility.

Mr. Gow: How is it that my right hon. Friend has achieved the Labour party's laudable target of reducing —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Q3. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cummings: Can the Prime Minister explain to the House and the nation why a Government with a surplus of £14 billion cannot allocate the small sums of money that are necessary for the National Health Service to stop charging for eye tests, and to enable the right hon. Lady to fulfil her pledge on full pensions for pre-1973 war widows, whose husbands made the supreme sacrifice?

The Prime Minister: The Government have allocated very much greater resources to the National Health Service than ever before—*[Interruption.]* In the lifetime of the previous Labour Government it was £8 billion a year; now it is £24 billion a year. *[Interruption.]* The latest Budget has given considerable relief on national insurance contributions, of some £3 a week on average, which people will have available for other purposes. We have been able to create the prosperity that the hon. Gentleman and his constituents enjoy through Conservative policies, which have led to a higher standard of living and a higher standard of social services than we have ever known before. All poor people on income support and family credit will get free NHS eye tests. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to listen to the answers to questions.

Q4. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gill: Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of the House on her considerable personal achievement in exporting the principles of the market economy and the enterprise culture to Communist Russia, where independence, initiative and enterprise are now being propounded by President Gorbachev as the essential nutrients of Soviet agriculture?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I think that the Soviet Union and some of the other satellite countries are learning. One cannot have the benefits of prosperity without a freer political system, backed up by economic freedom. Moreover, it is the only system that brings dignity. I wish that our friends on the Opposition Benches would also learn that lesson, for Socialism is but a pale shadow of Communism.

Q5. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mallon: Does the Prime Minister agree with the maxim enunciated by Lord Denning:

"Be you never so high, the law is above you"?

If she does, how does she justify the squalid and murky attempts to hide the truth about the Stalker affair? Has she any appreciation whatever of the damage that has been done to confidence in the police, in the process of justice and, above all, in a Government who have shown how low standards can apply in high places?

The Prime Minister: The events in the case to which the hon. Gentleman refers took place more than six years ago. They have been subject to a long, painstaking and thorough series of investigations. The decision not to prosecute was taken by the Northern Ireland Director of Public Prosecutions and the Attorney-General. It then became a matter of police disciplinary procedure and 19 officers have now been disciplined. I point out to the hon. Gentleman that the Royal Ulster Constabulary is a highly professional police force that is dedicated to serving equally all sections of the community, and everyone should extend to the force the unqualified support that it fully deserves.

Q6. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Waller: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the anger that many people, especially in the upland areas of the north of England, would feel if untreated green top milk were banned? Does my right hon. Friend fully appreciate than many who have drunk untreated milk throughout their lives would find it quite incomprehensible if pure, untreated milk were banned, despite the fact that they prefer it and that tobacco continues to be freely available?

The Prime Minister: I am aware of the strength of feeling on this issue. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has therefore issued a consultation document to enable all views to be aired, and I know that he will take them into account. We have to weigh those views against the 1,600 cases of food poisoning associated with untreated milk that have occurred in the past five years. My hon. Friend knows that there is a difference in treatment between England and Scotland, and we must take all factors into account after the consultation is complete.

Q10. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Powell: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the considerable anxiety in some parts of the country about the length of hospital waiting lists. Is my right hon. Friend aware of the restart programme's considerable success in reducing unemployment? Will she make inquiries to see whether a restart equivalent could be applied to National Health Service waiting lists?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. As he knows, there were special programmes to reduce the waiting lists. In one year we allocated £25 million for that specific purpose, and had the beds to try to get the number of outstanding operations down. The following year the figure was some £30 million. The modest sums that will come in from things such as eye tests and dental examinations will help us to continue to provide other programmes to cut the waiting lists.

Grain Stocks

Q12. **Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the current level of world stocks of grain.

The Prime Minister: World stocks of grain are expected to fall over the current year because of adverse weather conditions in 1988 in a number of countries, notably the United States and Canada. However, sowings of winter cereals in the main production areas for the 1989 harvest are well up on last year and, given favourable weather conditions, world cereals production is likely to increase significantly in 1989.

Mr. Howell: While thanking my right hon. Friend for her reply, may I ask whether she is aware that the FAO thinks that world stocks of grain are dangerously low?

The Prime Minister: I think that that is just a little at variance with the report that I have just given. Our objective is to reduce the surplus of grain so that we may have a better world price, which will be helpful to all those in the Community who grow wheat. So far, the situation looks reasonably good, but we shall know better towards the end of the year.

Mr. Yeo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take points of order after the business statement.

Mr. Yeo: It arises out of questions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: That may well be so, but I shall still take it afterwards.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Leader of the House tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 20 MARCH—Conclusion of the Budget debate.

Motion relating to the Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations.

TUESDAY 21 MARCH—Progress on remaining stages of the Water Bill (1st Allotted Day).

Motions on the Rent Officers (Additional Functions) and the Rent Officers (Additional Functions) (Scotland) Orders.

WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH—Progress on remaining stages of the Water Bill (2nd Allotted Day).

Motions on Legal Aid and Advice Regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Lord Chancellor's Salary Order.

THURSDAY 23 MARCH—Adjournment debates.

It may be for the convenience of the House if I indicate that the business for the first week after the Easter Adjournment will be as follows:

TUESDAY 4 APRIL—Conclusion of remaining stages of the Water Bill (3rd Allotted Day).

WEDNESDAY 5 APRIL—Progress on remaining stages of the Electricity Bill.

THURSDAY 6 APRIL—Progress on remaining stages of the Electricity Bill.

FRIDAY 7 APRIL—Private Members' Bills.

[Debate on Wednesday 22 March 1989
Negative Instruments
Civil Legal Aid (General) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 339)
Legal Advice and Assistance (Duty Solicitor) (Remuneration) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 341)
Legal Advice and Assistance Regulations 1989 (S.I. 1989, No. 340)
Legal Advice and Assistance at Police Stations (Remuneration) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 342)
Legal Aid in Criminal and Care Proceedings (Costs) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 343)
Civil Legal Aid (Assessment of Resources) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 338)
Legal Aid in Criminal and Care Proceedings (General) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 344)
Affirmative
Civil Legal Aid (Matrimonial Proceedings) Regulations 1989
Legal Aid (Functions) Order 1989
Legal Advice and Assistance (Scope) Regulations 1989]

Mr. Dobson: I thank the Leader of the House for his statement, which sounded like a roll call of political trouble for the Government.

When may we expect a debate on the Government's proposed reform of the National Health Service, in particular their rather cavalier approach to the question of the general practitioners' contract, as well as care in the community?

When are we likely to have the promised debate on student loans?

Can the right hon. Gentleman report to the House any progress that he has had in his discussions concerning the setting up of a Scottish Affairs Committee or some machinery that might go some way towards doing what that Committee is supposed to do?

Will we get a statement tomorrow, or early next week, on airport security? The situation, if it were not for the tragedies that we have had, is descending into farce. The House and the relatives of those who were killed want to know what the Department of Transport knew about warnings from the United States authorities. When did it receive those warnings; what action, if any, did it take on them; and what did the people to whom it passed them do with them? When will the Secretary of State for Transport come to the House and, for the first time, tell us the truth and the whole truth?

Mr. Wakeham: I entirely refute the hon. Gentleman's latter comments, but I will deal with the points that he raised in the order in which he raised them.

The hon. Gentleman first asked me about the debate on the National Health Service review. I share the view that we should have a debate on that important subject in the relatively near future. The precise timing is best left for discussion through the usual channels.

The Government have accepted the recommendation of the review body on doctors' and dentists' pay that they should receive a basic rise of 8 per cent. They did not accept proposals for an additional increase in the maximum of the consultants' pay scale, nor the limited increase in their proposed distinction award, partly intended as an incentive to junior doctors to pursue hospital careers. The Government consider that the best incentive to junior doctors is better promotion prospects. Therefore, they decided instead to create an additional 100 consultants' posts.

We are giving active consideration to the Griffiths report and hope to be in a position to bring forward our own proposals as soon as possible. We recognise concern that our response should not be unduly delayed, but it is vital that we reach the right solution in this important matter. We remain of the view that a debate will be most helpful when our proposals are available for discussion.

On student loans, the hon. Gentleman is aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is considering the response to the White Paper, and that discussions with financial institutions and other potential agents are continuing. Therefore, I cannot speculate on the time at which it would be right for a debate.

On the hon. Gentleman's question about the Scottish Affairs Committee, I recently met two of his hon. Friends, when we had a useful discussion. In the light of that, I am now considering how best to make further progress. Even so, I am not too hopeful about finding an immediate solution.

I entirely refute the hon. Gentleman's comments about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. They were disgraceful. My right hon. Friend has made two statements about Lockerbie to the House on 22 December and 10 January. He has been frank and has kept the House well informed, but he cannot reveal intelligence or security

matters or matters which are the subject of criminal investigations. It does the hon. Gentleman no credit to speculate wildly and inaccurately on such matters.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that we have another statement after business questions and a debate in which, sadly, because of the number of hon. Members who wish to speak, I shall have to impose a limit on speeches. I appeal for brief business questions, which I am reluctant to curtail.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): With reference to the airport security matter which the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has raised, and the hourly demands by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) for the resignation of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, is my right hon. Friend aware that there are literally hundreds of direct flights and transfer connections from Frankfurt to airports in the United States of America? This page is just one, for example——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question must be about business for next week.

Mr. Adley: Is my right hon. Friend aware that most normal people regard the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East as a freak?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is in no sense related to business for next week. I will give the hon. Gentleman one more chance.

Mr. Adley: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a debate on airport security and the competence of my right hon. Friend would be welcomed by Conservative Members?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's strong feelings and, to a degree, I agree with him, but I cannot promise him a debate, for the reasons that I gave the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). It is already known that airports and airlines were alerted in November to the discovery by the West German police of a radio cassette bomb in Frankfurt. Therefore, they were well warned about it.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is my recollection that you have called Opposition Members to order and asked them to withdraw when they referred to Conservative Members as freaks. I should be grateful if you would apply the same rule to the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley).

Mr. Speaker: It is not an unparliamentary expression, but it is certainly inelegant. Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw that word?

Mr. Adley: Of course, Mr. Speaker, if you wish me so to do.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The statement on airport security which has been made public in newspaper and media reports came from the Department of Transport. Many hon. Members are surprised that we should learn about it through the radio waves rather than through a statement in the House. Can the Leader of the House offer an explanation for that?

Can the Leader of the House confirm that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the proposed takeover of Scottish and Newcastle Breweries by Elders is now with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry? May we expect a statement on that before Parliament goes into recess?

Mr. Wakeham: The newspapers do not consult me about any statements they make, and I cannot be held responsible for what appears in the newspapers. I have explained the position of the Government and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, and I have nothing further to add to that. There is a procedure laid down for matters connected with monopolies and mergers and as I am not a party to those discussions I cannot add anything to what the hon. Gentleman already knows.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Can my right hon. Friend confirm the Government's intention to bring forward their embryo Bill as soon as possible? Can he also say when it is likely that the Government will implement the proposals and recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure, which would get rid of some of the worst abuses of the private Members' Bill system? Is he aware that many of my constituents are anxious to see the Abortion Act amended and cannot understand why, although we have votes in the House, we never reach a firm decision? I am asking for time to get the matter settled once and for all.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the strong feelings of my hon. Friend and in all parts of the House over those two issues. As he knows, the Government are committed to bringing in legislation to deal with the Warnock report during this Parliament. I cannot say anything further than that at present. I have had discussions with the Select Committee on Procedure and we have had several debates on its proposals—one fairly recently. The Committee is now having another look at some aspects of the matter and I await its further considerations on these matters with some interest. It is a complicated issue.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is the Leader of the House aware of the disclosure today that a letter from the Department of Transport about the danger of explosions from Semtex devices hidden in radio cassette players was sent to Manchester airport on 19 December, two days before Lockerbie, but did not arrive until January due to its having been sent by ordinary mail? In the age of the fax machine, is this not a case of incredible folly in a matter of life and death? Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to make an urgent statement?

Mr. Wakeham: The right hon. Gentleman, who is usually fair about such matters, seems to have missed out the most important part of the event—that airports and airlines were alerted by telex on 22 November. Subsequently a circular was sent out in the new year, which simply had further details and a coloured photograph. The original alert went out in November.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on employment, which would enable the Opposition to congratulate the Government on having reduced unemployment by 1 million since the general election? The Opposition

[Mr. John Maples]

promised to do that within two years of the general election, so it would be interesting to be able to ask them why it would have taken them so long.

Mr. Wakeham: It is a matter of congratulation and relief all round that this Government have seen the unemployment figures fall much more quickly than proposed in the Labour party manifesto. During the remaining stages of the Employment Bill, there will be an opportunity for just such sentiments to come from the Opposition, although I have my doubts about whether they will.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the Leader of the House speak to the Chancellor of the Exchequer before he speaks in the House on Monday? The Leader of the House will remember that the Committee stage of the Official Secrets Bill was taken on the Floor of the House because it mattered that such important issues should be discussed here. Yet the Chancellor announced that he would include in the Finance Bill a clause that would allow tax officers to be dealt with as if they were caught by the Official Secrets Bill. In other words, a tax officer revealing information could be prosecuted.

However, in the written answers from the Department of Health in Wednesday's *Hansard* there is a two-page list of organisations covered by the Official Secrets Act, such as the Health Advisory Service and the Dental Advisory Committee, and all sorts of other organisations, yet the Chancellor will have something in his Finance Bill to deal with precisely that. Surely there has been a mistake, and all that is needed now, if the Chancellor wishes tax officers to be covered, is an amendment to be tabled in another place. The Official Secrets Bill should not be dealt with in the Finance Bill.

Mr. Wakeham: The right hon. Gentleman usually listens carefully to what is said, but he has overlooked an important point. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was concerned about the protection of taxpayers' information, which is not quite in the same category as official secrets of the state—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) should contain himself; I shall do my best to explain the position to him.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor was talking about the protection of taxpayers' private information about their personal affairs. The Government believe that the right way to deal with that is in the Finance Bill. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the Committee stage of the Finance Bill takes place partly upstairs and partly on the Floor of the House. I have no doubt that discussions could take place through the usual channels if this is thought by the Opposition to be an issue that they wish to discuss on the Floor of the House. It is possible to arrange that, but I should like the various discussions to take place privately.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be helpful to have a debate soon on energy prices in the light of the news today that British Gas is to increase its prices to customers by only 3·3 per cent., which is less than half the level of inflation? A debate would give many Conservative Members the opportunity to question the scaremongering of Opposition Members who suggest that privatisation automatically leads to substantial price rises for the customer.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I have every hope that he will seek to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday 5 April or Thursday 6 April and that his remarks will be in order for our debates on those days.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): The Leader of the House may know that one of my constituents died in the crash at Lockerbie and that there is increasing public disquiet about the information that the family is obtaining in dribs and drabs, which shows clearly that full and frank information was not given in this House. The family is looking for an early statement. Is the Leader of the House aware that in addition there is considerable disquiet about negligence in regard to the information that was sent to families about the identification of bodies in at least one case about which I have asked the Department of Transport? I was referred to the Scottish Office and it took seven weeks to get the answer that arrived today, which does not give any information whatsoever. May we have an early and frank statement to help to allay the growing public disquiet?

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Lady is not receiving information concerning any of her constituents to which she feels they are entitled, and if I can help in any way, if the hon. Lady will write to me I shall do my best.

On the general proposition, I should have thought that anybody who gave a moment's thought to this matter must believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport was absolutely right not to reveal in this House intelligence of security matters or matters that are the subject of criminal investigations. I should have thought that that would be self-evident to those concerned with air safety.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Despite my right hon. Friend's replies, and in view of the half-truths and misinformation being put about today about airport and airline security, may I urge my right hon. Friend to consider changing next week's business because next week is not too soon to make it crystal clear that the Department of Transport acted immediately, properly and fully? Next week, at the latest, it should be made crystal clear that Heathrow Airport Limited acted in November the moment that it received a telex and we should make it equally clear next week that it is absolutely wrong to spread such half-truths because the only result of that will be that it is more difficult to protect the public and more difficult to bring the people who perpetrate such atrocities to court.

Mr. Wakeham: Of course, my hon. Friend is right. If it was possible to reveal everything in a debate I have no doubt that those matters would be cleared up. However, that must be balanced against the security considerations and the criminal and security investigations. I do not believe that it would be in anybody's interests for that sort of information to be bandied about until the appropriate moment.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): May I seek an assurance from the Leader of the House in relation to the difficulties being experienced by the Committee that is

dealing with the alien concept of schools opting out in Scotland? I am referring not so much to the antics of a few Members of the Scottish National party, as to the Government's abuse of the system by packing the Committee with no fewer than six Tory Members of Parliament from English constituencies who know little and care less about education in Scotland. Will the Leader of the House give an undertaking that proceedings on that Bill will not be guillotined so that Members who represent Scottish constituencies will have an opportunity to participate in debates on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman will know that I am extremely reluctant to introduce a guillotine on any occasion. I do it only with the greatest possible reluctance, in spite of calls from the Select Committee on Procedure and others that I should bring in guillotines automatically. As the hon. Gentleman well knows, the composition of a Committee is a matter for the Committee of Selection and not for me. However, I know that all hon. Members from English constituencies who serve on the Committee considering the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Bill have a long-standing interest in Scottish questions and affairs.

Sir Barney Hayhoe (Brentford and Isleworth): Will my right hon. Friend be a little more forthcoming about the Government's response to Sir Roy Griffiths's important report upon care in the community? It was published some 12 months ago, but little reference was made to it in the White Paper on the National Health Service. It is important that the Government respond to those important recommendations very soon.

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with my right hon. Friend that it is important that the Government respond to that important report as soon as possible. However, I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that it is also important that we find the right solution.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): My constituents at Leo Laboratories in Middlesbrough will be pleased to note that the Water Bill is to come back to the House next week on Report. The commercial manager of Leo Laboratories, which manufactures anti-coagulants for the National Health Service and for export, advised me that the rate for trade effluent will be increased from 7·9 p to 19·3 p per litre from 1 April by the local water authority. Will the Ministers during the debate take full responsibility for that price rise and accept that it is part and parcel of the privatisation proceedings?

Mr. Wakeham: There have been many discussions about price rises and who is and who is not responsible. I am pleased that I have arranged for the matter to be ventilated on the Floor of the House in the near future, and the hon. Gentleman can make his point then.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): It has been one and a half months since the Government produced their White Paper on the future of structure plans. Will my right hon. Friend provide an early opportunity for a debate on that important matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that it is an important matter. I wish I could be more forthcoming to my hon. Friend, who was very patient and courteous in asking me his question, as he has been before. At this time of the year there is much pressure on Government time, but I shall bear his suggestion very much in mind.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Attorney-General to make a statement about the Michelle Renshaw case? Is he aware that there is widespread public concern about the shameful decision to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must bear in mind that this case is sub judice.

Mr. Madden: Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement next Wednesday? As the Lord Chancellor's salary is to be discussed it would seem timely to announce that the Government are issuing guidance to the judiciary that they are not bound to commit to prison those who commit contempt of court.

Mr. Wakeham: I doubt whether my right hon. and learned Friend would consider it right to make a statement on that at the time, or whether the matter that the hon. Gentleman raises would be in order in the debate that he suggests. However, that is a matter not for me, but for you, Mr. Speaker. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and if he thinks that the hon. Gentleman has a point he will no doubt get in touch with him.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the need for improved road and rail links from the Channel tunnel, not simply to London but to regions such as the north-west where industry needs fast and competitive transport links to its markets in Europe and the south-east of England?

Mr. Wakeham: As the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said, we have set ourselves a rather hefty programme of important legislative matters during the next two weeks. I cannot accommodate my hon. Friend by adding anything more to it, but I have a feeling that the matter that he has raised will be the subject of debate on the Floor of the House before too long.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): May we please have a debate or a statement next week on airport security? If it is correct, as has been alleged, that a telex was sent to all the airlines and received by them, the public are entitled to know what was done as a result, and why it is that the awful disaster occurred in which so many people—constituents and friends of hon. Members on both sides of the House—died, probably unnecessarily, because no heed was taken of it? Without a statement, how are we to know what is being done to protect people who will be travelling by air this Easter if future warnings are given and allegedly received?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows that what is said in such cases is not always accurately reported and is often nothing other than wild speculation. The facts that can be revealed have been revealed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. He is obviously deeply concerned about the issue and is watching it, and if there is anything more that it is appropriate to say he will say it. With his experience, the hon. and learned Gentleman will know that, while matters are the subject of criminal investigation, they are not best dealt with on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Will my right hon. Friend allow time for an early debate on whether, when a Member is suspended from the service of the House, he and his staff should lose pay and whether the full services and facilities of the House should be withdrawn from the hon. Member for the period of that suspension?

Mr. Wakeham: On balance, I do not agree with my hon. Friend, but I understand his point. The most important thing in such matters is the authority of the Chair, which must be upheld at all times. That is best demonstrated by the Chair being given the overwhelming support of hon. Members on both sides of the House. We have to move by agreement, but I recognise the strength of my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Should not next Monday the Secretary of State for Employment return to the Dispatch Box to answer some of the questions on skill centres that he did not answer last Monday? Exactly what is Deloitte Haskins and Sells recommending for its fee of £128,000—money for old rope—and what is happening to the considerable property and machinery investments in those skill centres? Apparently, a justification has been given of a management buy-out. Should not the House of Commons be told a great deal more about that? Frankly, it looks like a gravy train of the first order.

Mr. Wakeham: The only good thing about the hon. Gentleman's question is that it is on a subject different from those that I have become used to him asking about. He can take some comfort from the fact that my right hon. Friend has announced that a new clause is to be tabled to the Employment Bill on that matter so that the House will have plenty of opportunity to debate the proposals. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman, with his customary ingenuity, will find a way of making the points that he raised last week when the statement was made. However, I must say that I thought that my right hon. Friend adequately answered his points there and then.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): As my right hon. Friend knows, the House has not yet had an opportunity to debate the Lord Chancellor's Green Papers on legal reforms, despite intemperate opposition from various vested interests. As a barrister, I would welcome an opportunity of saying that the view of the independent Bar will survive as a result of maintaining high professional standards, not restrictive practices. Can my right hon. Friend assure me that in the debate on the Lord Chancellor's Salary Order next Wednesday there will be such an opportunity, and that I shall be in order to refer to those matters? Will he extend the debate, if necessary, so that those who support the Lord Chancellor's proposals will not be crowded out by various heavy-handed silks, who do not represent public opinion?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes his point very effectively. I am not sure whether a debate on the Lord Chancellor's Salary Order is the right occasion on which to debate the substantial and complicated documents published by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor. Everyone should have a chance to study and comment on those important documents, and the proper time for a debate will be after that has been done. Whether it will be in order for my hon. Friend to refer to those matters in next week's debate is not a matter for me.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Leader of the House aware that, among the many predictions in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's 1988 Budget that he got wrong, was the suggestion that his 1989 Budget would be televised? Can the right hon. Gentleman say when the House will be given an opportunity to consider the report from the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House? Can he say also whether we shall be able to debate the report of the Select Committee on Procedure on the private Bill procedure? Those two outstanding matters are of interest to right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House.

Mr. Wakeham: On the hon. Gentleman's first question, I suspect that he was on his trip to America—from which I am delighted to see he has returned—when I answered a question by his hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on that subject, with, as I remember, a very snappy joke. I said then that we are making steady progress and that the report will be published before too long. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will find it a fascinating read and will give it his support.

I have promised a debate on the report of private Bill procedure, fairly soon after Easter. We are having discussions through the usual channels about an appropriate date. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman served on the Select Committee.

Mr. Banks *indicated assent.*

Mr. Wakeham: He did, so I am preaching to the converted. The more that I study that subject, the more complicated and difficult I find it. We must consider the matter extremely carefully in order to be as knowledgeable as the hon. Gentleman, and to make wise judgments about a procedure that has been around for a long time and perhaps needs bringing up to date.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider his answer about right hon. and hon. Members who disobey the rules and Standing Orders of the House? In these days of mass media, it is clear that substantial fees are paid for newspaper articles and for television appearances, so one can gain not only enormous publicity but financially as a result of misbehaviour. Although I fully support my right hon. Friend's comments on respecting the authority of the Chair, which is absolutely vital to the well-being of this unitary Parliament, in this modern age too many other factors can be taken into account. It is time for us to update the rules.

Mr. Wakeham: I am glad that my hon. Friend gives me an opportunity to reconsider the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick), because I should have said, much more responsibly than I did, that we await the report of the Select Committee on Procedure on those matters, and that I had better wait for that before expressing any more views on the subject.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): In terms of the immediate business of the House, does the Leader of the House anticipate the regular use of the Leader of the Opposition to facilitate Government business through the unusual use of the private notice question procedure?

Mr. Wakeham: The private notice question procedure is laid down in Standing Orders, but it has long been the practice of the House to make special arrangements for the

Leader of the Opposition. It is for Mr. Speaker to decide whether to accept such arrangements, but, looking back over our proceedings, one can see that it has been very rarely indeed, if ever, that the Leader of the Opposition has asked Mr. Speaker for leave to ask a private notice question and that that request has been refused. I thought that on the most recent occasion the Leader of the Opposition asked his private notice question beautifully, but I have some criticism of his speech afterwards.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the strong feeling among Conservative Members about the possibility of the Government banning unpasteurised green-top milk? Will he give an assurance that a decision on that matter will not be made before the House has had an opportunity to discuss it? Conservative Members may wish to make the point that their party believes in choice, and in individuals being free to make their own decisions.

Mr. Wakeham: I know my job well enough to know that the Prime Minister gave a good answer to that question a little while ago. She reminded the House that there is a consultation document on the subject. There are strong feelings on both sides of the argument, and the Government will not make a decision about the best way to proceed until they have studied the responses to that consultation document.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Now that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has made a statement announcing preferential price treatment for unleaded petrol, will the right hon. Gentleman call on the appropriate Secretary of State to make a statement next week about those who use cars under the mobility allowance scheme? Such people, by their very nature, need assistance to run a car and cannot afford to have their cars adapted for unleaded petrol—which is estimated to cost upwards of £200 per car. In order to reinforce what he has done, will the Chancellor of the Exchequer also give preferential treatment to those on the mobility allowance scheme?

Mr. Tony Banks: The right hon. Gentleman did not expect that one.

Mr. Wakeham: No. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) can have either my unbriefed answer or my briefed answer. I thought that the hon. Gentleman made a good point and I did not know the answer until I happened to see the piece of paper in front of me. We do not think that it is appropriate to bring forward proposals for changes until we have further considered the matter. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on the right to buy of people in properties run by housing associations, bearing in mind the increasing number of people in such properties and the fact that, in that respect, they feel like, and are, second-class citizens? Their inability to buy has a detrimental effect on the estates on which they live—such as the Drayton Bridge road housing estate in my constituency, where only a third of the properties available have so far been occupied. Many people are so disenchanted with the Notting Hill housing trust that they are scrawling graffiti all over the place, which is becoming a serious problem.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that it is an important problem, but I cannot give my hon. Friend an off-the-cuff answer to it. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I do not want to interfere with the Easter holiday arrangements of the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends, but will he give some indication of the Prime Minister's movements around 1 April, when an important rally against the poll tax is to take place in Edinburgh? As the tax is the flagship of the Prime Minister, would it be possible for her to be invited to Scotland on that day to explain to the rally why we in Scotland must be subjected to this tax one year before England and Wales?

In view of the forthcoming holiday, the Leader of the House will recognise the important deadline of 31 March in relation to the mining industry. Will the Secretary of State for Energy make a statement on any agreement made between the South of Scotland electricity board and British Coal for deep-mined coal in Scotland?

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to say in reply to the second question, although I shall certainly refer it to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

I am not in a position to answer the question about where my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be on a particular day. There was, however, a more substantive element to the question. Evidence of a more responsible attitude on the part of Scottish local authorities is already beginning to appear, as they know that they will have to rely on the community taxpayers for their public expenditure. The hon. Gentleman will rue the day he criticised the community charge.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Before the recess, may the House be given information about the 1989 electoral register in England and Wales, constituency by constituency? The information is available for Scotland, which once again is being pampered by the Scottish Office. I am particularly interested in the information because, when the House returns on 4 April, I shall be presenting a ten-minute Bill, the Re-enfranchisement of the People Bill, which is concerned with the fall in the Scottish electoral register because of the poll tax.

Mr. Wakeham: I look forward to listening to the hon. Gentleman's speech. We shall have to see how he gets on with his Bill; I am sure that it will be a very good occasion. I shall refer his main point to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): A couple of months ago my right hon. Friend assured me that we could have a general debate on Northern Ireland. Someone seems to be killed there pretty well every day, judging by the newspapers. Will my right hon. Friend assure us that we will have such a debate in the next two or three months?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. Friend did press me for such a debate, and I am sorry that it has not been possible to arrange one. I have it in mind, and, although I have no

[Mr. Wakeham]

immediate plans—I have a heavy programme to get through—I have not forgotten what I said to my right hon. Friend some time ago.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Does the Leader of the House agree that we should in the near future debate the findings of the public inquiry into the loss of the Bibby Line bulk carrier the Derbyshire? The right hon. Gentleman will recall that the vessel was lost with all hands in 1980. In stark contrast with what has happened since the loss of the Herald of Free Enterprise, relatives of crew members of this tragic ship have received a pittance in compensation from the Bibby Line. Is it not time that we debated the findings of the public inquiry?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that that is the main concern of anyone involved in the incident. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks, but I will refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and perhaps write to the hon. Gentleman.

Adjournment (Easter)

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State for Social Security, I have a brief statement to make.

I remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Thursday 23 March up to 10 Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning, and the result will be made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Hostels (Income Support)

4.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. John Moore): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement about payments of income support to people in hostels.

People living in hostels at present have their benefit calculated under separate rules from other claimants. Those separate rules are an anomaly carried over from the old supplementary benefit system. They developed more by historical accident than by planning based on objective criteria. The proposals I am bringing to the House today will replace those haphazard arrangements. Hostel dwellers will receive benefit under the same rules as other claimants, and money now reaching hostels through benefits will be channelled more sensitively to the hostels direct.

From April the vast majority of claimants, including people living in board-and-lodging accommodation—often little different from hostels—will receive benefit from two main sources. Their personal needs will be catered for by income support, with special premiums for well-defined groups, and accommodation charges will be met by housing benefit administered by local authorities. There are different rules for people living in hostels. They currently receive help through income support alone, both for their own needs and to meet the hostel charge. Benefit is calculated on the basis of a complex set of allowances which bear little relationship to claimants' actual needs.

There is a wide variety of hostels, catering in different ways for groups of different ages and with different needs. Some deal with individuals who need little in the way of special help, and provide little more than a place to sleep. Others might cater for severely disabled people with a host of special needs, and furnish a wide range of amenities and a high level of care and attention from skilled and dedicated staff.

The present system was never intended to cope with this diversity, and it never has. In July last year the Government therefore issued a consultative paper seeking views on ways of changing the present arrangements. Many of those who responded to that paper accepted that the present arrangements were unsatisfactory, and the Government have concluded that the social security contribution to hostels' revenue should be put on a sensible basis. I shall shortly be laying regulations before the House which provide for this. From 9 October 1989, housing benefit will meet the basic accommodation costs of hostels as it does for accommodation costs of other kinds.

The personal needs of claimants and their families will continue to be met from income support, but on the same basis as operates for other claimants. This will provide access to precisely the same allowances and special premiums available to other claimants. It will also ensure that claimants do not have perverse incentives to seek a particular form of accommodation because of anomalies in the benefits available, rather than because that accommodation best fits their needs.

In putting assessment on a new footing, some claimants, particularly more elderly ones, will find that they are better off. Equally, others would have lower benefit entitlements under the new rules. I will ensure that existing claimants are protected from any adverse effects.

Those living in hostels at the time of the change will be compensated for any loss in benefit income. They will continue to receive compensation to bring their benefit up to at least its former level in cash terms for as long as they live in the same hostel.

Under the previous arrangements, however, social security may have contributed to some of the costs of providing care included in hostel charges. In future, housing benefit will normally cover only the accomodation element. The Government fully share the concern expressed by many respondents to the consultative paper that hostels should not suffer an unintended reduction in revenue as a result.

Hostels play a valuable role in helping many vulnerable people to live in the community. The Government are fully committed to supporting that. We have encouraged, and in many cases made possible, the large growth in hostel provision in recent years. Some £300 million has been committed in capital funding alone. We are as anxious as the hostel movement to protect that investment.

In line with that commitment, I am determined to find the right way to put benefit payments on a more sensible footing, while at the same protecting hostels' ability to provide care. In the longer term, the best way of encouraging and supporting that work must be through the familiar existing methods for channelling direct funding to hostels—through central Government grants, charitable organisations and local authorities. In that way, hostels can obtain a greater proportion of their income from organisations which are better attuned to their needs and aspirations.

This will be an important shift in the funding arrangements for hostels and I am taking great care over how the changes are made to minimise any disruption. Hostels need time to adjust. They need to see in practice what difference the new benefit system makes to their incomes before they can establish whether they need extra funding and how much.

We shall shortly open discussions with the local authorities and the hostel sector on the best way to redirect the money made available by the October benefit change. The aim will be to utilise existing funding methods, including social services and social work departments, Home Office after-care accommodation schemes and funding for approved probation and bail hostels. This will also clearly be much easier once it is possible to see exactly how the benefit changes affect individual establishments.

My Department will therefore make payments direct to hostels for 18 months after the changes—that is, until April 1991. I am establishing a special unit to do this, which will be responsible for assessing the effects of the proposed changes on individual hostels and making direct payments to compensate for any resulting loss in revenue from charges currently met by income support. The unit will also compile information on the effects of these changes on the hostel sector to facilitate the redistribution of resources to other budgets after April 1991.

I can assure the House that I shall be looking to transfer to these budgets the total amount which the special unit pays to hostels during the interim period. I stress that these changes are not prompted by a desire to reduce the money that we are already spending.

What is more, from October my Department will transfer to the Department of the Environment and the Scottish and Welsh Offices, additional sums to help new hostels which open after October 1989 but whose financing has been planned on the assumption that the present income support levels would continue. These sums will total over £2 million in a full year.

I shall be writing today to all hon. Members, setting out the background to these measures in greater detail.

People living in hostels account for only 28,000 claimants—less than 0·5 per cent. of income support claimants—but I am sure the House will agree that it is right to safeguard the valuable role played by hostels. These measures demonstrate the Government's concern to achieve a simpler and more comprehensible social security system while at the same time protecting hostels and claimants. The end result will be a simpler and fairer system with no reduction in the amount of money available to hostels. I trust that this will be widely welcomed.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): First, there is little doubt that the extent to which the Department has moved away from its original disastrous proposals will be welcomed, although I note that the Secretary of State says that at present the benefits are calculated on the basis of a complex set of allowances which bear little relationship to claimants' actual needs, and it appears that it is proposed to replace this with a simple set of allowances that bear even less relationship to claimants' actual needs. Certainly it is also agreed that there is a need for review, especially as the rates of payment have been frozen for four years, which in itself is an unsustainable position.

However, since it is clear that the Government have, mercifully, abandoned their first proposals but have not decided what to do in the long term, it is hard to see why they are so determined to move in October when it is plain that, though they may know the station they are leaving, they do not know their destination.

Is the Secretary of State aware that it appears that what he proposes will still cause considerable disruption? Hostel budgets for this coming year will probably have been set since last July, particularly if they are negotiated with local authorities. Their budgets for 1990-91 would normally be negotiated and settled this coming July, but even then the changes he proposes will be in the following October and will affect this year's and next year's accounting without their effects being known.

Moreover, it seems that the effects will vary from one hostel to another. It is clear from the statement that the effect on each hostel will have to be assessed, and assessed after its budget has been determined, which seems to us to be a recipe for some degree of chaos.

It seems that the scale of losses of the hostels will vary and will in many cases be substantial. Perhaps the Secretary of State could confirm that already, out of a cost of, say, £145 a week for providing a place, £70 is the maximum paid on behalf of the resident and £75 or so has to be found from grant-making bodies, and that already most of those running hostels are seeking further funding from those organisations? Indeed, the report commissioned by the Department from the Policy Studies Institute indicates that charges to residents were calculated to compensate for the vagaries of grant aid. That is under the existing system.

The hostels which provide care for the young will find that housing benefit, like income support, is now being age-related and that they are likely to receive the junior rate of benefit, which I believe means—again, perhaps the Secretary of State could confirm this—that the amount

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

they receive for their housing support could be substantially reduced, perhaps even halved. I recognise that he says in his statement that the Department will protect existing residents, but that presumably means that the impact on each hostel will vary with the speed of turnover. Can the Secretary of State explain how the Department thinks it can reflect that?

The position of women's refuges, it seems to us, could be even more serious. Because the size and age of family alone determine the level of basic income due and therefore whether full housing benefit can be paid, the move to housing benefit for accommodation costs means that there will be no reflection of the size of family. Housing benefit is a property charge benefit alone. Does the Secretary of State recall that one hostel in Leeds received £18,500 in 1987-88 purely on account of the children who live there? Presumably, the hostel will lose that money. The speed of that loss will vary as claimants move in and out of the hostels and as transitional protection is lost.

Does the Secretary of State recognise that cash flow is already a major problem for many of the hostels, particularly for the women's aid refuges? How fast does he anticipate the unit which he mentioned will be set up? How fast does he expect it to deal with compensating payments for the losses which will be experienced as short-stay residents move?

The statement suggests that whether and how much hostels will lose will be assessed on an individual basis and long-term replacement money will be sought from a variety of Departments. That conjures up the hideous picture of 3,000 hostels trailing from one Department to another and each Department disclaiming its real responsibility because none has the wish to pick up the bill. Will the Secretary of State give the House an assurance today that no hostel will be left to fall between two, three or five stools and that if need be his Department will pick up the bill, even in the long term?

The initial proposals were announced a year ago. Since then there have been changes to what is proposed today, but I understand that there has been no real consultation. Does the Secretary of State recognise that there is regret that the Department has put forward proposals before full consultation and before the announcement of decisions on the Griffiths report as many people in the sector feel that those changes have to be taken into account across the board? While we are relieved that the Secretary of State has not pulled the whole building down, we fear that his statement leaves provision very rickety, and we should be glad for any further clarification that he can offer.

Mr. Moore: If that was a grudging welcome for what the Government have done, I should hate to hear the criticism. The Government have listened very carefully and, as a conscious recognition of the valuable role of the hostel sector, have ensured that hostels do not lose money by the changes. It is quite clear that, despite that relatively difficult welcome, the hon. Lady has been desperately trying to find problems in the statement. [HON. MEMBERS: "Get on with it."] Less intelligent sedentary reactions from Opposition Members sitting below the Gangway always demonstrate that the Government are on the right track.

The hon. Lady has tried to refer to the disruption that will occur. Those who are concerned about the continuing success of the hostel sector will be aware that, although the hon. Lady said that we did not know what we are doing, we are doing precisely what we had planned to do to guarantee the successful continuation of the hostels and their charges. We are putting hostel accommodation on all fours with board and lodging and local authority and private sector rented accommodation. We are also providing extra money for new hostels and confirming the existing position for others.

The hon. Lady asked me to explain about the £70 maximum. She will know that at the moment most hostels have an interconnection with many different sources of the funding they receive. On average, about 42 per cent. of their total funding comes from grants and support sources. We are trying to ensure that the sensitive way in which that current position is protected is preserved for the future so that the existing funding bodies which are more able to judge their interest will be able to help.

The hon. Lady referred to young people. I remind the House that a detailed analysis of the 28,000 people in hostels shows that just under 700, or 2·5 per cent., are in the 16 to 17-year-old category. The hon. Lady is quite right to say that those who are new to the system and those who move to new hostels will not receive the same rate of income support. However, under the present system there are many perverse incentives whereby a young unemployed person of 18 living in a hostel may be doing better than a young person living in a hostel who is in work earning a low salary.

The hon. Lady asked about women's refuges. We all strongly support their excellent work, but the hon. Lady would not want to argue that the system for providing accommodation and income support should make it more attractive to women to be supported in refuges than in normal accommodation.

The hon. Lady asked about the speed of the change. Before October, there must be consultations with local authorities. Benefit offices must establish the precise entitlements of claimants to housing benefit and income support.

The proposed special unit will ascertain whether a person has moved from a hostel. After October, the unit will then immediately ensure that the income to the hostel never falls below its planned level.

The hon. Lady asked about the effect of the Griffiths report. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House referred to that report earlier today. But hostels are not like the registered homes, upon which the report mainly focuses. We look forward to further statements by the Secretary of State for Health on that matter.

When the hon. Lady has had time to reflect on my statement more carefully, I hope that see will realise that we have done the most important thing that we have been asked to do, protect the hostels, while simplifying and improving the benefit system. I know that many hon. Members take an interest in these matters, so I have written to every hon. Member giving many details of the changes.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. As I have said, there is great pressure from hon. Members wishing to speak in the debate. Therefore, I urge hon. Members to ask brief, perhaps single, questions of the Secretary of State, as the House will certainly return to the matter subsequently.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Will the Secretary of State guarantee that no hostel dwellers will be made homeless as a result of these changes? The Secretary of State talked about his projected Budget, but will there be more or fewer hostel dwellers three years hence?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that I cannot estimate whether there will be more hostel dwellers. Government support for this sector has increased. The population of 15,000 hostel dwellers in 1985 has increased to 28,000, and it has received tremendous support from the Government. I confirm that the moneys now going to the hostels will continue undiminished. However, I cannot guarantee what each and every hostel will do for the people living in them. But the money is assured under the new arrangements.

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I welcome the proposals by the Secretary of State, but could he tell the House how housing benefit levels will be set?

Mr. Moore: It will, of course, be up to local authorities to establish housing benefit levels, on a similar basis with other forms of accommodation. Returning to the questions posed by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) it is hard to be precise about the financial implications of the changes, because they will depend upon the levels of recoupable housing benefit, which have yet to be established. Those benefits will determine the precise compensation in the charging structure relating to each hostel.

Mr. Archie Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): There is substantial worry about the impact of these proposals on women's refuges because of the problem of high turnover and difficulties relating to the level of care that each family unit might require. Can the Secretary of State guarantee that, after the transitional arrangements expire in 1991, no hostel will close as a result of these changes?

Mr. Moore: I hope that the hon. Gentleman listened to my statement, because I was not trying to denigrate, but rather to compliment, the role and function of places like women's refuges. I was saying that the existing system does not allow us to support these organisations effectively so as to maintain the level and quality of care provided.

Therefore, we shall protect refuges throughout the transitional period at the current level of funding. We shall ensure that hostels, including women's refuges, are protected. At the end of the transitional period, all the money held by the special unit will go to the relevant bodies, which deal with the difference between housing benefit and income support, which hostels receive at the moment.

The hon. Gentleman should examine the proposals carefully. I cannot guarantee the precise position in 1991, although I can guarantee that the full resources that are being spent now will go to hostels. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) rightly says that hostel rates have not changed since 1985. But there is an annual uprating of income support and housing benefit, which reflects the annual decisions of local authorities and the advice of rent officers. Therefore, one could foresee that housing benefit and income support will be subject to different factors from the increased money for hostels, which we shall protect.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I thank my right hon. Friend for the sensitive manner in which he has listened to representations made to him in recent months. Does he agree that the measures that he has announced meet most, if not all, of the concerns expressed not only by those who run hostels but those who use them? Has he not safeguarded the future of charitable hostels, which play such an important part in our community?

Mr. Moore: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who takes a serious interest in these matters. I am surprised at the grudging manner of the Opposition, because we have tried to protect the funding of these important and valuable organisations. The hon. Member for Derby, South suggested that we have ignored consultation, yet at the same time said that we have made major changes to our original proposals. We have listened carefully and made the statement in a way that takes account of hostels' concerns, because, as my hon. Friend said, we wish them to continue to play their valuable function.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Has the Minister ever visited a women's refuge? Is he aware of the sad and tragic women who have to use refuges? Will he give an assurance that no women's refuge will close as a result of these proposals, because the consequences would be that women would not only be homeless but would go in fear of their lives?

Mr. Moore: Yes, I have visited a women's refuge. The hon. Lady would not want to distinguish between her natural supportive emotions and what I have said. I have said that the present financial structure that supports these organisations will continue and will be protected. I cannot comment on each and every women's refuge or hostel in this country—*[Interruption.]* Despite sedentary interruptions, I confirm that funds given to help these organisations will continue.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): I give a warm welcome to what is undoubtedly a sympathetic, imaginative and generous scheme, which I have followed closely. Tomorrow, I shall be receiving a delegation from a hostel—before I receive my right hon. Friend's letter—that is facing imminent closure for financial reasons well before October. May I give them my right hon. Friend's specific assurance that that will not happen?

Mr. Moore: I hope that my hon. Friend will find the details of my letter on the board. My hon. Friend can give an absolute assurance that, on the basis of my statement, there is no reason why any hostel need fear for its future or close. These arrangements confirm their present financing.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Does the Minister agree that there are inadequate hostel places, that the number of homeless people is increasing rapidly, that his Department should ensure an increase in hostel places and that the total cost of running hostels should be met by his Department, because there will be an increasing gap in the future? The Minister did not reply to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott). Will he assure us that none of the women's refuges, which are worried about the severe threat of closure, will close as a result of lack of funding from his Department?

Mr. Moore: I repeat what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd): no hostels need fear for their future because of these recommendations or this statement. I also repeat what I said a little while ago: hostels, which have experienced an increase in the number of people using them from 15,000 to 28,000 people over the past three or four years, need have no fear about the support that my Department has given. They must distinguish between the simple and sensible way in which we try to help people through the benefit system and housing benefit, and the specific additional help—which is tailored and targeted to meet the needs of various hostels—that could develop from retaining this money in the hostel sector.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): My right hon. Friend and the Minister for Social Security deserve praise for being prepared dramatically to rethink the original and inadequate proposals. Can he confirm, first, that these proposals will result in an increase in net expenditure? Secondly, does he agree that, in conjunction with the earlier statement this week about assistance to 16 and 17-year-olds, this represents very good news for homeless young people?

Mr. Moore: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend, who follows these matters very closely indeed. He is right to see the interrelationship between the statement of my hon. Friend the Minister of State about 16 and 17-year-olds and the decision that I have announced today. As we have said throughout, we are trying, within the strategy of the social security reforms, to be sensitive in facing issues in respect of which there may be a need for change. Quite clearly, what I have announced today will protect the very valuable role of hostels. My hon. Friend asked me specifically about the money involved. Current expenditure on the hostel sector will be maintained, and, as has been said, I am adding £2 million for those hostels that have not yet opened, to maintain the same financing arrangements as would have obtained under the old system.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): We have heard that £2 million is to be provided for new hostels after 1989. How many new hostels, or new hostel places, does one get for £2 million? The Minister of State shakes his head. Let me be corrected if I am wrong, but that is what his right hon. Friend said. What is the Department's perception of the number of new hostels, or new hostel places, that are required?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman asks a perfectly reasonable question. The hostels that were agreed under the old system prior to the issue of the consultation paper in July 1988—I do not know the precise number, but I will write to the hon. Member about that—suggested an entirely different method of financing hostel places. The Government thought it perfectly right and proper that such hostels, having been agreed under the old system, should be allowed to open. This is the amount of money that is regarded as sufficient to cover the difference.

Mr. Dalyell: By the Department?

Mr. Moore: By the Department, in consultation with the organisations that put forward proposals during the consultation period, which started in July 1988, as a result of which the Department established precisely its arrangements, plans and numbers. But I shall certainly give the hon. Member much greater detail about his specific point.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North East): Does my right hon. Friend accept that Conservative Members are glad that there is to be no further delay in throwing overboard these perverse incentives, which have so distorted the provision of hostel accommodation? We admire the way he has ensured that there will be a soft landing for those most affected by the changes.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is quite right to draw attention to our efforts to maintain fairness as between expenditure on those in local authority accommodation, those in board-and-lodging accommodation, and those in private accommodation, in terms of the ways in which the state, through housing benefit or income support, supports them, and the additional costs associated with particular and very varied kinds of hostels. We are protecting the amount of money that currently goes to that sector to ensure that that fairness will continue.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): My right hon. Friend's statement, and in particular his reference to transitional arrangements, is very welcome. May I suggest that, in the longer term, he pay particular attention to the staffing needs of hospitals? As he said, we are dealing not only with accommodation but with the care and guidance of some very vulnerable people. Indeed, present staffing is not always adequate, in terms either of numbers or of training. Perhaps we should look further in that direction.

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right, and he has drawn attention to one of the key dilemmas here. My Department is able to make payments through the income support system, through benefit offices, but it is not in a position to judge the kind of issues that my hon. Friend refers to, in regard to the Home Office, or the local social services, or the personal social services, or other areas of other Departments or the local authorities, which have a close relationship and a close identity with the particular needs of the wide range of varied hostels.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Can I take it that the £2 million that has been mentioned is for new hostels? How much money is to be given to those hostels seeking provision for renovation or modernisation? Regrettably, I was told the other day that the women's refuge in my constituency is packed to the gunwales. May I have an assurance that women in Scotland who have sought such shelter, and their children, will suffer no loss of income support?

Mr. Moore: As I said in my statement, those who are in hostels at the moment have no reason to assume that there is any change in their circumstances. They are protected. The hostels are protected by the moneys that they are currently receiving. The moneys that we are talking about are not moneys that go to the kind of decoration or rehabilitation that the hon. Gentleman is talking about. We are talking about the money that is currently broken down through the income support system as between charges and allowances to individuals and hostels. I confirm that hostels' charges will continue to be paid through the housing benefit and a compensatory amount, the same as they receive through the current system.

Lockerbie Air Crash

4.44 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter, that should have urgent consideration, namely

"the information withheld from the House concerning warnings received prior to the Lockerbie tragedy, which has this afternoon been disclosed on 'The World at One' radio programme."

The matter is urgent, in view of the great concern and growing confusion at the Secretary of State for Transport's role in handling airport security and the warnings received before the tragic loss of the Pan Am flight at Lockerbie, and in view of the latest disclosure today of early warnings that the Government received about the use of a radio cassette bomb, as outlined in the *Daily Record* and the *Daily Mirror* this morning.

It is specific in that, on today's BBC "World at One" radio programme, the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) declared that he had been kept informed from authoritative sources on these warnings at a time when such information was being withheld from the House and not referred to in the statements mentioned by the Leader of the House this afternoon. It is important because it is now clear that those warnings were dismissed by the Secretary of State and by the Prime Minister herself. It is now horribly clear that the warnings actually identified the company, the type of plane, the route, the time and the way in which the explosive was contained in a radio cassette player.

Those facts alone justify, at the very least, a statement by the Government, followed by a debate, and then a public inquiry, which has so far been denied by the Prime Minister, feeding the view that there is a cover-up of the Government's inadequacies in dealing with airport security.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the information concerning warnings received prior to the Lockerbie tragedy, which has this afternoon been disclosed on 'The World at One' radio programme."

As the House knows, under Standing Order No. 20, I have to take into account the requirements of the Standing Order and to announce my decision without giving reasons to the House. I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said. As he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 20 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for this evening or on Monday. I regret that the matter that he has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member should not raise a point of order on that matter.

Mr. Wilshire: As I am new here, Mr. Speaker, I seek your guidance on this matter. Do the Standing Orders provide any way for an hon. Member who has been named, as I have been named, to nail half-truths and false information and to put the record straight?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member must find other opportunities for that.

Mr. Wilshire: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Wilshire: It is important. If I understand you correctly, Mr. Speaker, it is proper for me, if I give notice under Standing Order No. 20, to make whatever irresponsible claims I like, and no hon. Member would be able to answer me back? Is that what the Standing Order says?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that every right hon. and hon. Member must take responsibility for what he says. Provided that it is in order, I have no way of stopping it.

Mr. Wilshire: If that is so, Mr. Speaker, how on earth can I protect my constituents from the sort of allegations that have been made in respect of Heathrow?

Mr. Speaker: There are many ways. I am sure that many of the hon. Member's friends will guide him.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1989 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [14 March].

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and the Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;
(b) for refunding any amount of tax, otherwise than in a case where the amount has been paid by reason of a mistake;
(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or
(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

Question again proposed.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

[Relevant documents: European Community document No. 8887/88, Annual Economic Report 1988-89 and the unnumbered document, "Annual Economic Report 1988-89" (final version as adopted by the Council).]

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, I must repeat to the House that a large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in the debate. It would therefore be fair today for me to propose a 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 pm and 8 pm.

4.49 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Tony Newton): As the House would expect, my speech today will be concerned principally with industry and commerce, and with the clear aim of the Budget to maintain what the Government have created—a climate in which British industry can flourish.

It is worth noting at the outset that, for the third year in succession, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has shown that it is possible to increase public expenditure on important public services and at the same time to reduce the tax burden and the overall level of public borrowing. The contrast with 10 years ago, when the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) was predicting a public sector borrowing requirement of about £8·5 billion for the forthcoming year, is, perhaps instructive. It is a measure of the present Government's success over that decade that we can repay this year, as last, some £14 billion of the debt that the last Labour Government did so much to build up.

I shall listen with considerable interest to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) to hear whether he will be able to avoid the temptation of so many of his predecessors—and of himself, on many occasions in the House—of simply talking about different or new ways in which that debt can be re-created and the burden on the British economy restored to the level at which the last Labour Government left it.

By a succession of measures of which the present Budget is simply a further step, our economy has been transformed in the past 10 years and it is now stronger than it has been for generations. As my right hon. Friend said, we are now looking towards our eighth successive year of strong and steady growth in the economy. We have now become so familiar with it that it is perhaps all too easy to take it for granted, but it is a striking fact that, since 1981, the United Kingdom has had the fastest growing of all the major European economies, and the cumulative effect has been striking. Gross domestic product is some 20 per cent. higher than when this Government took office. The Government can rightly be proud of a 20 per cent. increase in national prosperity in a decade.

My right hon. Friend's new Industry Act forecast predicts that that steady progress will continue in 1989 at a rate of about 2·5 per cent. That will maintain our position as the fastest-growing major European economy in the 1980s. I shall not labour too much the comparisons with what went before, but it should not be forgotten that, in contrast with what has happened in the 1980s, our average growth record in the 1970s was probably the worst in Europe and the worst of the seven leading industrial countries.

The Opposition always put great emphasis on manufacturing industry, so I want to make the point that manufacturing output is now, by a comfortable margin, at an all-time record. My right hon. Friend has forecast a further increase of some 3·5 per cent. in the current year, which follows increases of 7 per cent. in 1988 and 5·5 per cent. in 1987. That at least should be welcome news to the Opposition, in view of their quite correct interest in manufacturing industry. However, it is worth recalling that, when the last Labour Government left office, manufacturing output was lower than at the time when they came to office.

The major improvement in productivity has enabled us to achieve that improvement in manufacturing output. Manufacturing productivity in the United Kingdom has risen by over one half since 1980, which is an average annual improvement of more than 5 per cent.—far and away the best performance of any of the seven major industrial countries. In the last quarter of 1988, output per employee in manufacturing was almost 6 per cent. higher than it was a year earlier.

The combination of sustained growth and rising productivity has meant that British companies now have levels of profitability that have not been seen for over 20 years. The real rate of return of industrial and commercial companies in Britain rose in 1987 to more than 10 per cent., and for manufacturing companies alone, the figure was 9 per cent. The importance of that, as even the Labour party now accepts, is that it has helped to overcome the failure to invest which for so long was one of the main features of the British economy.

Throughout the 1980s, total business investment in the United Kingdom has again grown faster than in any other European Community country. Business investment is now at a record level as a percentage of gross domestic product, with a further increase forecast for 1989. That must be taken as clear confirmation of the confidence that practical business men feel in this country's economic future and this Government's policies.

Ever since my right hon. Friend made some of those same points on Tuesday, we have received further news

that confirms those aspects of the strength of the British economy. This morning, for example, statements of capital expenditure in the fourth quarter of 1988 and 1988 as a whole were published which show that the volume of investment in 1988 was nearly 11 per cent. higher than in 1987. For manufacturing industry, the figures show that the volume of investment in 1988, including leased assets, was almost 9·5 per cent. higher than in 1987. Again, all hon. Members, not least Opposition Members, will welcome that.

Let us consider some of the more notable changes by individual manufacturing industries on the same annual basis—excluding leasing, for purely technical reasons. There were rises in investment of almost 27·5 per cent. in paper, printing and publishing, 25 per cent. in vehicles, more than 15·5 per cent. in metal manufacture and nearly 14 per cent. in food. That is a reflection of the continued strengthening of the British economy.

Provisional figures were published this morning for United Kingdom vehicle production in February 1989. For cars, compared with the corresponding period a year ago, output was 14 per cent. higher, with production for export up by 21 per cent. For commercial vehicles, compared with the corresponding period a year ago, output rose by no less than 39 per cent., with production for export up by 52 per cent. Again, that is striking evidence of progress in an industry which, for all too long, was very much in decline.

Perhaps most strikingly, we have today received the unemployment figures for February, showing a further fall, seasonally adjusted, of more than 41,000 to 1,947,000, or under 7 per cent. of the work force. The unemployment figures have now fallen for 31 months in succession, the longest and largest sustained fall in unemployment since the war.

Another point that will certainly be of interest to all hon. Members, especially to the Opposition, is to remind them of the leaflets the Opposition published at the time of the last election. I have one here, with the facsimile signature of the Leader of the Opposition himself. The leaflet says:

"We will reduce unemployment by one million within two years."

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Yes, but we shall really do it—not with a stroke of a pen.

Mr. Newton: We have now reduced unemployment by more than 1 million since the election, a period of significantly less than two years. What is more, we have achieved that without the measures that the Labour party then said would be necessary, such as increases in income tax and massive increases in the level of public expenditure.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: But half the jobs are part-time.

Mr. Newton: I shall come to that, if the hon. Gentleman will wait for a moment.

The fact is that the rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom has fallen faster in the past year than in any other major industrialised country and is now lower that those of the majority of our European Community partners. What is more—this too will interest Opposition Members—the comparison is particularly good when it comes to young people. The latest figures show that the United Kingdom has a lower unemployment rate for the under-25s than all other major European countries, except West Germany.

I come now to the point raised by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). The downward trend in unemployment has been more than matched by the growth in jobs. The revised figures in the 1988 labour force survey show that the number of people in jobs in the United Kingdom rose by 735,000 in the year to September and, at 26·4 million, is now at its highest ever level, even after taking account of trainees on work-related training schemes. Employment has been on the increase for more than five years and over the past two years has shown its fastest growth since 1945. To return to employment in manufacturing—I know that it interests Opposition Members—it is now increasing following several years of decline.

I advise the hon. Member for Workington, who has been intervening so assiduously, that about 85 per cent. of the growth in jobs in the past year has been in full-time employment.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow) *rose*——

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I shall give way in a moment.

Self-employment has continued to increase and is now more than 1 million higher than in June 1979.

Mr. Leighton: The Minister referred to the last general election, but is it not the case that the Labour party suggested an investment of £6 billion in the public sector to reduce unemployment by the amount that he has mentioned, but that we have had an explosion of £40 billion in the private sector, which has stoked inflation so that we must now put the engines into reverse, with either a hard or a soft landing which will stop the growth in the economy? Will that not also stop the fall in unemployment?

Mr. Newton: During the last general election campaign, the Labour party produced all sorts of strange ideas about how it would achieve its aims, against a background where the application of the self-same policies during its previous five years in office had reduced the British economy to stagnation, slow growth, relatively low productivity and an inability to sustain many of the public services about which people talked so much.

Dr. Godman: I hope that the Minister will forgive my parochialism, but I advise him that unemployment in my constituency is still touching 17 per cent., that in 1979 it was at the disgracefully high level of 12 per cent., and that 3,500 people have been unemployed for 12 months or more.

When does the Minister expect finally to close British Shipbuilders? Has he received from John Lister, the chairman of British Shipbuilders, a preferred bidder for the last British shipbuilding yard, Ferguson-Ailsa, in Port Glasgow? Again, parochially, that is of immense importance to the people I represent.

Mr. Newton: I know and understand the hon. Gentleman's interest in such matters and hope shortly to say a little more about one or two of them—not in my speech today but in other ways. At this moment I cannot give him the name of a new preferred bidder for

[Mr. Newton]

Ferguson-Ailsa following the difficulties that arose in the previous negotiations. The hon. Gentleman is aware of the current re-bid process, but I can offer no conclusions from it at the moment. There are also developments, in which the hon. Gentleman will be interested, in respect of Marine Design Consultants, British Shipbuilders' training operation, and on the future of Sunderland Forge Services, which currently accounts for the employment of about 400 people in the north-east. If I may, I shall give the hon. Gentleman further details of that in a more appropriate way at another time. As far as British Shipbuilders as a whole is concerned, a number of tasks remain that need the continued existence, for the time being, of a central operation. I have no immediate plans for changing that. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): As there seems to be a break at the moment, I should like to ask my right hon. Friend whether he thinks that, given the welcome growth in productivity in the British economy, the 2·5 per cent. growth in the economy as a whole next year will be enough to keep unemployment falling at anything like the rate that it has been falling in the past?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend knows that forecasts of the precise rate of change in unemployment are among the more difficult to make in a world in which economic forecasts are well known to be subject to uncertainties——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Or to figure-fiddling exercises.

Mr. Newton: I do not want to venture to predict the precise rate at which unemployment will continue to fall. On the face of it, if the rate of growth in the economy as a whole is somewhat moderated, which is what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has suggested he expects to happen in the forthcoming year, at some stage that will have an effect on the rate of the fall in unemployment. However, as there is a basis for a continued decrease in unemployment because of our increasingly successful economy, I see no reason to doubt that.

The results of our policies, not least their effects on employment, are being felt in all parts of the United Kingdom. In the north, unemployment has fallen by one third in the past three years. In the past year, the sharpest falls have been in the west midlands, which went through a particularly difficult time earlier in the decade, and in Wales. Since 1981, manufacturing output has risen by almost 13 per cent. in Yorkshire and by more than 20 per cent. in the west midlands.

We have seen a tremendous surge of inward investment in the north-east—Nissan is only the largest and best known example. There are some 220 foreign-owned businesses in the north-east, employing 42,000 people. The recent confirmation from Toyota that Britain is in the lead for its choice of location for its first manufacturing investment in Europe is another in the growing number of signs of a practical expression of confidence from people overseas in our skill, workmanship and capacity for management, as well as in the competitiveness of the British economy as a base for their operations.

One thing that I have found most striking in recent weeks, and which has put me in mind of the different situation that would have existed 10 years ago, was when I was talking to a significant German company that was contemplating the possibility of significant investment here and its people referred not only to our generally good business climate, but to the fact that our corporation tax was among the lowest in Europe—that was one of our major attractions. That is an almost incredible change from the position 10 years ago, when the notion of a major German company contemplating investment in this economy, partly because our tax regime is at least as favourable as, if not more favourable than, that in West Germany, would have been unbelievable.

Mr. Daffyd Wigley (Caernarfon): A moment ago, the Minister mentioned the growth of jobs in Wales and it is true that there has been a growth in certain areas, but does he accept that in other areas, such as in rural north-west and south-west Wales and in the old industrial valleys, there are high levels of unemployment, ranging between 15 and 20 per cent.? Given the contrast between those levels of unemployment, which also exist in other parts of these islands, and the low levels in places such as the home counties, where there is 2 to 3 per cent. unemployment, is there not now a case for looking at some mechanism for a differential expansion of the economy, especially in terms of the regional policy which has been abandoned by the Government in recent years, but which is now much needed to overcome that discrepancy?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows that I have considerable respect for him on this and on other subjects that we have debated over the years, but he obviously has a different perception from that which I would have about the extent to which the Government are pursuing a number of policies, including regional selective assistance, which is available in the pattern of assisted areas in a way with which the hon. Gentleman will be familiar, precisely to seek to make further progress in overcoming regional and in some cases local imbalances that have been a feature of our economy for many years, not just for the last few.

What I was seeking to say a few moments ago is that, when I frequently travel around the country with my various regional and inner-city responsibilities, it is clear that the effects of our policies are being increasingly felt in areas that had felt left out of the general improvement in the economy. The mood in places such as south Wales, Newcastle, Merseyside, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds and almost wherever one goes is of much greater confidence and optimism about the way things are going than would have been the case for many years past. That is not the least encouraging aspect of what my right hon. Friend and the Government have achieved in getting the British economy on the move.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Chief Secretary to the Treasury made some interesting comments yesterday, when he said:

"It is interesting that fully three quarters of our imports of manufactures now consists of production and investment goods. Consumer goods are only a small proportion."—*[Official Report,* 15 March 1989; Vol 149, c. 427.]

Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why, in a document that was published by his Department relating to production and investment goods, those sections are preferable as imports to consumer goods? Why is it so important that that three quarters consists of production and investment goods rather than consumer goods?

Mr. Newton: That was a point that I sought to make in one way earlier on. The difficulties of the British economy over a long period have been associated in many people's arguments—I believe rightly—with the tendency of the economy to invest less than most other economies. That has changed dramatically and importantly in the past few years. Indeed, there has now been a fairly consistent pattern over a considerable period—probably five years or more—in which the growth in investment has consistently out paced the growth in consumption.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): Seven years.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor informs me that it is seven years. That is a major change when compared with the previous 20 years.

That investment is reflected to some extent in the figures of imports of semi-manufactured and capital goods, to which I believe the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was referring to and to which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor would have referred. That increase in investment is associated with an increase in such imports. However, its importance is that it is part of the process of strengthening the British economy—which is what is happening—to build up the capacity of our industries for the future, to improve their competitiveness and to strengthen their capacity successfully to export and to improve our trade balance.

I do not want to over-simplify the matter or to suggest that we are not concerned to see an improvement in the trade balance, because that is part of the aim of our policies. However, a key part of achieving that improvement is continued investment in British industry. To the extent that the current level of imports reflect that investment, it is very different from a level of imports solely fuelled by the imports of consumer products.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On what is admittedly a difficult and complex problem, what advice would the right hon. Gentleman give to Sir Kit McMahon, Sir Jeremy Morse and other major bankers faced with the problems of South American debt?

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): The Minister is not quite the right person to ask, is he?

Mr. Dalyell: He is a major economics Minister—*[Interruption.]* I am told that I am right to have asked. Is it the policy of the Government seriously to consider the debt for nature swap?

Mr. Newton: The Government are obviously concerned to ensure a stable international financial framework. The advice that I would give the hon. Gentleman, or indeed anybody else who might ask, would be to pursue policies that contribute to that end, but beyond that I do not think I shall be drawn into commenting on the hon. Gentleman's points.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The right hon. Gentleman was talking about the balance of payments deficit which is a major problem. Has he noticed that sections 51 to 89 of the overseas trade statistics, which deal with three quarters of the imports that were referred to by his right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary yesterday, are in the main the very areas of industry that have closed down over the past years? Can the right hon. Gentleman not see a connection between the loss of those areas of industry and the high level of imports in those sectors?

Mr. Newton: I see a connection with the difficulties of the many parts of British industry that were associated with policies pursued not least by the last Labour Government, which left them in a significantly weakened state and which have necessarily taken time to overcome. The thrust of what I have been saying today is that, whether one looks at the figures of output, of productivity or of investment, one can manifestly see a restrengthening of important parts of British industry, although of course it will take time to achieve all that we would wish.

The motor car industry—the figures for which I have already mentioned—is an interesting case in point. We now see new investment in the motor car industry. Nissan is the most obvious example, but there has been investment, too, by Ford, Vauxhall and others. We see rising production for export and many other signs that we are getting back into business with the motor car industry in the way that both the hon. Member for Workington and I would undoubtedly wish.

Before that intervention, I was seeking to underline the extent to which unemployment is falling and output is rising in every part of our country. It is worth noting that that is to be seen not only on a regional basis, but in respect of those areas that we have come to call the inner cities. Unemployment in the inner cities has fallen by more than 20 per cent., and long-term unemployment by even more. Half a million people have been assisted in those urban programme areas by training programmes to help them to take the job opportunities that the expanding economy is creating. There are major improvements in infrastructure, and around the country there is a new sense of optimism and self-confidence that those areas can and will tackle their problems.

I want to emphasise to the House that we can make that progress in areas that have been among the black spots of our national economy over many years only because the national economy is strong again and because the business community has the confidence and the good commercial reasons to invest in areas where formerly it had virtually ceased to invest.

It is that change in the climate and the confidence of British industry that is above all the striking feature of developments in the past few years. Of course, my right hon. Friend's Budget is designed to ensure that that climate of greater confidence, of investment, and of a willingness to get back into the inner cities and the regions is maintained. That is the way in which the proposals in the Budget have been designed, both in their overall impact on the economy and in the detail of the particular tax and the other reforms contained in it.

The Budget reflects a recognition that the commitment to the defeat of inflation is the foundation of maintaining that greater business confidence and willingness to invest and—as I was seeking to say to the hon. Member for Workington—that in turn is the key to improving still further our competitive and trading performance in a way that will help us to improve the trade balance to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

It is for all those reasons that my right hon. Friend put his emphasis on personal taxation and other charges on a further reform of employees' national insurance contributions. I believe that that has been generally welcomed and

[Mr. Newton]

will act directly to restore work incentives by removing large numbers of people from the poverty and unemployment traps.

It will once and for all end the anomaly whereby, at various intermediate steps, the employee earning an extra pound could find himself several pounds worse off. My right hon. Friend has performed the happy trick of a change which produces no losers but which concentrates the gains among the lower-paid. It is good that a reform which will have important effects in promoting enterprise has also been so widely welcomed on both sides of the House, not just on the Conservative Benches.

As I said a few moments ago when talking about a German company, our level of corporation tax is now one of the lowest anywhere in Europe. The small companies' rate of corporation tax has been successively reduced in line with the basic rate of income tax. That is now being extended to companies with profits of up to £150,000, with the threshold for marginal relief being extended to £750,000. Those increases more than compensate for the rise in prices since the limits were fixed, and the scheme will be of particular benefit to the growing number of smaller companies which have contributed so much to the revival of enterprise in Britain. It will reduce the tax burden on no fewer than 20,000 companies, half of those not already paying tax at the small companies rate.

A significant aspect of the Government's policies to revive the enterprise of our economy has been the encouragement of wider share ownership, both by the employees of a company and by the public at large. Again, my right hon. Friend's Budget has introduced new incentives for both. Existing tax reliefs for employee share schemes are to be substantially improved and there will be a generous new relief from corporation tax for an employer's contribution to an employee share ownership plan, provided that the purpose of the plan is to pass shares to individual employees. That is a response, as I think will be recognised, to representations from both sides of the House and will be of particular value to unquoted companies wishing to enable employees to share in their success.

Profit-related pay offers an alternative approach to promoting a community of interest between employer and employee. The increase in the maximum amount of pay relieved under the scheme, and the relaxation of some of the associated conditions, will substantially improve the attractions of such profit-related pay.

For the investing public, the terms of relief for investment in personal equity plans have been greatly improved, with a 60 per cent. increase in the annual investment limit, a more than fourfold increase in the amount that can be invested in unit and investment trusts, and the relaxation in the rules which will permit newly issued shares as well as cash to be placed in a personal equity plan. I have little doubt that, in their new guise, PEPs will be well received by individuals and investment managers.

We have been asked by Mr. Speaker to keep speeches reasonably brief and I shall not seek to take up much more of the time of the House. The context of the Budget in an economy which is expanding, which is more productive and which is investing more for the future, and a society in which standards of living are rising, in which ownership is more widely spread than ever before and in which the results of our greater national prosperity are being increasingly felt by every part of our country. The purpose of my right hon. Friend's Budget is to ensure that that progress continues, and I have no doubt that it will.

5.22 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I notice from the Minister's use of statistics at the start of his speech that the right hon. Gentleman has lost none of the deftness in selection that he displayed as Minister for Health. He will pardon me if I begin by putting some of the statistics that he used into perspective, which, unaccountably, he omitted to do when he presented them to the House.

For instance, there was the Minister's entertaining reference to manufacturing investment in 1988 being 9 per cent. up on 1987. That is, of course, perfectly true. I entirely concede that. But what he omitted to point out was that the figure for 1987 was 10 per cent. down on 1979. In other words, last year manufacturing investment finally crept back to where it had been in 1979—10 lost years. If we had been investing the same share of our economy in manufacturing as Germany over that 10 years we would have invested an additional £100 billion, and Germany did not have a drop of oil during those 10 years.

The right hon. Gentleman said that manufacturing output fell under Labour. I am a fair-minded gentleman and an honourable Member of the House and I readily concede, as he will remember from the previous debate, that between 1974 and 1975 manufacturing output under Labour did fall as a result of the oil price. But it rose in every year from 1975 to 1979. But what is truly interesting is that every year under the previous Labour Government manufacturing output was higher than in any year of this Government until last year. Last year, at long last, the Government finally got in front of 1979—another 10 years of stagnation. Between 1979 and 1987 the Government failed to get manufacturing output above the level of 1979—a period of stagnation which it shares solely with Malawi, Barbados and Fiji.

But the most remarkable omission in the Minister's speech, given that he comes here from the Department of Trade and Industry, is that he managed to address the House for over half an hour without once referring to the fact that we have at present a balance of payments deficit without precedent in our history. It is worse than anything ever contemplated by any previous Government; worse even—I understand that this is the worst insult that I can offer the Treasury Bench—than anything recorded during the period of Government under the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

Moreover, the Government have achieved that during a period of oil surplus. To achieve a current account deficit and an oil surplus at the same time takes genius. In the rest of the world it has been achieved only by Iraq, Iran and Venezuela. That is the league in which we find ourselves. It was achieved by turning the £3 billion surplus in manufactures which they inherited from Labour into a staggering £20 billion deficit last year.

I was astonished that the right hon. Gentleman should claim an increase in output on commercial vehicles and coaches as evidence of the Government's success. Since he mentioned that particular sector, let me share with him the trade figures for those sectors. In 1978, imports of buses and coaches took up 3 per cent. of Britain's domestic

market. In 1988 they took up 38 per cent. That is the area that the right hon. Gentleman chooses as a success story. In 1978, imports of commercial vehicles took up 22 per cent. of the British market. In 1988 they took up 40 per cent. That is not, I grant, such a dramatic increase as for buses and coaches, but the import penetration has doubled.

As *The Guardian* reminds us this morning, the Government are now even running a trade deficit in putty. We are £500,000 down in trade on putty. The Government cannot get their hands on enough putty to stick their policies together.

It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Gentleman again. I had been rather afraid that with one bound last July he leaped from Richmond terrace to Victoria street and leaped free from the consequences of the NHS review which he helped to set in hand. He will recall that, when that review was set in hand, the Secretary of State for whom he then worked said that its consequences for health in Britain could be as dramatic as the discovery of penicillin. If I may say so, the consequences of the NHS review have certainly been dramatic, but they have perhaps not been as benign as the discovery of penicillin.

This morning the Royal College of Nursing published its report saying that it had the gravest reservations about the proposals. It said that they undermined and threatened fundamental principles of the NHS. Last weekend the *British Medical Journal* accused the Government of using the same strategy for the NHS as a steaming gang demanding money at knifepoint. But the unkindest cut of all comes from David Green, whom the hon. Gentleman will recall is one of the directors in the Institute of Economic Affairs, who spent all the preceding year urging the right hon. Gentleman to set up the review. Last month David Green wrote in the *Health and Social Service Journal* that the Government's proposals are in danger of giving competition a bad name.

I presume that at some stage the Secretary of State for Health will come to the House and invite hon. Members to debate the White Paper in full. I presume that that will be his intention, even if only by remote television link-up, which appears to be his favourite mode of communication with NHS staff. He would be wise to debate it in the House of Commons because, increasingly, it looks as if that is the only place in which he will ever muster a majority for his proposals. The last opinion poll to seek evidence on public reaction to his proposals discovered that of those members of the public who had heard of them, 14 per cent. approved and 71 per cent. disapproved. The truth is that the public do not want the NHS broken up. They do not want their doctors to have to weigh the treatment that they can afford against the treatment that the patient needs. But most of all, they do not trust a Government who propose cash controls for public health and cash subsidy for private medicine.

I turn to one of the key elements in the Chancellor's statement. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster suggested that I would spend money throughout my speech. I disabuse him of that notion, because I wish to propose a modest saving. The Government could save the £40 million that they are to give in tax concessions to the private medical sector, in the form of tax relief to elderly people paying for private medical insurance, such as the Prime Minister.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): That is cheap.

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman says that is cheap, which is absolutely true. The Prime Minister spent a year devising a proposal for the NHS review, over which she presided. The first proposal to come out of that review and to be put before the House is one from which she will benefit, while the majority of pensioners will find it totally irrelevant. If the hon. Gentleman finds that cheap, perhaps he should take it up with the Prime Minister.

It speaks volumes for the Government's priorities that the first of the White Paper's proposals to be put before the House is not one that will improve the public sector but will give an old-fashioned handout to the private sector. It appears that the private sector appreciates the gesture. At breakfast yesterday, I was discomfited to be confronted with a photograph of the Chancellor of the Exchequer naked. I am not sure whether I was more distressed by the impersonation of his torso or by the text underneath that was an advertisement for BUPA. That advertisement promoted something called "Budget BUPA". It has indeed been a BUPA Budget, because the subsidy offered by the Budget to that organisation is substantial.

I noticed that yesterday, the Financial Secretary—who is with us in body if not in terms of attention at the moment—referred to figures that I and my right hon. Friend the shadow Chief Secretary revealed at a press conference. The right hon. Gentleman said that the average cost of the relief per taxpayer would be £100. I find that rather curious. Earlier this week, my office contacted BUPA and invited it to quote a premium for a person aged 60 wishing to continue with the kind of medical insurance cover that they enjoyed while at work—which I understand is the intention behind the Chancellor's proposal. BUPA quoted £1,080 per year. With tax relief at 40 per cent., that means a cost to the public purse not of £100 but of £430.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was so riveted by the picture purporting to depict my right hon. Friend's torso that he did not read the wording that appeared below it. Had he done so, he would have read that BUPA estimate the cost of "Budget BUPA" to be

"from around £15 a month at age 55 to £27 at age 74, or even less."

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman is right in giving those figures, but he must recognise that "Budget BUPA" in no way replicates the cover provided by a company scheme —which is, we understand from the White Paper and the reference in the Chancellor's speech, the intention behind the tax relief. If anyone wishes to follow the Government's logic and obtain cover that is equivalent to that which they enjoyed during their working life, the figure that will be quoted to them by BUPA will be £1,080, involving tax relief of £430.

Yesterday, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury suggested that the average cost of an elderly person to the NHS is £1,000. I invite the right hon. Gentleman to refer to his own White Paper, where he will find that the cost of hospital services for a person aged 65 to 74 is £415, which is half the figure that he quoted. I begin to understand why the forecasts of the Treasury team are so wildly wrong. The Treasury propose spending more in subsidy so that wealthy elderly people may go private than it would cost to treat them in the National Health Service. That is crazy

[Mr. Cook]

economics, but the whole Treasury team knows that the proposal has nothing to do with economics but is entirely the product of political dogma.

The cost of providing private health relief is estimated at £40 million. The Treasury Bench arrived at that estimate as the figure necessary to cover those who already have private health insurance, plus, if I correctly understood the Finance Secretary yesterday, a 10 per cent. increase. I am sorry to tell the right hon. Gentleman that again.

BUPA is not playing ball with the Government. It estimates that the number of elderly people who will be covered as a result of the new tax relief will increase from 350,000 to 1 million subscribers. It adds that that figure of 1 million is a modest estimate. That represents not a 10 per cent. increase but a threefold increase and implies a total cost, using the right hon. Gentleman's own figures, of £120 million.

Even a figure of £40 million is sufficient to pay the annual salaries of 3,000 nurses or 1,000 consultants. It is enough to purchase 20,000 ventilators or 1,300 ambulances. It is enough to meet the operating costs of 35,000 cataract removals or of 17,000 hip replacements. Those are the substantial lost opportunities caused by putting that money into private health care rather than into the Health Service.

The Chancellor knows that he will get better value for money using that sum for direct NHS expenditure rather than using it for indirect expenditure on the private sector. One reason for saying that is that the effect of subsidising the private sector will be to target help on those who are most fit and least in need of help. They are the people who obtain private medical cover.

The private medical sector, unlike the NHS, screens applicants to ensure that they are well enough. The private sector, unlike the NHS, has no Hippocratic oath by which it is bound to treat the sick. Instead, the private sector smartly passes them back to the public Health Service on the basis that, as was helpfully observed by the managing director of one private health insurance company, such screening enables the private sector to protect essentially healthy people against the cost penalties of unhealthy people. That statement has the advantage of originality, in that it perceives healthy people as the vulnerable group that needs to be protected from the unhealthy.

Meanwhile, the NHS is left struggling to cope with the costs of the unhealthy. The extent to which it is losing that struggle was tellingly revealed by a blatant example of news management, with which the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will immediately identify as he will remember the trick from his old days. On Budget day, the Department of Health slipped out the latest hospital waiting list figures. As soon as I heard of that device, I assumed that the Department had something to hide—and it did. The six-monthly waiting list revealed on Tuesday shows a jump of 50,000 since September 1988. The figure now totals 900,000, of whom one quarter have been waiting almost one year. Nevertheless, the total sum of money given by the Department of Health this year to the waiting list initiative is only about £30 million, or £1 million less than the Government propose providing as a subsidy for private hospitals.

There is another dimension to the Government's handsome handout to the private sector. The tax relief for the elderly is the sole proposal from the Government's whole NHS review to improve the health care of the elderly. The speed at which it is being implemented contrasts with the Government's indifference to the plight of the elderly in need of care in the community. The Chancellor of the Duchy will remember the Griffiths report, because he was Minister of State when it was presented to his former Department. That report was also subject to a spectacular example of news management, being smuggled out and published in Budget week one year ago this very day.

The Government's response to the Griffiths report has been one year's silence. During that year, another 30,000 people have been added to the list of those aged over 85 requiring care in the community. During that year, another half dozen hospitals have been closed. The consequences can be seen within walking distance of the House. A hostel for the homeless in Covent Garden calculates that in 1983, 10 per cent. of its residents had a serious mental health problem. It calculates that this winter the proportion was 50 per cent. They are the victims of the Government's year-long neglect.

Another aspect of the Budget that is critically important to the Health Service involves not what the Chancellor did, but what he did not do—his failure to increase excise duty. I notice that the chief executive of the Health Education Council said that he was dumbfounded by this, and the director of ASH said that it was incomprehensible. I understand their surprise. After all, only two months ago the Prime Minister launched a campaign to cut teenage smoking by half. Only last week, the Minister of State, Department of Health launched no-smoking day with the ringing declaration that he would give up smoking after dinner. This week, the Chancellor has knocked a hole below the waterline of both proposals.

There can be no room for doubt about the consequences of his action. More people will smoke more cigarettes—in particular, more teenagers will start smoking. Most people start smoking before they are 18, and making cigarettes cheaper makes it more tempting for them to do so. This is the second time in three years that the Government have failed to increase the duty on tobacco and is another stage in the Government's constant, pusillanimous retreat in the face of the tobacco lobby.

At present, the Government are the only Government in Europe resisting tougher warnings on cigarette packets. They defend their stance on the basis of voluntary agreements with the tobacco industry. Of course, since the Government have a cosy, voluntary agreement with a company such as Imperial Tobacco—its parent company donated £80,000 to Tory Central Office last year and £102,000 to it in election year—it is hardly surprising that the company finds its interests protected by this Government, in Brussels and in the Budget.

On the radio, the Chancellor said that it was necessary to control the excise duty rise because of the fight against inflation. That will not wash, because only last week the Secretary of State for Health slapped another 20p on prescription charges on the grounds that it was necessary to keep up with inflation. I remember that in 1979, when prescription charges were 20p, we were assured during the general election that it would be a lie to suggest that the Government had any intention of increasing prescription

charges. However, they did not merely double them but increased them fourteenfold in 10 years. That is a heroic rate of inflation.

The result of that rise is that chemists in every constituency in Britain are faced every week with people at their counters asking which of two or three prescriptions they really need because they cannot afford them all. If the Chancellor was so anxious to control the fight against inflation, he would have frozen prescription charges, not the price for nicotine.

Another freeze announced in the Budget was that on child benefit. It is particularly important and appropriate to recall this in the Budget debate, because child benefit replaced child tax allowance. Since 1983, child benefit has decreased in real terms by 13 per cent. During the same period, every other tax allowance has risen by 22 per cent.

I have asked the following question on three successive occasions in the past six months, and I shall ask it a fourth time in the hope that someone on the Treasury Bench will have thought of an answer. Why do the Government imagine that the cost of maintaining a child has dropped by one eighth in the past 10 years, but the cost of maintaining a wife has risen by one fifth? How can they justify that double standard?

Child benefit is superior to tax allowances because it puts the cash into the hands of the mother who feeds and clothes the child. If the target of child benefit is to help with the cost of children, it hits the bull's eye because it puts the money in the hands of 98 per cent. of mothers and is therefore, dramatically better than family credit, which, we are told, is a targeted benefit. The problem with family credit is that it keeps missing two thirds of its targets.

We were promised that family credit would achieve a 60 per cent. take-up rate, but it has never been anywhere near that rate. The current take-up level is stuck at about half that target. When we debated the matter in January, I pointed out that, far from increasing, the numbers of those taking up family credit fell between November and December. I was told by the Secretary of State for Social Security that this was because Christmas had resulted in a delay in applications. Apparently, families on family credit were too busy Christmas shopping to submit their applications on time. As a result of my private notice question last week, I have found that at the end of February, far from recovering from the Chrismas blip, the numbers on family credit had actually decreased from the December figure. Christmas was not a temporary blip. I presume that, this time, it was because the applicants were all out at the January sales that they forgot to submit their applications.

The truth is that family credit is a failure. It has failed to protect families from the extra costs of the loss of free school meals and the cuts in housing benefit. It can no longer be used by the Government as the threadbare pretext for freezing child benefit, which goes to far more poor families than family credit ever could.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the present rate of child benefit is about £40 a year more valuable than child tax allowance would have been if it had been indexed at the same rate as the married man's allowance?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman cannot escape the fact that child benefit was a merger of both family allowance and child tax allowance. When the Labour party left office, it did so with child benefit higher in real terms than it is now. I am not suggesting—and I wish to disabuse the hon. Gentleman of any misunderstanding that he may have on this matter—that we should convert child benefit back into a tax allowance. That would be regressive and would not give money to poor families, but to the father, rather than the mother. However, I do sometimes suspect that it might be in the interests of the 7 million mothers to rename child benefit child tax allowance, because the Government would then immediately uprate it in the way that they uprate everything that is labelled tax allowance.

One last group was entirely left out of the Budget. They will not gain, either from this week's statement on tax or from next month's uprating of social security. The 570,000 claimants, who are mostly pensioners, are almost double the 350,000 who gained tax relief for private medical cover. There will be no tax relief for this group because they do not pay tax—their income comes from social security benefits. They will receive no increase in benefits in April because last April they received a litle bit extra for heating costs because they were housebound, for their diet because they have special needs, for their laundry costs because they are incontinent. Last April, the Government scrapped all those allowances and as a result this group found that they had more in cash than they were entitled to in benefit. Therefore, they are not entitled to any increase from this year's uprating.

Every one of those 570,000 cases was one of the 88 per cent. whom the House was assured last spring would not lose from the changes in social security. I invite the Ministers on the Treasury Bench to the surgeries held in my constituency and to explain to my constituents who fall within that group that they do not lose because of the changes in the rules.

This is the second year running in which this group of poor, vulnerable people have suffered a freeze in income —they are probably the only ones to have suffered that two years running. Ironically, by definition, the group contains the most frail, elderly and disabled, and their treatment has been a disgrace. It is also a disgrace that, in a Budget with a surplus of £12 billion, the Chancellor could not find enough to uprate their benefit by 5 per cent. The total cost of uprating would probably be £60 million a year, which is not that much more than the £40 million that he has handed out to private medicine. If the Chancellor had to make a choice, he should have given the money to those half million pensioners. It would have proved better as a contribution to the health of our nation to enable those half million adequately to feed and heat themselves, rather than to provide a subsidy to private hospitals.

I do not doubt that, when the Division bells ring on Monday, the Government will find a majority for these polices. I do not doubt that the Whips would be able to find a majority of Back Benchers willing to vote for the proposition that pensions should be taken away entirely. Equally, however, I do not doubt that when history judges this period it will be as bewildered by such priorities as all the pensioners who are the victims, and will join us in condemning the social strategy that financed tax cuts for the rich through cuts in benefits for the poor.

5.49 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Although we are not yet in the "long speech exclusion zone", which I think begins at 6 pm, I shall try to apply a voluntary quota to my remarks and keep them as brief as possible.

The House has heard a detailed speech from the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) about the National Health Service and social policy. NHS issues are vastly important and will no doubt be debated in the Chamber at great length, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I return to the impact of the Budget on the economy, and discuss the industrial energies and dynamism from which funds must flow to finance the social policies that the hon. Member for Livingston and others wish to see. It is on such energies that we must concentrate our efforts if the goods are to be delivered in the form of higher living standards, whether in health, education or any other regard.

I confess that I do not consider the Budget statement a very good occasion for the examination of economic policy. First, the current policy is very complex, and it is hard to establish what point we have reached in the unwinding of the overheated economy. The Budget statement must be made at some time, but this happens not to be a very good time to pull up the economy by its roots and examine it in broad daylight.

Secondly, I entirely share my right hon. Friend's view that fiscal policy is not a suitable instrument for short-term management of the economy. It should be carved and shaped for the medium term to achieve supply side improvements. Attempts to use fiscal measures to adjust the wing flaps, as it were, and to change the steering at the last minute, are almost certain to end in tears and to prove futile.

Much of the comment on the relationship of the Budget and the Government's fiscal stance to the immediate position is entirely unrealistic. Fiscal policy works on a different time scale, and we cannot draw any fresh conclusions about the evolution of short-term economic policy from my right hon. Friend's statement. It is impossible to rush forward and take a snapshot of the economy on Budget day, and to be wonderfully well informed as a result. I sometimes feel—my right hon. Friend must feel the same—that it is as though someone ran up with a camera and took a flashlight picture, I hope in a more suitable place than a nightclub, and then expected that picture to portray the scene truthfully. Often an entirely false impression will be given.

I note that some of my right hon. Friend's critics, especially in the press, are rushing to conclusions. My right hon. Friend is being accused of being a closet Keynesian. One commentator suggested in yesterday's papers that he was discarding monetary controls. That, I think, is a facile picture—a back-seat commentator's view. I suspect that the reason why my right hon. Friend no longer mentions some of the monetary controls and aggregates of which he and others talked earlier in the decade is that they have been tried and found useless and irrelevant in today's wide open economy.

I do not think that my right hon. Friend has gone back to closet Keynesianism or that he is trying to manage the United Kingdom economy as a separate, closed entity, steering the ship from day to day. Nor do I believe that he has thrown over monetarism, deciding that such issues do not matter. The reality, in my view, is that the instruments that are all thought important to steering the monetary side of the economy and controlling inflation—as at one time they were—have turned out to be levers with no wires connected to them.

Like Finance Ministers in other western economies, my right hon. Friend is having to fly his aircraft in exceptionally difficult circumstances. He is, indeed, flying blind, in that all economists disagree on where the economy now is. We are given contrary statistics, which in themselves are suspect, and—almost daily—contrary assessments of the rate at which the economy is cooling down.

As my right hon. Friend peers through the fog, all he has to go by is one glimmering dial before him: M0, which is not a control mechanism but merely an indicator. He has, and is using vigorously, the lever of interest rates, and intends to continue to do so. What he lacks is the additional support that he would receive from a clear sterling exchange rate policy within the framework provided by the European monetary system. I believe that such a policy, underpinned by a relationship to the grid of European currencies through the exchange rate mechanism, would enhance the Government's credibility in squeezing inflation out of the system. My right hon. Friend, however, is denied that, and is thus faced with an extraordinarily difficult task.

Some of my hon. Friends, along with the high priests of monetarism and monetary technicians, say that that is all wrong, and that those other monetary instruments should be installed. They say that my right hon. Friend should be pressing different buttons. I cannot help feeling that it is useless to tell a pilot trying to land his aircraft in foggy conditions that he should be in a different type of aeroplane, and that it is a pity that he is in that one.

I wish my right hon. Friend well in his attempt to achieve a soft landing for the economy in the next few months with the limited instruments that he has to hand. I think that he will achieve it, although I do not believe that the tax changes or even the broad fiscal stance in the Budget will make much difference to what is happening from day to day.

I think that it was David Lloyd George who said that, when making a speech in the House of Commons, Back Benchers should stick to one point and Ministers to two. I shall therefore make only one point about the tax policies presented in the Budget speech. Let me begin with a slightly worrying fact. We now have the lowest ratio of personal savings to disposable income since the 1950s. According to the Central Statistical Office, it fell as low as 1·3 per cent. in the last quarter of last year. That should be of particular concern to my party when we consider the way in which we want to shape our fiscal policy for the medium term.

It does not matter in the very short term if personal savings ratios are as low as that—and one does not know whether the figures are accurate—because this is a credit-worthy economy. We can continue to borrow, we can continue to finance a large trade deficit easily and, in any event, if personal savings are low, corporate savings are high. Government savings are also high, and that is what the public sector surplus is all about.

Overall, the savings of the economy may not be too bad and one can argue that, for the time being, we need not worry on that score and that no problem exists just because of the low savings ratios for individuals. I suppose that it can also be argued that high personal saving is not

necessarily a guarantee of economic perfection and dynamism. After all, the savings ratios in the Soviet Union are among the highest in the world—not due to any economic efficiency but because they cannot find anything on which to spend their roubles.

It matters a great deal, however, in the medium term, which is where we should be focusing our attention in considering my right hon. Friend's fiscal reforms. It matters because the expansion of personal and domestic savings is the key to the creation of the kind of society that Conservative Members believe is right, just, flexible and fair for the future.

Our whole party aim—my right hon. and hon. Friends need no reminding of this—is to avoid the state doing all the saving and investing. We think that the state makes a rotten job of both. Our intention over the years has been to encourage personal savings, not merely for their economic contribution but as part of the pattern for a future in which people take more responsibility for organising their own lives, health, education, retirement, housing and the rest.

It worries me, therefore, as a member of the Conservative party and a Member of this House that the personal savings ratios have fallen to dramatically low levels. It would seem a legitimate object of policy to try to get them up, even though the overall savings of the economy may not immediately be a matter for worry.

Another reason why these matters concern us is that they reflect something of a slowing down in our ambition to achieve a popular capital-owning democracy. The Chancellor of the Duchy has had much to say about democratic capitalism. It has been a central theme of successive Conservative Governments since 1979. It gives momentum to what we Conservatives are trying to achieve, which is to extend and spread ownership, to turn earners into owners and to get away the sort of mad propositions of the past which set capital against labour and made the war on capital, ownership and profits such a feature of successive Labour Governments and Oppositions.

We must continue to watch how well the pattern of popular personal share ownership is getting on, and it is not getting on as well as it has in the past. I read in the *Financial Times* today that personal shareholding has ceased to grow; it has been static for the last year.

I note that the proportion of shareholding by people, as opposed to the great institutions, far from rising, has continued to fall, until it is now below 20 per cent. That, too, worries me, and I look to the Budget to see what can be done to reverse that trend because it is vitally important for the whole momentum of our economic and social programmes that it should be reversed.

The Budget helps in those areas in some ways. As the Chancellor of the Duchy mentioned, a welcome boost is given to employee share ownership. This is immensely valuable and is one of the good things that the famous Lib-Lab coalition of the late 1970s achieved. The Administration of the time did much damage to a great deal of the economy, particularly the health sector and the public infrastructure, with the appalling cuts that were made, which some of us have been trying to restore ever since.

But Labour Members agreed, under pressure from the Liberals and with our support, to introduce employee share ownership plans with tax relief on them. That is how it started, successive Conservative Chancellors have built on that and today we are seeing a growth in employee ownership, which is healthy for industrial relations, social responsibility and a wider share-owning democracy generally.

We are proposing that personal equity plans should be expanded so that people can now invest in pooled forms of savings—unit trusts, investment trusts and equity shares. I make no secret of the fact that I would have liked to see something more dramatic. I would have liked to see the personal pension plan participant's present freedom to put quite large sums of his or her income tax-free into a savings plan extended to the freedom to invest in equity shares, unit trusts or investment trusts tax-free up to a certain amount, with that applying to every working person who wishes to save. That could have been an opportunity vastly to increase personal savings and personal participation in the wealth and industrial strength of the nation.

I hope that what has been done is not a surrender to institutional saving, as the distinguished financial editor of the *Financial Times* suggested this morning. The implication was that we had gone back from encouraging individual share ownership and were now trying to encourage institutions to flog people more savings plans. That is a misjudged interpretation. That is not what the Chancellor is doing. Wider ownership involves a vast variety of forms of encouragement everything from small business ownership and unit trust investment right up to the full action of investing in equity shares, a difficult and sometimes not particularly rewarding occupation.

I hope that the interpretation in the financial columns is not right and that the Chancellor will reassure us that the Government are still committed to the goals that we set ourselves in the 1970s of widening personal ownership in every way.

Those are ways in which the Budget somewhat helps the situation which causes me unease about low personal savings and a static pattern of personal ownership. However, those issues do not touch the heart of the matter, which is that the pattern of savings in Britain is mad. That is the case because it is influenced by a traditional pattern of fiscal privilege which, in turn, is mad.

As a nation, we invest a great deal, as the Chancellor of the Duchy said, and we are doing well on that front; investment is roaring ahead, at the moment even more in cities in the north than in the south. But we are not saving, which is why we have the present trade deficit. We are not saving on the personal level because of an extraordinary traditional pattern of fiscal and tax privileges which sends strange messages to families and individuals in all income groups and causes a major distortion in the pattern of saving.

The message that comes from the tax system today, even though the Chancellor has struggled to change it a little, is that one should save for one's house—reflected in the vast growth in house prices, a trend that is now spreading across the whole country—that one should save for one's pension, which is fair enough, and that one should stick in one job for life and take no risks. The message, generally speaking, is that one should sit tight and take no risks.

The message that we should be sending, if we can engineer it, is that people should save for investment, for undertaking entrepreneurial risks, for the next generation —for health and education. These things may be anathema to Members of the Opposition, including the hon. Member for Livingston, but to us they are extremely

[Mr. David Howell]

welcome concepts and ideas that should be spread, to bring privilege and opportunity of that kind to everybody in society so that they save for these things.

The trouble at present is that the tax system is only just beginning to be tilted in the direction of encouraging saving for those social aims rather than merely for the pension and the house; and encouraging savings for investment, therefore matching—as must happen in the medium term—the savings of the nation with the huge desire to invest that now exists in this nation and which I so greatly welcome.

I believe that my right hon. Friends are grappling with an immensely difficult task and that they have begun to grapple in the right way. But only when——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must say to the right hon. Member that the 10-minute limit on speeches began at 6 o'clock, so I think he must sit down now.

6.11 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I shall be very different from the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) because he is a financial whiz kid and I am not. I have my feet on the ground, not my head in the air. That has not been the situation as regards Conservative Members, either at the Dispatch Box or behind the Chancellor and the various Ministers. I know what the members of this Government are all about. They are a load of pawnbrokers. The things they are doing are a disgrace. But I have my feet on the ground and I am a realist.

I talk to people in my constituency who have problems. I do not bother those who have no problems; they can look after themselves. I have plenty of people with problems in my constituency. There were 550 of them in a theatre on Friday afternoon listening to what we had to say about what they should be getting, but are not getting, from this Government. Those pensioners and lower-paid workers told us in no uncertain terms how they felt about the way they are being treated by the Government.

I have elderly people and lower-paid people in my constituency who cannot afford the kind of contribution that the Chancellor of the Exchequer suggested for private health. They are totally dependent upon the National Health Service. I am right behind the National Health Service and I will give my reasons in a very few minutes, because I only have eight left.

The surplus that is knocking around could have been spent in a very sensible way to do something, for instance, about waiting lists. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, following the Chancellor's statement, said quite clearly that money should have been spent on the National Health Service from that massive surplus that the Government have created. One way it could be used is to get waiting lists down. We spend millions of pounds on operating theatres and on equipment for them, and for eight hours of the 24 they are doing nothing. That is shocking.

I can tell the Government why that situation exists. It is because consultants will not work a night shift. We expect the workers that provide all the necessary services to work mornings, afternoons and nights. What is wrong with a consultant working a night shift? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Hon. Members are agreeing with me. I did not think they would. So let the Minister take it on board and let us have something done about it. That is one thing that will help to get waiting lists down.

The Government will start making excuses about beds not being available. That may be the case, so let us put more beds in. In the last 10 years the Government have set about taking beds out, so let us put them back. Then, if there is still a problem of shortage of beds, we should provide a proper service in the community so that, if people have to leave hospital early, at least they will be looked after properly.

I am opening an exhibition in my constituency tomorrow afternoon on behalf of the Central Nottinghamshire district health authority, the object of which is to let people know exactly what is available in the way of community services. They will get a message from me as to what the Government have done about community services. It is shocking. They have been cutting the money for services which people require.

The Government should be spending more money on education. We now have a shortage of teachers. Is there any wonder, under this lot? They cut university places drastically, for a start. I remember Lord Joseph standing at the Dispatch Box talking about what he was going to do about education. He did it, all right, and as a result we have a shortage of teachers.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science ought to come and have a look at my constituency and see the number of schools built in the 1890s. They are falling down and the Government should be spending money on them. Yet, in the rich constituencies of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his right hon. and hon. Friends, they are opening a new school every five minutes. That is wrong. Those are plush, green Conservative areas. What about areas in which the workers live, such as my constituency? We want a fair share of the cake and we are not getting it.

The Chancellor stood at the Dispatch Box and bragged about how they were going to help the pensioners and the lower-paid, but with all the increases that are coming along, that help which the Government say they are going to give the pensioners and the lower-paid will be cancelled out. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I have just been doing a hell of a stint on the Electricity Bill. Electricity was up 9 per cent. last year and will be up 6 per cent. next year. This is paid by the lower-paid workers as well, not just by people who have plenty in their pockets, into which the Government keep pouring more and more.

Those poorer people have to find money for these increases in prices, and in addition increased water charges are on the way. There was the announcement made yesterday. I think that the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) was right when he said that this lot will get kicked out next time if they do not change their ways. But, make no mistake about it, they will not change their ways, because of the leadership from No. 10, No. 11 and, yes, No. 12, for the Patronage Secretary is backing them up and making sure that they do not. I know all about that, because I am in the Whips Office on the Opposition side, so I know what he is up to at No. 12.

Then there are dental examination and eye test charges. All that will be borne by the lower-paid and those people who do not qualify for that little bit extra.

The Financial Secretary made a statement not many days ago about taxes being paid generally. We are paying

more taxes now than we were in 1979, yet Ministers stand at the Dispatch Box and say how well they are doing for the economy and the people.

The cost of privatisation is an enormous burden on ordinary folk. The rich will fill their pockets from it; it is the lowr-paid and the pensioners who will pay for it. This is a shocking state of affairs and it is time, as the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North said, for the Government to change direction; otherwise, they will get booted out. I look forward to that day. The enormous cost of privatisation is all coming out of the taxpayers' pockets, including the pockets of those poor beggars at the lower end of the scale who are still paying taxes.

They also have to pay for all the advertising. I saw the advertisement yesterday for BUPA. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) stood at the Dispatch Box and held up for all to see an advertisement for BUPA with the Chancellor's face on it. It was really ugly. When I looked at it I thought that for a start he needed a size 42 bra. That is how it looked. In Committee this morning we were talking about the cost of advertising. I suggested that the Government might use the young lady who has been on the front pages of the newspapers for the past few days. The lass is electrifying, but she will be very costly, according to the reports, so if the Government use her it will cost the taxpayer a few bob.

You have given me my 10 minutes, Mr. Speaker, and I have enjoyed them. I hope that you have too. You are a great friend of hon. Members, you have to look after them and you have looked after me this afternoon. At the next general election, I look forward not to returning here, but to remembering where I had been and how much I had enjoyed myself. I hope that at the next general election we get rid of that lot, return to power and really work for the nation.

6.20 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Herefordshire, South-West): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) who is good value for money, but I hope that the House will excuse me if I am a little more temperate and conciliatory.

I support the Government in much of their general policy and I was delighted at the improvements in the Budget for small businesses and share ownership schemes. However, I am concerned about our manufacturing industry. This is the second Budget that should have done more to push forward the recent improvements in production and investment.

About two years ago I expressed my concern about the state of our manufacturing industry and said what I thought would happen to the balance of payments. I was reassured that I was worrying about nothing, but today there is a huge balance of payments deficit and 8 per cent. inflation. Inflation has been brought under control by the use of one lever, and I have no doubt that the squeezing of demand will reduce our current high deficit and choke off the import of foreign goods, but it will not eliminate the balance of payments deficit completely. I see nothing in the Budget to prevent the same balance of payments deficit that we face today re-emerging when interest rates drop and demand rises. If nothing is done, I envisage the emergence of an economy behaving like a car with kangaroo petrol, bouncing forward and backwards in a cycle of stop-go reminiscent of the 1950s and 1960s.

At the beginning of the decade I supported the Government's industrial policy and helped to push it towards making industry more independent and more self-sufficient, pulling it away from that teat of state support. With the improvements that flowed from management starting to manage, the privatised state industries became major contributors to the current account surplus, from the sales and from the fact that the Government no longer needed to find billions of pounds to prop up lame-duck nationalised industries. But nothing is for ever, and the time has come for a further boost to our industrial strategy.

The excess demand in our economy produced the expected results of rising inflation and a widening trade deficit when British industry has been selling all that it can make. Industrialists are human beings. When they are faced with excess demand over production they are not under so much pressure to hold down prices. Consumers faced with non-supply or slow supply of products and money burning a hole in their pockets readily turn to buying foreign goods.

If there were evidence that British industry was growing at a sufficient rate to meet the demand that will be rekindled when interest rates have dropped, I would be relaxed about advocating any change. I certainly do not sneer at the improvements that have been made towards productivity and investments, as Opposition Members have done. But unfortunately, I consider the rate of improvement in our industrial sector to be considerably below the level required.

Last year's expenditure way outstripped the capacity of our industrial base to satisfy it, so imports soared. January's results reinforced that position. To put the problem into perspective, manufacturing output last year would have had to rise by some 24 per cent. to meet the increased demand in the home market. Industry managed an 8 per cent. growth.

Much play has been made of the improvements in productivity and manufacturing investment. I welcome them—I certainly do not knock them—but we should examine those figures not in isolation but in comparison with the world stage, because we compete on the world stage. Recent OECD figures show that we still have a productivity gap of 30 per cent. against the United States and 25 per cent. against the rest of Europe. The figures covering investment by our manufacturing industries in machinery and equipment as a percentage of GDP, or our gross domestic fixed capital formation as a percentage of GDP compare badly with our foreign competitors. Let us not forget that the majority of countries with which we have a £15 billion deficit last year belong to the EEC. The figures are available for everyone to see, so I shall not go through them all, but will select a few examples.

Although I welcome the improvements, investment by manufacturing industries in Britain has yet to reach 1979 levels. In domestic gross fixed capital formation costs as a percentage of GDP, we are at the bottom of the list of 23 major industrialised countries. It is significant to note that, in all those figures, the Japanese invest 50 per cent. more than the average in fixed capital formation and in machinery investment. There is no sign that, if demand is allowed to expand, British industry will have the capacity to meet it.

Leaving aside my concern that present interest rates could slow down capital spending as much as we hoped they will slow down consumption, I ask the Government

[Mr. Richard Page]

to look further than the current short-term problems and set in place an enhanced strategy to further increase the capacity of British industry. The problem can be tackled only by the Government putting out strong signals. It cannot simply be left to the market. So often, industry's horizons are dominated by the short-term and medium-term levels of investment. The Government have to look further.

Like every other nation we have our strengths and our weakness and our national characteristics. It is a matter of puzzlement and concern that for some reason British industry and commerce does not pay as much attention to training, research and investment as do our foreign competitors. The results reflect that lack of attention.

The Government recently announced a major shake-up in training in which industry will be involved, and they are to be congratulated on that welcoming initiative, but stronger signals and inducements have to be set for research and capital investment which will require a strategy to identify our exporting priorities and provide appropriate measures to support them. We have to consider initiatives such as the "Better made in Britain" campaign run by Sir Basil Feldman. I know that the Government have given it great support but they could suport it still more. In the critical sector of information technology, we have to look more closely at discouraging reliance on computer components imported from the far east. It must be wrong to have higher levels of import duty on silicon chips than made-up circuit boards. We are a value-added economy and having duties the wrong way round is not the way to make things work.

The third vital ingredient is a coherent industrial strategy for research and development. By that I mean that the tax structure must be adjusted to push, persuade, cajole and force industry into supporting basic and applied research.

Budgets should seize opportunities to persuade our manufacturing industry that it is always easier to retreat from areas of policy than to devise and carry through constructive new schemes. Our rivals abroad are exporting vast quantities of goods into this country. They show that it can be done. Sooner or later, we must do that as well, in order to survive.

6.30 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster referred to considerable improvement in unemployment levels as a justification for the Government's overall financial and economic policies. But as I said in an intervention, it is hard to believe that from my perspective. Perhaps unemployment in the constituency represented by the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) is only 2 or 3 per cent.—I see the hon. Gentleman nodding—but unemployment in my constituency is approaching 20 per cent. Many hon. Members who represent other parts of Wales and north-west and north-east England, as well as Scotland, with the same problem fear that the Government are slowing down the economy when those regions have not yet caught up and do not yet benefit from any of the advantages resulting from economic improvement.

I noted with concern the words of Samuel Brittan in today's *Financial Times*. He says:

"even if the Treasury's real growth forecasts are right, the present level of capacity and labour utilisation could well be too high even to stabilise inflation, let alone to drive it down."

He goes on:

"One alternative. . .is a sharp and perhaps short recessionary shock, with a period of sterling overvaluation."

When such remarks are made arising out of the circumstances of the economy in the south-east, they create a shock wave in areas such as mine. Our levels of unemployment are unacceptable.

Against this background, measures such as the pensioners' earnings rule relaxation, which is welcome in itself, are irrelevant in areas such as mine, where youngsters cannot get jobs, although they might be relevant in other areas to provide incentives to work for those over retiring age.

The Chancellor replied to my intervention by referring to the importance of regional selective assistance. But we have seen only in recent weeks how that tool is not being effectively used in my constituency, when a television film studio project was discouraged from pursuing regional selective assistance, even though about 200 jobs could be created. The Government seem to have withdrawn from regional policy as part of the desire to save money in the past two to three years. The consequence is an unbalanced development of the economy, which is in itself an inefficient way to run any economy.

Incidentally, in that context of the waning of regional policies, even today we hear of 60 job losses within the Welsh Development Agency. We know that the important programme of the rural conversion grant scheme was ended summarily only last month because of lack of funds to keep it going.

Therefore, we have real misgivings about the failure of the economy to provide jobs and to get economic development in areas such as mine. We need capital investment programmes to give local stimulus, programmes that can be closely directed to areas of high unemployment. Most areas need new hospitals, modernised schools, improved roads, electrified railways, and upgraded sewerage and water systems. These programmes could be used to ensure that jobs are developed in the areas where they are most needed. We greatly fear that a brake will be put on the economy before we see any real recovery in Wales.

With regard to high interest rates, which are clearly a problem for manufacturing industry as well as for home owners, I believe that if they are caused by excessive consumer spending and demand, they can be better controlled by the use of selective credit controls rather than the market place attitude of the Government. The cost of present policies is high to many families.

The main drift of Government policy over recent years seems to have supported cutting back spending and reducing services, to which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) referred. The increased emphasis on making profits rather than answering needs seems to have been the direction of Government thinking. That has led on to the concept of privatisation. A spiv value society is being created, which is only concerned about costs and profits, and is indifferent to needs and values.

The manifestation of that approach in my constituency is seen in all directions. Earlier this month, four hospital closures were confirmed, although there is a great need for those services. Only last week there was another school closure in Gwynedd by the Welsh Office, although the

education provided by the school was needed in that area. Those closures were designed to reduce spending by the education and health authorities.

More generally, a freeze of benefits is hitting pensioners. Those who had anything above the bare minimum pension last year, such as in heating allowances, will have no increase in their pensions this year as the transitional arrangements are eroded. Yet they face many increased bills. Not least, many council house tenants are being billed directly for the first time for their water charges. That is hitting people in our area. Pensioners living on £40 to £50 a week receive lump sum bills for £150. They do not have any money and do not know where to turn. They are required to make this payment as part of the privatisation process.

They are helping to create the £14 billion surplus which the Government announced for last year and are working to this year. We have seen the same thing in relation to charges for eye tests and prescriptions. Each man, woman and child in these islands is being required to pay £5 a week to fund that surplus. One really questions whether the Government's social objectives are right.

The Government's ethos is seen in other directions. The cuts affect other areas of social policy. The police are not getting the resources they need to do the job. There are even reductions in water bailiffs on our rivers. They fear for their lives in doing their jobs. The need to spend money on reducing environmental pollution in the air, on beaches and in rivers is manifest in all directions. People keep reminding us of the need to improve standards, but we are cutting costs.

The cutting of costs is an attitude that can go in very dangerous directions. One thinks of the dangers on the railways recently. Although we do not know the reasons for these tragedies, the cutting of costs can sometimes lead to disaster. One also thinks of food safety and the danger from the closure of research centres. One wonders whether we are being penny wise and pound foolish. Service after service is being privatised, but the major privatisation is the privatisation of public debt—the reduction of the national debt at the expense of creating the massive hike in private debt, which many people face.

I was a little surprised by what the Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said in his reply to the Budget. He referred to the Government's taxation policies and criticised the Government for having placed the highest tax burden in peace-time history on the people of this country. He said:

"This Budget will not lessen the burden either on the family or on the national income."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 311.]

I suggest, however, that that is not what Opposition Members should be looking for. If we believe in public expenditure and public services, we must will the taxation to do that. We are not taking up an exceptional moral position by criticising the Government for their taxation levels when that taxation is needed to maintain services. Indeed, I should have liked to see the indexation of duties on alcohol and tobacco, because the money that would be raised by those methods could better be spent on services that are needed by ordinary people. People in receipt of attendance or mobility allowances are losing their benefits, although their conditions are worsening, because of the need to make cuts in expenditure.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wigley: No, I will not. I am about to run out of time.

If there was a surplus of £14 billion, would it not have been sensible to provide £4 or £5 a week extra to pensioners and disabled people? Surely that would not have affected the balance of payments or seriously fuelled inflation. It would have been a worthwhile step which we could have afforded and would have been of benefit.

We welcome the incentive to use unleaded petrol, the VAT relief for charities, in so far as it goes, and the relief from car tax for cars leased to disabled people. Those are relatively small measures. We are worried about the lack of underlying strategy and of solutions to the unemployment problems of areas such as mine.

6.40 pm

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I am pleased with the Budget, but few Opposition Members will hold that view. I know that it is fashionable to try to sum up a Budget in a phrase. My summing up would be that for the majority of people it was a something-for-nothing Budget.

In the debates since the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, Opposition Members—especially Labour Members—have found it extremely difficult to criticise the Budget. Listening to the hon. Members for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), one might have been excused for thinking that one had stumbled into a debate on the National Health Service. We have heard little from Opposition Members about the Budget. Being slightly more charitable, one could say that Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), have confused the Budget debate with one on the public expenditure White Paper. It is time that we returned to the Budget.

I began by saying that I was pleased with the Budget, and I shall briefly pick out five matters—there are many others—that pleased me. I was most pleased by, at long last, the abolition of the earnings rule for old-age pensioners. I cannot think of anything that has more irritated my constituents than this rule. People have never understood why they were fined for working, or why reductions had to be made in what they thought they had earned and paid for, merely because they wished to continue to work for the good of their health and the good of the nation. It is the best measure in the Budget.

The second matter that pleases me is that the Treasury appears determined not to let up in the fight against inflation. All Conservative Members share discomfort and considerable surprise that we are on the threshold of an 8 per cent. inflation rate. I say to the Treasury that this is not why Conservative Members were elected. Once again, inflation seems to have become the No. 1 priority of the Treasury; it is essential that it remains so. I hope that it will ensure that nothing stands in the way of reducing the inflation rate to manageable proportions.

The third matter that pleases me is the way in which the Government have dramatically started to repay the national debt. I was always brought up to believe—as, I suspect, were other hon. Members—that the national debt was a burden imposed on current and future generations by previous ones. I was brought up to believe—and I have some experience because this is the 25th Budget to which I have listened—that the national debt is something with which we must live. Until the past few years, even given the

[Mr. Michael Jopling]

Goverment's outstanding record on the economy under this Chancellor and his predecessor, I never thought that we would get round to paying it off. The news that we heard this week—that at the end of the coming financial year we shall have paid off 16 per cent. of it and shall save £3 billion a year in interest charges—was a revelation. I hope that in the next Budget, and in subsequent ones, Conservative Chancellors will tell us some of the measures that have been made possible by the money saved from interest payments that would otherwise have had to be made.

The fourth matter that pleases me is the accent that the Chancellor has put on savings. I share the concern of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) about the lamentably low level of savings. Clearly something had to be done, especially in this period of inflation.

In his speech, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor mentioned his brainchild—the introduction of personal equity plans. It was a brilliant scheme and it is disappointing that it has not succeeded as much as it deserves to. I hope that the new steps that the Chancellor has taken to breathe life into PEPs will be successful and that he will not hesitate to make them more attractive. It was a highly imaginative idea and everything should be done to encourage it.

The final matter that pleases me is the Chancellor"s freeze on excise duties, which will please many people. I notice that already a torrent of abuse is coming from that vociferous group whose business it is to tell us that more or less everything that we want to drink, eat or inhale is bad for us. Most of us are coming to the conclusion that they should be completely ignored, and I hope that the Chancellor will ignore all those who are criticising him so firmly for freezing excise.

I shall end on an important note of caution. I am concerned about the current balance of payments deficit. I heard the comments made about it by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury yesterday and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster today. I hope that, with the greatest charity in the world, they will understand when I say that they tend rather to shrug off the current balance of payments deficit in a sentence or two. I am bound to say that I have considerable anxieties about it. It is hideously large and I hope that the Chancellor will reconsider the need to encourage endeavour in making import savings.

The Treasury should understand that revenues and production from domestic oil and gas supplies will soon be running down. All the reports produced on the subject bear that out, and in future we shall need to import much more energy, which is likely to bring us to a structural balance of payments problem similar to the problems with which we were so familiar in the pre-North sea era.

It is not good enough to wait until that happens; the Chancellor should be looking now at ways in which import saving endeavours could be stimulated. Over the years, one of the great opportunities for stimulation was provided by British agriculture. That opportunity was grasped in recent years, but nowadays, given that we are much more self-sufficient in foodstuffs and that there are massive European Community surpluses, there is much less opportunity to do so. However, there are still many opportunities to prepare for the time when we may run into balance of payments problems much more serious than we have been used to over the past 10 years. There are ways of doing this, and they ought to be thought through now. The Government ought to begin to make arrangements, because we shall need them before very long.

6.51 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) said that the Government had not been elected to preside over an inflation rate of 8 per cent. That is true, but why did the right hon. Gentleman stop there? The list is endless: the Government were not elected to preside over the current unemployment rate; they were not elected to see the rundown of our National Health Service; they were not elected to see the rundown of our housing stock. I think the right hon. Member was rather too kind to the Government and their Budget.

The Budget was a disappointment for some, but for many it was little short of disastrous. It was out of touch not only with the realities of the British economy in 1989, but with the vast majority of the British people as well. It was a hands-off Budget, at a time when the economy is running out of control and is in desperate need of a firm steer from our helmsman. I am sure that, in making that point, I will have the support of the former skipper of Morning Cloud.

At 4.30 pm on Tuesday I was reminded of a saying that I learned as a lad, when I was evacuated to the north-east during the war: "When in doubt, do nowt." I have to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) would do more justice to that saying, but, while I may not have the accent right, I am sure that the meaning is clear. The Chancellor did not do very much that was relevant, and that Geordie sentiment sums up this particularly boring of all this Government's boring Budgets.

Hundreds of thousands of people were crying out for some fairness and help following last year's unbalanced Budget. As a NUPE-sponsored Member of Parliament, who represented many thousands of low-paid workers in the public sector before coming to this House, I know that this Budget leaves them as badly off as ever—and that is badly off. That a married couple on one third of average earnings will benefit by £2 a week, compared with the £7·40 that a couple on five times average earnings will gain, shows what this Chancellor's priorities really are. In his speech he claimed that his Budget had eased the poverty trap. That is complete nonsense, particularly in my patch of north-west England. It simply is not the case. Earnings of £60 a week will no longer face a marginal tax rate of 25p plus 5p national insurance; the rate will rise to 25p plus 9p, making those people much worse off.

Labour Members, and, indeed, the low-paid, had hoped that the Budget would lead to an attack on poverty. Of course, it will not. The few crumbs given out by the Chancellor will be clawed back by his ministerial colleagues through family credit. It is high time the Government started to help the 300,000 people in the north-west alone, and many thousands more in the country at large, who do not earn enough even to pay tax.

An increase in child benefit—long acknowledged as the best way to attack poverty—would have been very welcome indeed to those people.

I wish now to address my comments to a group who, sadly, have once again been neglected by the Government—the pensioners, whom, strangely, the Chancellor thinks he has helped in large measure. There are now some 10 million pensioners in this country—almost one in five of our citizens are over retirement age—yet this Budget does nothing for the two thirds of pensioners who do not have sufficient income to be liable for income tax. More than four fifths of our pensioners rely, for the vast majority of their income, on state pension and housing and other benefits. The much-publicised abolition of the earnings rule, which we certainly welcome, will affect just 200,000 of our elderly. Welcome though that measure is, it will leave the other 9·75 million pensioners no better off. We have to see the measure in that context.

Likewise, the tax relief on private health insurance now on offer says far more about the Government's lack of commitment to the National Health Service than about caring for pensioners. All that the change will do is reduce the tax base for funding the National Health Service, while demonstrating once again the Government's lack of faith in a properly funded National Health Service for all. What is more, the Government do not even understand the private health sector. Both BUPA and Private Patients Plan make it clear that they are not interested in having long-term elderly ill people on their books—they are much more for the quick buck and the easy operation.

Many pensioners are more alarmed than ever about the future. The Chancellor admitted that inflation would top 8 per cent., yet pensions will rise this year by just 5·9 per cent., leaving the pensioners worse off than ever. The pensioners whom I know have long memories. My 96-year-old mother still remembers the day in 1980 when the split was made between pensions and earnings. She and millions of other pensioners have cursed that day ever since. As Age Concern points out, the pension is now worth just 80 per cent. of its 1980 value, and will be worth even less by the end of 1989. Given that the pension increase is based on the rate of inflation last October, and not the current rate, the real value of the next pension increase will have been eroded even before the money is paid out.

The inadequacy of the state pension means that more and more pensioners have to rely on means-tested state benefits. More than 5 million senior citizens now receive income support or housing benefit, yet 34 per cent. of pensioners do not claim the supplementary benefit to whch they are entitled, and a further 19 per cent. do not claim housing benefit. The cuts that the Government make in housing benefit hit those who can least afford them, while this Budget does nothing to help the self same elderly people. The latest change in housing benefit cost over 2·5 million pensioners some cash, and some 750,000 further senior citizens lost all their entitlement. This is against a background of five successive changes since 1983, which have cost more than a million pensioners real money.

It is no wonder that pensioners are now standing up and being counted. It is not just national organisations, such as Age Concern and the National Pensioners Convention, that are voicing their grievances so clearly; there are now many local groups that are becoming very effective. The pensioners action committee in my own area of Tameside is active. This week, knowing that the Budget was coming, it lobbied me about the rights of its members. Local vocal leaders, like Tameside's Judith Clayton, come and lobby me actively. There are many Judith Claytons, and if they are not already making their presence felt in the constituencies, they certainly soon will be.

I conclude by referring to two letters that I received recently, which give some indication of that feeling. One senior citizen, from Dukinfield, writes:

> "When we served in the Army we fought for a first-class Health Service to keep us fit to fight for Britain, and they did not count the cost of the bullets.
>
> "Now that we are not fit to work, through no fault of our own, they are counting the cost of keeping us from pain and suffering, let alone dying."

The second letter says:

> "I have voted Conservative for 55 years . . . I am no longer a Conservative and will in future turn my allegiance to your party. I trust Mr. Kinnock will be more sympathetic to us pensioners, who will be the turning point in the next election. Ten million are a hell of a lot of votes, and I am convinced most of them will be on your side."

Pensioners like these will not lightly forgive the Government, and they look to the Labour party to fulfil their just needs after the next election.

6.58 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I salute the Chancellor. As another former naval person, I appreciate the slogan of the Budget, which is, "Steady as she goes." That is good news for the good ship Great Britain.

We still have too many taxes. I join other hon. Members in applauding the fact that the earnings rule for pensioners has been done away with. We still have too many taxpayers. Too many of the best brains in the financial circles of this country are employed on tax matters. That is because, regrettably, our taxes remain too complicated. Many of them are beyond the intellectual capacity of the majority of taxpayers.

The Budget is realistic, prudent and thrifty. "Thrifty" is an important word, because, try as we may, we cannot encourage prosperity by discouraging thrift. Since the Government came to office in 1979, thrift has been encouraged in the public sector. It is now firmly established. We have a balanced Budget, and buoyant revenues and, what is more, we are repaying debt.

What is to be done about encouraging thrift in the private sector, where experience is altogether different? We are living beyond our means and borrowing more than we can afford. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) drew attention to the low level of savings in the country today. It is self-evident that savings—thrift, if hon. Members want to use another word—are more difficult and relatively unattractive when they must come out of taxed income, especially when the products of such savings in turn are taxed.

When the Government came to office in 1979, they did two things. First, they dramatically reduced taxation rates. Secondly, they instituted a major shift towards indirect taxation. I urge my right hon. Friend to accelerate that process.

Direct taxation is an enemy of thrift. Direct taxes—that is, taxes on income—are taxes on hard work and honest endeavour. Taxes on income, at whatever rate and for whichever group of workers we are considering—whether they are blue collar or white collar workers—are disincentives. They always have been and they always will be. They are disincentives to thrift, saving and risk-taking. I want my right hon. Friend to consider the many

[Mr. Christopher Gill]

substantial benefits of shifting more of the burden of our taxation on to an indirect basis. One virtue of that is that we would give the average citizen greater self-esteem. The majority of our citizens enjoy greater freedom to determine their own priorities. We have proved beyond any doubt that, when we give individuals greater responsibility for their actions it works—and I want to see more of it.

It is easier and cheaper to collect indirect tax, and there are fewer opportunities for evasion and avoidance. Many hon. Members are aware of the black economy. More important, as we shift the burden of taxation on to an indirect basis, we put savings on the same basis as any other disbursements. Again, that encourages thrift. But, equally important, by shifting the burden of taxation on to an indirect basis, we would shift the burden from production, where it currently lies, on to the consumer. That is important. Direct taxes—taxes on wages and salaries—are taxes on production, which is inconsistent and incompatible with the aspirations of a manufacturing nation trying to regain its confidence, its competitiveness and its capacity, to become once again the workshop of the world.

7.4 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I will not waste breath on this frightened and timid Budget. Gone is the swagger and braggadocio of last year's Budget. Because of the mistakes then, we have virtually a non-Budget. Last year's Budget was for the rich. This year, some expected a Budget for the poor, but it was not to be. I shall say a few words about the effect on employment and training.

At the last election, the Labour party suggested that we should invest £6 billion, mainly in the public services, to create 1 million jobs. The Conservatives said that that was wildly irresponsible and even inflationary. But in the last Budget £4 billion was given to the rich. The message was, "The good times are here, so spend, spend, spend, and borrow to do it." With unprecedented competition between banks and building societies to lend, credit was thrown at the public, and never have so many been able to borrow so much. About £40 billion was borrowed. Instead of £6 billion, more than £40 billion was spent as a private sector, not public sector, borrowing requirement. It spilled over into a new breakneck consumer boom, and it has had two effects.

First, as Labour said it would, it brought down unemployment. Secondly, as the extra demand did not go where Labour wanted—that is, into investment in industry, research and development, education, training, housing, schools, and the environment—but into the consumer boom, it was not sustainable. The weakened, ravaged supply side of the British economy could not cope, so private borrowing sucked in imports, and we had the catastrophic deficit in our balance of payments of about £15 billion. In addition, because of the extra demand, producers were able to put up their prices, hence the big rise in inflation. The so-called blip is still with us, and it is rising.

Because of the resulting high inflation, high balance of payments deficit and high interest rates, the engines have been put into reverse. The punitive interest rates signal stop, not go. Instead of flying, we are to have either a soft or hard landing, and growth is to be cut by more than half next year. If that policy succeeds, the fall in unemployment will stop and be reversed.

There is nothing in the Budget about training. That is a major reason for the weakness of British industry and for the balance of payments deficit. After 10 years of this Government, we have one of the worst trained work forces in the world, yet there is nothing in the Budget about encouraging training. As soon as we get growth, we run into skill shortages. They are a major restraint on Britain's ability to grow and compete. We have a yawning skills gap. Unless and until that is transformed, we shall be trapped into a low skills equilibrium, with our enterprises having poorly trained managers and workers producing low-quality, low-value, goods and services, and earning low pay. We already have the cheapest labour in Europe. We are falling behind even countries such as Korea and Taiwan.

We have a market failure, and it cannot be left to market forces. We need greater public financial commitment to encourage investment in training. The money exists—£14·5 billion—yet the opportunity has been thrown away. The Chancellor is afraid to spend, because of the inflation that he stoked up. Investment in training is non-inflationary. It is counter-inflationary. It would aid the supply side and enable us better to compete in the markets of the world and diminish the trade deficit.

Let us examine the much-vaunted employment training scheme. It is grossly underfunded. The Government instructed the Training Agency to put twice as many people on ET as on previous programmes but for the same amount of money. One does not need to be a genius to realise that it was an impossible task and that the programme would be crippled by that handicap.

The Select Committee on Employment has been studying the matter. On 15 June 1988, it examined the Training Agency on the failure of the previous programme, the job training scheme. It told us that the JTS target was 232,000 adults in 1987-88, and 110,000 at any given time. The programme ended with only 30,000 people on it, and only about 100,000 had entered—in other words, less than half the expected number. It was such a failure that it spent only 42 per cent. of the original financial provision. There was a massive underspend and a massive failure. Why was that?

We were told in the Select Committee on Employment that there were four lessons to learn. There had to be, first, realistic targets and numbers and, secondly, adequate financial incentives; thirdly, the programme should be sold better to employers, and, fourthly, it was important to secure the co-operation of the partners needed for the delivery of the programme—that is, the local authorities, the trade unions, the voluntary organisations and the employers.

None of those lessons has been learnt and the same mistakes have been repeated, with predictable results. The whole programme is going off at half cock. The financial incentives are inadequate. I suggested doubling the £10 above benefit, which was a modest proposal that would have cost £180 million. The Government said no. As a result, the programme is not attractive to the unions, which did not support it, and largely because of that the local authorities did not either. The Secretary of State for Employment gloried and rejoiced in that and he hurried to expel the trade unions from the Training Agency. But the

programme can succeed only with the co-operation of the unions and local government. We need consensus and agreement, not conflict. Because of that fundamental blunder, the programme is failing.

On 15 June, Roger Dawe, the director-general of the Training Agency, told the Select Committee on Employment:

"350,000 . . . is the number of entrants we expect to come in between . . . 5 September and the end of the financial year."

He told us that he expected 45,000 a month. On 22 June Geoffrey Holland, the permanent secretary, said:

"In the scheme at any one . . . time . . . there will be about 300,000 places in total."

When, on the same day, I asked the Minister of State, Department of Employment whether those figures were realistic, he said that they were, because he had had bids for 700,000 places from training managers. What has really happened? The latest figure is 157,000, which is half. Because of that failure, there will be a massive underspend.

A fortnight ago, the Select Committee went to Scotland to look at these matters. We were told there by the Training Agency that its target was 41,000 by the end of the financial year. How many are there? On 24 February, there were only 18,000, plus 3,000 on community programme pay, so the agency had only half the expected number. The reason was that the local authorities did not join the programme. They rely on the partners for the delivery of those programmes and it is essential to bring them in for success. We must enlist their co-operation and not antagonise them.

In Dundee, we learned that, of those referred by the employment service, 53 per cent. had dropped out by the time they reached a training agent and 35 per cent. had dropped out by the time they reached a training manager. The average across Scotland was that only about 25 per cent. of those referred actually completed six days with a training manager. That can only be described as shambolic. Even after that, I have been told in answers to parliamentary questions that tens of thousands have dropped out nationally thereafter. That is ludicrously inadequate for the nation's training needs. After 10 overlong years of this Government, we are falling further and further behind. It is a scandal that, with a Budget surplus of £14·5 billion the Government are unwilling to invest more in the training of our people.

7.12 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) was right at the beginning of his remarks to draw attention to the credit boom which has been such an important part of the cause of the Government's present difficulties. I want to make a point about the Government's relations with the level of the stock market at present. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me that credit had much expanded before the last election in June 1987. Many of us who managed to keep our mouths more or less shut during the election hoped that that credit would be much reduced immediately after the election. It was not. I suggest that the reason was that the Government were interested in the level of the stock market because they hoped to float BP shares on a high and rising market.

The Government then found themselves caught in the stock market crash of October 1987. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor now says that it was both inevitable and necessary that further liquidity should be put into the market. If I may be pompous, I said at the time and I say again that it was not necessary and that there was no proper comparison between October 1987 and the autumn of 1929, for 1929 was a time when there had been a long period of tight credit. There had been high inflation at the end of the 1914-18 war and that had been corrected by high interest rates. There had been a progressive squeeze from 1922 until 1929 and the authorities were mistaken in further contracting credit in 1929. But in October 1987 there had been a year of lax monetary policy and that was then greeted with yet further laxity.

Why do I say that that particular mistake needs to be borne in mind at present? The reason is that there is every sign that the Government are, once again, concerned about the level of the stock market. It is, of course, inevitable that once a Government become involved in the level of any market, they give that market particular tax concessions. When we consider, for example, the proposals for the personal equity plans or the proposals by which employees will be able to save on advantageous terms and to purchase shares in their own concerns, it is obvious that the Government are anxious to channel savings into concerns that have been privatised and to encourage employees to buy those shares, even at a substantial discount.

You will have noticed, Madam Deputy Speaker, that employees may be given the opportunity to buy shares in the water concerns at a discount now increased to as much as 20 per cent. I am not making a point about that, because it seems inevitable that, if the Government are interested in the gilts market, for example, tax advantages will be given to the gilts market. If the Government are interested in privatised shares, it is the nature of government that tax advantages will be given to shares in privatised concerns.

But I want to make it plain that I do not agree with Mr. Sam Brittan in today's *Financial Times* that it would not be the end of the world if, at the end of this Parliament, the underlying rate of inflation were 5 per cent. I make that point because I know that Mr. Brittan often speaks with the voice of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. One of the principal reasons why this Administration attained power in 1979 was that it was believed that they would eventually and properly restore sound money. It would not, of course, be the end of the world if the underlying rate of inflation were only 5 per cent., but it would be a sad letdown for all those who voted in 1979 and later for a Conservative Administration. Inflation at 5 per cent. would be a major cause of social disruption and unease. Those of us who believe ourselves to be not so much Gladstonian Liberals as Tories, believe in social cohesion. The enemy of social cohesion is inflation—perhaps at 5 per cent.

I hope that, when the time comes to float the shares in the water companies, it will not be thought wise to let up on the present restriction on credit simply to ensure that asset prices go up. That will not be a genial mistake that is easily understood by historians, who may say that the present Chancellor of the Exchequer lost the only chance in the electoral cycle of getting on top of inflation simply because he wanted to ensure that water shares were floated on an attractive market in the way that he certainly wanted to float the BP shares back in the autumn of 1987.

7.18 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): This is probably the 24th Budget debate in which I have participated. I took no part in one, because I was a Minister of State at the time.

I always consider that in these debates we are usually discussing how best we can operate the present economic system. The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) put his finger on it when he said that he passionately believed in people's capitalism, a share-owning democracy. I find it difficult to adjust my mind to such debates because I think that the system of society we operate is ludicrous, selfish, greedy and beneficial to small groups of people but not to the mass of ordinary people. Therefore, I have some difficulty in relating to the discussion in this House.

The fissures opened up again this evening. We have seen the more moderate Tories who, of course, have rejected the full-scale monetarist position and who are not too happy about the way in which the Government are moving, and we have had other Tory Members who have supported the Government, but who perhaps have thought that they are not going far enough. We are back to discussing the nature of society and the best way to run it.

Sometimes some of my hon. Friends use phrases such as, "The Government have failed," or "The Government should have done this," or "They should have done that." I do not think that the Government have failed. In running the capitalist system in the interests of the small group or class that they represent—the big business interests of the City of London—they have done pretty well. They cannot be accused of failure, because the rich have done exceedingly well out of this Government.

The rich did particularly well in the last Budget, when the poor did very badly. This time the poor are hardly getting anything out of the Budget, and although the rich are not getting as much as they might have wanted, they are not unhappy, as could be seen in the reaction of the City of London immediately the Budget was announced. Business men in the City sat and drooled. They were as happy as Larry saying, "How good it is for the City. We're not unhappy with this Budget."

The Government are very much a class party. Their Budget proposals are beneficial to their class and it is about time that we, the Opposition, began to think seriously about an alternative strategy to eliminate this type of society which the Government think is getting stronger and less and less helpful to ordinary people.

The top 10 per cent. have gained more from the Budget than the whole of the bottom 50 per cent. The bottom 30 per cent. received only 5 per cent. of the total tax reduction. The only point that I could make when I shouted out during the Chancellor's speech—it is a rule that Chancellors do not give way when making their Budget speech—was, "It is all right for the rich," and the Budget is certainly very good for the rich.

The Budget proposals, or rather the failure to uprate personal allowances and the threshold in earnings, mean that 160,000 families on low incomes will pay tax when previously they did not. That is an example of the class nature of the Budget.

Let us see who has not been helped in the Budget, despite all the talk from the Government Front Bench about helping the low-paid. The unemployed and pensioners living on state pensions are not helped in this Budget. Women receiving child benefit will not be helped either. It is a fact that 48·1 per cent. of women full-time workers earn less than £100 per week.

Look at what happened with the bonanza last time. A person earning £100,000 a year was given £260 a week. That underlines the nature and character both of the Government and of the sort of Budgets they introduce. This year, the gains for the majority of ordinary working-class families will be only £1 or in some cases £3 a week. However, that gain will quickly be lost if they have to pay the high mortgage rates. I remember when I had a mortgage. It seemed as if the burden got bigger every year, although I was supposed to be paying it off. I shall never forget it—it was a dreadful business—and that is the position for the majority of people in this country.

This capitalist system, with its selfishness for the few at the expense of the majority, is basically an evil system. I use the word "evil" because to me it is evil that small groups of people can become exceedingly wealthy under a Government who help them to become even wealthier, when the mass of the ordinary people are not receiving their rights.

We had an example of those differences in attitude when the Prime Minister recently came to Liverpool. She went to the Birds Eye Foods factory which has been in Liverpool for 35 years. She said that it was closing down —this is what the firm told her—because of the lack of productivity. She did not say that the company had been building another factory on Humberside for the past two years. She did not say that what worried the workers at Birds Eye was losing between 300 and 400 jobs. In an area where 18,000 people have been out of work for over five years—on Merseyside as a whole, well over 100,000 are out of work—the loss of one more job is an extra burden. What the workers felt was compassion. They believed in putting the needs of their fellow workers before the profit concept and the profit-making system that we have in this country.

I know that I must bring my speech to a fairly quick close, but I should like to comment on what I often hear —that unemployment has been going down under this Government. I for one do not deny that, because our system of society has booms and slumps. Sometimes there are booms and almost full employment, but at other stages of the capitalist system there are slumps where thousands of workers are out of work. Despite what the Government say, they have never yet got the level of unemployment to as low as it was when the Labour Government left office in 1979.

Those are the facts. According to a report published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, we still have the highest level of unemployment—apart from France, which might be the same—of any nation in Europe. That is the reality and as long as we have a system where profit is the motive for production, there will inevitably be unemployment.

When taking about the Budget and the future of our industries, it is time that we had a new concept of industry being for the benefit of the mass of the people. Why do we not, for example, talk about reducing hours of work? Why are we not talking about workers having longer periods off with full pay? Why are we not talking in those terms? We do not, because the profit motive is the basis of this society.

I would have liked to say a great deal more than I have had the time to say. If we look closely at the Budget, we see that there are certainly some measures in it to which no

one will object. I do not object to some of the points—who could?—but the overall aim of the Budget is to reinforce this rotten, lousy, capitalist society. The quicker we get that message across, and the sooner we have a Labour Government, who will begin to transform society into something better, the better it will be for the people of this country.

7.30 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): It is appropriate that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy opened the debate, because his departmental responsibility is for the investment and savings industry. Hon. Members will know of the problems that the Financial Services Act 1986 has created for that industry. My right hon. Friend's Budget brought some welcome relief from the difficulties that the industry has been facing in recent months.

During the past few months, there has been a growing chorus of advice to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to introduce measures to boost personal savings and investment. We have heard much about that during the debate. I hope that my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary found my forceful baritone contribution nonetheless sympathetic. It is certainly the case that the choristers have inspired my right hon. Friend to produce another virtuoso performance in the Budget measures. That is especially so for personal savings and investment. As the House knows, I have an interest to declare in these matters—as do a number of other hon. Members—because of my career in the insurance industry.

The argument in favour of increased savings is often thought to rest on the perceived fall in the savings ratio. I believe that there is some reason to treat such perceptions with caution. I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) quoted recent statistics, but there is reason to doubt the accuracy of some of them. It is clear that the increased prosperity in our country has created a whole new generation of low income and lower middle income families who, many for the first time, have the capacity to save and to invest. Until now, their savings habits have largely been to keep their money on deposit in banks, building societies and the Post Office. We must persuade them to undertake real investments beyond home ownership.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford appeared critical of institutional savings, but to move from the building society or Post Office account to owning a portfolio of shares requires a quantum leap of philosophy and attitude. That the personal savings ratio is so low is clear evidence that we still need to encourage the many millions of people, who have the ability to invest, to take those first steps into equity investments, unit trusts and the more sophisticated insurance plans.

We on the Government side of the House support the concept of individual choice—tax people less and leave them free to spend their money as they choose. However, one must question whether the people of Britain are utilising their new-found and increased wealth in the way that the Government would like and the nation needs. That is especially so in respect of the priority given to higher borrowing as against personal savings.

We must never lose sight of the value to any society of financial independence of individuals and their families. That demands setting aside part of today's income for tomorrow's need and not simply relying on the ability to borrow to get out of difficulty. The Government are taking the lead in reducing the national debt which, in the dark days of the 1970s, threatened to overwhelm our children's generation. We must encourage the same attitude and response among the greater population, so that our children's generation will be better able to achieve the economic and personal success that they desire in the increasingly competitive world of tomorrow.

It is for that reason that I greatly welcome the improved range and choice of savings opportunities that were outlined in my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

The proposed changes to the taxation of life assurance are entirely right. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will know that there is some relief in the insurance industry that its worst fears were ill-founded. The Association of British Insurers has accepted that there were anomalies and abuses that needed to be dealt with. I believe that it has been welcomed that there will be no more stamp duty with life assurance policies and that my right hon. Friend has taken the bold and imaginative step of bringing the rate of corporation tax paid on life assurance funds and on unit trusts down to the basic rate of income tax. I would ask my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to place on record the commitment that, as the basic rate of income tax comes down in the future, so too will the corporation tax rate on life assurance and unit trusts.

I was glad to hear from the Chancellor that, when he considered the life assurance industry's representations on the proposals for tax reform, he took full account of the prospects for increased competition within the European Community after 1992. At the risk of appearing greedy, I would ask that the Treasury and the Inland Revenue have the completion of the internal market similarly at the forefront of their minds as they consider the taxation of general insurance business. At present, the overall tax burden on general insurance is not out of line with that of other member states, but the incidence is markedly different and enables continental insurers to build up reserves, on a deferred tax basis, to cover those large industrial and commercial risks that will be opened up to competition under freedom of services before 1992. It would be unfortunate if the industry's position in the European Community was weakened by the imposition of American practices, such as the discounting of claims provision in computing profits liable to tax.

It is greatly to be welcomed that the opportunity for enhanced provision of personal pensions, especially by older age groups, has been included in the Budget. However, I believe that one political point needs to be made. The closure of over-exploitation to high income earners gives the lie to the constant accusation that the Chancellor is the friend of the better-off. The alternative step that he has taken is for those on middle and low incomes, especially small business men, to have an even better opportunity to make proper provision for their retirements. Many small business men in the early days of their businesses do not have the profits from which they can put aside money for their pensions. When they are older, they often have that chance, and it is entirely right that we should allow them to contribute as much as they can afford and within much wider bands of eligibility.

There are bound to be some who will argue that the £60,000 limit for company schemes will inhibit mobility at the higher executive level. Two years ago, similar fears

[Mr. John Greenway]

were depressed when other changes in pensions were introduced. However, I am not aware that those have proved justified.

It is also right to point out that the new provision for higher pensions, but without tax relief, is entirely welcome and answers the point that I have made. Once again, that prevents over-exploitation of the tax system by the top earners. It is entirely right that, with a 40 per cent. top income tax rate, and a 35 per cent. top corporation tax rate, the amount of tax relief should be limited. The benefits of buying those rates should lie not in tax avoidance but in pension provision.

But it is in the changes in personal equity plans that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has been most imaginative. Fiscal neutrality always seems to be interpreted as bringing to an end tax concessions. That is not true. What my right hon. Friend has done, as I called for some months ago, is to create a superstructure for modest concessions which are available across the savings industry. For example, institutions such as building societies, banks, life assurance companies and unit and investment trusts will be able to operate and run personal equity plans through the unit trust vehicle. The prospect of investors being able to put £200 per month into a tax-exempt fund, with no commitment to do so beyond 12 months, is imaginative and will bring a much-needed shake-out in the marketing of investment plans in the investment industry. It is thanks to my right hon. Friend's imagination that that is possible.

It has been said that the low-paid will not benefit from the reductions in national insurance. I do not believe that to be true. For example, a single person earning £75 a week will save 87p in income tax as a result of the inflation proofing of the personal allowance. Had that been increased by, say, 10 per cent. the further tax saving would have been 38p. Alternatively, a 2p cut in the basic rate of income tax to 23p would have saved only 43p a week. Under the national insurance reductions, that worker will save a further £1·51 per week, making a combined tax and national insurance saving of £2·38. Therefore, it is clear that reducing national insurance in the way that my right hon. Friend has done benefits the low-paid far more than had we had the kind of tax reductions which many of the teenage scribblers, as they are often referred to, were recommending.

I greatly welcome the enhanced age allowance, bringing it down from 80 to 75. When I first spoke on financial matters in the House two years ago when the 80 age limit was introduced, I asked my hon. Friend to consider that reduction and I am delighted that we are taking this action now. The scrapping of the earnings rule is a long overdue reform and I am sure that for many pensioners throughout Britain 1 October cannot come soon enough.

In conclusion, the greatest threat posed to the economy is the upward trend in inflation. My right hon. Friend's strategy is the right one to bring inflation down and I hope that the House and the nation will support him in his actions.

7.43 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I want to use my brief contribution to this evening's debate to try to counter the impression that the Budget gives the elderly a substantial financial advantage. In doing so I will be supporting many of the arguments made earlier by the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry).

Some aspects of the Budget will be welcomed by many pensioners, marked out by the fact that as a group they are in receipt of either income or occupational pensions or have savings in addition to their pensions. To them, the abolition of the earnings rule, the relaxation of the rate of withdrawal of the age allowance on incomes and the extension of the higher allowance to people aged between 75 and 80 are all both beneficial and welcome, as they are to hon. Members on both sides of the House, as the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said. But that good news does nothing for the other two thirds of pensioners who are too poor to pay income tax. The House must bear their plight in mind when considering the Budget's impact on the nation.

I wish that Treasury Ministers would stop using average figures when they calculate pensioner incomes. As was shown clearly in an article in *Economic Trends* in December 1988, the top 20 per cent. of pensioners enjoy a level of income which substantially skews the average figure for the remaining 80 per cent. Between 1979 and 1986, there was an increase in the average incomes of pensioners of some 24 per cent. But the top 20 per cent. of pensioners with relatively high incomes make such an impact on that figure that it is dangerous to draw conclusions from average incomes.

I have talked to a number of pensioners since the Budget was unveiled. Their main cause for concern is that since 1980 they have lost the benefit of the linkage between the state pension and the level of earnings. They make the powerful point, which the House should consider, that in April 1989, under the current system of indexation, a single person will receive £43·60, but if the link with earnings had been maintained he would have received £53·30. A pensioner couple who will receive £69·80 this April would have received £82·25 had the earnings link been maintained. That is a substantial reduction in the spending capacity of the vast majority of our pensioners.

Another cause of anxiety among pensioners is the substantial loss that they suffer from the current upratings which where announced in the autumn but will not be paid until April. The RPI is now 7·5 per cent. and rising, but pensions will be increased by only 5·9 per cent. in the spring. That means that married pensioners will be £1·05 worse off and a single pensioner will be 65p worse off than if their pensions were uprated at the real current rate of inflation.

Inadequate state pensions require a great number of our pensioners to rely on means-tested state benefits than would otherwise be the case. I remind the House that, even on the Government's own figures, 1,777,000 pensiners claim income support and 3,465,000 claim housing benefit. That is a substantial number of people in some degree of poverty, some of them in abject poverty. Moreover, those figures ignore the fact that in 1985—the last year for which figures are available—34 per cent. of pensioners did not claim supplementary benefit and 19 per cent. did not claim housing benefit.

The situation for those pensioners is dire and the impression given after the Budget that they would be better off was substantially wrong. Indeed, the reverse is the case. Pensioners have been hardest hit by recent cuts in

housing benefit, and more will lose benefit when the existing transitional protection is withdrawn in the spring of this year.

The Budget has dismally failed the two thirds of our pensioners who, for the greater part, still rely on state pensions and other benefits. More than anything else, a higher state pension is essential to enable that group of our citizens to catch up with the growing prosperity of other sections of the community. Insult has been added to injury by the £40 million concession in respect of tax relief on private health insurance premiums. That will not touch the real needs of sufferers from conditions such as arthritis, rheumatism and senile dementia. It will merely raise expectations for a few and create a two-tier health system for the elderly. *The Daily Telegraph* leader for 16 January anticipated those proposals and described them as being "a most undesirable and mistaken precedent."

If *The Daily Telegraph* takes that view, it is a matter to which the Government should pay some attention.

The decision not to raise excise duty on cigarettes and alcohol has the potential of having a disastrous effect on the health of millions of younger citizens. Every day, 270 people are prematurely killed by cigarette smoking—100,000 a year, or one every five minutes. I believe that smoking is the largest single cause of death in middle age in Britain. The Government's position veers between complete abdication of responsibility and paying lip service to public information campaigns.

The Prime Minister launched a £6 million campaign to halt the rise in teenage smoking, which is the crucial age group one needs to influence if young people are to be prevented from getting the smoking habit. Had tobacco tax been valorised even by the same percentage rise as the retail prices index, the £137 million it generated could have been sensibly deployed in establishing much larger public information campaigns. The message from that part of the Budget is clear. The failure of the Government's economic policy of restraining and bearing down on inflation will seriously damage one's health by increasing tobacco sales.

The failure to increase duty on alcohol was an equally bad decision. There is widespread public anxiety about the impact of the 18 per cent. increase in one year in public drunkenness offences, and the fact that one out of five Health Service beds is currently occupied by someone suffering from an alcohol-related illness or an alcohol-related accident. The Chancellor did not even need to increase alcohol excise duty, although that would have been the right course. He could alternatively have taken non-inflationary action by drastically reducing excise tax on low-alcohol drinks—but he did not do even that.

The Budget is deeply damaging also to the nation's environment. The reduction in duty on unleaded petrol is welcome, but a truly green Chancellor would have used fiscal and other interventionist measures to protect the environment. I shall give two examples. First, it would be possible and beneficial to introduce a reduced green rate of VAT for environmentally friendly products such as energy-efficient electrical goods. Secondly, the Chancellor could have introduced tax incentives to encourage the conversion of houses to the use of energy-efficient techniques, particularly in relation to private sector landlords. There is a long list of measures that could be taken, but the Chancellor adopted none of them.

The Government's lack of action and their disregard for the environment shown in the Budget demonstrates once more that being green is basically incompatible with the free market philosophy and hands-off practices that they favour. The Budget is a feeble attempt to rectify the economic mistakes of the past few years. It does nothing for pensioners in financial need, damages the health of the nation, increases the costs of the NHS, and does little or nothing to meet public demand to improve the environment.

7.53 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Most of my right hon. and hon. Friends will agree that the biggest problem facing the Government and the country is inflation. I welcome the tight fiscal stance that my right hon. Friend's Budget adopts. Perhaps it is not as tight a stance as some commentators may wish, but it is a tightening to the extent of £4 billion to £5 billion.

I share some of the concerns of my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who doubts whether a tight fiscal stance will have a major short-term impact on inflation. However, if the Chancellor's tight fiscal stance is coupled with high interest rates at the level now being employed to tighten money supply, the effect should be to bear down heavily on inflation in the short term. It is possible that that stance will produce a psychological change that will in itself be very beneficial.

I wish to comment in particular on two measures of importance in the Budget, because they both address the major problem of poverty. Before doing so, I make it clear that, in my view, there is no possibility of the Budget being able to address all aspects of poverty. However, if it can alleviate two causes of distress among the less well-off in society, that in itself is a worthwhile objective.

Yesterday, the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) argued that the effect of the Budget's national insurance changes will not be to remove the poverty traps encountered by low paid workers. He gave as an example the national insurance threshold of £43. Although that argument is to some extent true, the poverty trap is caused not by national insurance contributions but by the way in which the social security system operates.

Looking back on these times, none will seriously credit that we tolerated the pensions earning limit as long as we did. It will be thought ridiculous that someone who earned as little as £79 faced 100 per cent. marginal tax rates. The removal of that rule is greatly to be welcomed. That measure enables pensioners who want to work to do so without being heavily penalised by the tax system. Many pensioners aged 60 or 65 are hale and hearty and keen to carry on working. Their reasons for doing so are not always financial, although that may be of pressing importance in some cases. People's reasons for carrying on working are often social, or to do with prestige in their own community. It is not unreasonable for them to wish to defer the time when they make the change from a working life to a state in which they may see themselves as less useful to society.

That change in the earnings rule is to be welcomed for other reasons. This country will soon face severe problems of recruitment resulting from demographic changes and the decline in the number of young people available to take jobs. For those reasons, we must make it easier for people to prolong their working lives. Inner London, for example, is facing a major skills shortage. If people who have skills that cannot easily be replaced are allowed to continue working, that will be very beneficial. The major benefit will

[Mr. Matthew Carrington]

be for pensioners who, until now, have been forced to live on their old-age pension without supplementing it with a part-time job or with low earnings from working in the retail trade, for example.

The other change on which I shall comment is that affecting national insurance. I have believed for a long time that the system is unfair. I am glad that major changes have been made, including the removal of the steps that it embodied, which were the most outrageous element of the system as it existed. The contributory element of the national insurance system is important. There must be a connection in people's perception so that they believe that they are actually paying for the non-means-tested benefits which they will receive. However, over the years, the connection between contribution and benefit has been severely weakened.

I believe that it was in 1960 that the national contribution was first made earnings-related—it was its first weakening. Then, as bands were introduced into the national insurance system, that further weakened it to the point that we have reached today, when there is a large element in the national insurance contribution which is, effectively, the same as any other tax on income. That causes severe problems.

When future Budgets provide the opportunity, we need further to reform the national insurance system. That should not be carried to the point of a total meshing of the national insurance and income tax—the two should be kept distinct. However, there should be a change in the balance between the two in the ways in which they raise revenue.

I shall give one example that concerns me. Below the upper limit for national insurance contributions, the effective tax rate on income is 25 per cent. If we add on the 9 per cent. for national insurance contributions, the marginal tax rate becomes 34 per cent., which is a very high rate. That marginal tax rate is a major disincentive to people to work because it is too high.

There are two ways of tackling this problem. We could reduce the 25 per cent. marginal tax rate of the basic rate of income tax or we could reduce the 9 per cent. on the national insurance contribution. I should like the 9 per cent. to be reduced, while at the same time we head towards a 20p in the pound basic rate of income tax. I am not sure what the appropriate level of national insurance contributions should be, but it should be considerably below 9 per cent.—perhaps as low as 5 per cent.

Another problem of the national insurance contribution is that, beyond the upper limit of national insurance contribution, the marginal tax rate drops to the basic rate income tax of 25 per cent. There is a strong—although much more complicated—argument for ensuring that we do not end up with a period in earnings when marginal tax rates are reduced the more we earn. That could be interpreted as an argument for increasing the upper limit on national insurance—which causes problems with SERPS contributions and non-means-tested entitlement—but the limit would have to be increased to a level where the 40 per cent. income tax band started to bite. That in turn raises difficulties about the way in which the national insurance contribution and income tax bandings are calculated, which is much more complicated. A certain amount can be done to simplify that calculation and to smooth out the dip in the marginal tax rate that it causes.

I am much less concerned about the employers' contributions. It has been said that, due to the high level of employers' contributions to national insurance, employers will still be reluctant to employ people who earn just above the national insurance contribution level of £43. I find that hard to justify, because most employers will have to employ somebody for whom they must pay national insurance contributions. The extra administrative work needed to move somebody from the £42 to the £44 bracket would not be a disincentive. It would be of great benefit to remove the disincentive for the employee.

The Budget was justifiably cautious, at a time when we face high inflation—the reduction of which must be our first priority. It was also a fair Budget, and I was glad that the Chancellor left himself with opportunities to adjust some of the tax rates in the future, when he may have the opportunity to relax the current very tight fiscal stance.

8.7 pm

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): I am extremely grateful for this opportunity to draw to the attention of the House, the anger, anxiety and frustration of the people whom I represent in my constituency at what they term a non-Budget and non-event.

Much has been said this evening by Conservative Members about savings, equity plans, credit booms and credit cards. I intend to direct my remarks—short though they may be—to support those people who cannot afford to save, will never be able to afford to enter an equity plan, have never seen or owned a credit card and do not participate in the credit boom.

This afternoon, I asked the Prime Minister about the £14 billion on which the Chancellor of the Exchequer is sitting. I asked why a small amount of that £14 billion could not be directed towards the relief of the hardship and anxiety of the pre-1973 war widows. The right hon. Lady did not even give one word in response. I am sure that this diminishing band of gallant ladies who have suffered, and still suffer, deprivation, will take to heart the Prime Minister's off-hand arrogance, and I am confident that the Prime Minister has not heard the last of that incident. Those women want some of the £14 billion to enable them to live a decent life and not have to eke out an existence on the widow's mite.

I intend to be parochial in my remarks this evening and to speak on behalf of those people—pensioners and retired mineworkers—in my area who, after a lifetime of service to the industry and the nation by providing energy and heat for the country by their hewing, are now denied their cash-in-lieu benefits. That sum of money was made available to them through their lifetime's work in the mining industry but is now set against housing benefit. That is a national disgrace when Mr. Chancellor is sitting on £14 billion worth of taxpayers', ratepayers', pensioners' —indeed, our—money.

Much has been said about the earnings rule tonight. Perhaps I can give it a cautious welcome but what does the Chancellor say to my father, who, after 51 years of work in the mining industry, has been invalided out, cannot work and has to rely on state pension and a small supplementary payment from the mineworkers' pension scheme? What does the Chancellor of the Exchequer say to

the retired steelworkers and those in heavy industry who, after a lifetime of service, now find themselves chronically sick and disabled, and unable to work? It would be interesting to hear what the Chancellor has to say to that band of people. Out of the £14 billion, is it not possible for the Chancellor to direct his attention to supporting pensioners by abolishing standing charges on telephone, electricity and water bills? The people who made this country great are entitled to some of the huge bonanza on which the Chancellor is sitting.

I come from an area where the unemployment level is more than 20 per cent. That disguises figures as high as 35 per cent. in some villages where collieries have closed. What does the Chancellor of the Exchequer have to say to the unemployed in my area, who may have no hope of finding a job ever again?

I want to see some of the £14 billion accumulated from the taxpayer directed back into my local economy—for instance, to provide more housing for the disabled and more special-purpose accommodation. As our population decreases, we are left with increasing numbers of aging and chronically sick people. We need funds to assist areas suffering from the deprivation caused by colliery closures, redundancies and people moving away, leaving vast areas of derelict properties.

Owner-occupiers who have bought their properties from the council or from the Peterlee development corporation have subsequently found structural and design defects, some caused by past corrupt practices in the building trade. They cannot obtain a second mortgage to repair faults, as no financial institution will help them. The Government are not prepared to do anything other than reducing the HIP allowance year after year. What does the Chancellor say to people who desperately need assistance and cannot receive it from the money markets?

Aging people in Easington who have given a lifetime's service also need NHS resources for the increased services that they so richly deserve. Has the Chancellor any idea of the indignity suffered by geriatric patients? What price privatisation—what price is put on service—when we must see an elderly person lying in a soiled nightdress because of NHS cuts? After 51 years as a working man and a taxpayer, my father must wait three years to have a cataract removed. Why should he have to become virtually blind in the 78th year of his life? That is the cause of the anxiety, frustration and anger expressed throughout my constituency.

In South Hetton, a mining village where a colliery has closed—which means virtually the death of a village—money is needed for the protection, enhancement and possible rebuilding of the local school. I look to the Chancellor's £14 billion to provide the necessary resources.

This really is a humbug of a Budget.

8.13 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): We have just heard a moving speech from the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings). We share his worries about the plight of some of his constituents—I wish him to know that—although we may differ on the appropriate remedies.

Many of yesterday's headlines purported to give the gist of the Budget, but the only one that struck me as accurate was "Cautious but clever". That is what I think the Budget has been, but many journalists appeared to overlook many significant factors included in it.

In my view, the most significant change is the alteration in national insurance, to which several of my hon. Friends have already referred. This year the cost to the Exchequer of the proposed changes will be £1·9 billion, and in a full year it will be about £2·8 billion. That is roughly equivalent to 2p off the basic rate. If that had been the way in which my right hon. Friend had announced the injection of such a sum into the economy, the press would probably have sat up and paid attention. The problem is that few outside observers seem to appreciate the full impact of national insurance. It is, in a sense, the forgotten tax, which goes by the more favourable epithet of a contribution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) made some telling points about the way in which the national insurance changes are targeted towards the lower paid. I urge Treasury Ministers to ensure that, in future years, when considering reducing standard and higher rates of income tax, they ensure that parallel changes are made in the way national insurance is levied. It should be borne in mind that national insurance contributions raise a sum 70 to 75 per cent. as high as that raised by income tax. Nevertheless, I welcome what the Budget has done to help the lower-paid.

I also welcome the incentives for the elderly. Many people in my constituency who felt that the earnings rule was unfair will be delighted to learn of its removal. I am also pleased about the repayment of the national debt. Not only is this a prudent policy but, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) pointed out, it will in a sense relieve the burden on future generations. Nevertheless, I ask the Treasury Ministers, in the autumn public expenditure review, to consider allocating the £1·75 billion per annum saved through the debt servicing cost reductions to further public expenditure. Many of my hon. Friends are keen for more to be spent particularly on transport infrastructure and other such supply side measures.

My main concern this evening, however, is the impact of the Budget on individual shareholders. The increase in the number of such shareholders under the present Administration has been startling: it has risen from 3 million to 9 million, representing about 20 per cent. of the adult population. Many of those new shareholders have invested as a result of privatisation issues. Lest Opposition Members believe that only the rich in the south-east buy shares in such issues, let me say that figures announced today suggest that nearly two thirds of individual shareholders live outside the south-east.

Encouraging though the figures are, there is no doubt that most of those shareholders own few shares. Moreover, the proportion of shares owned by individuals has fallen since the war, as was pointed out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell). The Budget has attempted to broaden individual share ownership in some important ways. Personal equity plans have been discussed by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and I do not wish to go into great detail about them, except to say that I welcome the Chancellor's announcement. I expect a major advance in both their adoption by the City and their attractiveness to individual investors, and consider the use of privatisation share issues as a PEP investment a particularly significant development.

[Mr. Ian Taylor]

But the area of outstanding development in the Budget is that of employee shareholding, where there has been a real breakthrough. There are already 1·75 million employees benefiting through the allowances given under the 1978 and 1980 Finance Act schemes, and we are pleased with that number. But the increased allowances under the improved all employee share scheme and the share option scheme announced in the Budget will go a long way to making sure that that number increases.

I am particularly delighted with the announcement about employee share ownership plans—ESOPs—for which I and many others have campaigned since the last Finance Act. As a result of the announcements made in the Budget, ESOPs are on the map. The announcements in the Budget on tax deductibility, the improved clearance procedure and the removal of the material interest clause will satisfy the majority of the worries of those of us who felt that the Treasury had not gone far enough in the past.

We are pleased with those changes, and I pay tribute to the Financial Secretary for the hard job he had in making sure that they reached the Budget speech and did not get lost somewhere between the Treasury and the Inland Revenue. I noted his remarks yesterday, reported in column 500 onwards of *Hansard*, where he referred to those measures, and I know how great has been his personal involvement.

ESOPs have distinct advantages, and, although they can take advantage themselves of the 1978 and 1980 schemes to which I referred, they have many other features. They may borrow to acquire the shares that they hold, rather than rely entirely on funds provided by the company. They may need to hold shares for a longer period—for example, while repaying borrowings—than is possible for 1978 scheme trusts. In the case of unquoted companies, they may wish to provide a market in the company's shares for the benefit of employees and they may wish to distribute larger amounts of shares to employees than is possible under 1978 schemes.

The proposed Finance Bill legislation is designed to encourage companies wishing to set up trusts of this type for the benefit of their employees by removing the uncertainty which previously surrounded the tax deductibility of contributions by companies, thereby extending the entitlement to corporation tax relief. I welcome this and I have noted the conditions which are applied; I do not think many professional advisers will find those insurmountable.

ESOPs are extremely important. In the United States they now cover 10 million workers, and the Avis company, which has benefited from the scheme, has a new slogan. Instead of "We try harder", it is "Owners try harder". That is indicative of that firm's return to profitability since the ESOP scheme was announced.

It is the traditional lack of access to capital, and the income which it provides, that has left working people hard up compared with the owners of capital. Conservative Members who are aware of this problem do not see the solution in programmes of state aid or wealth transfer through the tax system, but much more look to an answer in the widening of access to capital. Employee share ownership broadens the ownership of capital without invading the property of existing owners. It is a form of populism without Robin Hood.

By the transfers available under the 1978 scheme, employees in effect get their shares free. They do not pay cash. They are therefore receiving capital from the fruits of their labour, an important and significant development in the extension of the property-owning democracy.

We on these Benches have promoted schemes such as this, in contrast, it is sad to say, to Opposition Members, many of whom, in the words of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), often feel, as soon as they hear the word "shares", that the person uttering it is a raging capitalist. That is a dismissive attitude to an important social revolution which, slowly but surely, some of their trade union colleagues are beginning to endorse. I pay tribute to the work of Unity Trust bank, which has trade union shareholders, for the way in which it has made a specialist activity out of promoting employee share ownership plans.

There are at present about 15 specific employee share ownership plans, covering about 20,000 employees. It is interesting to note that the average percentage of the companies held by those trusts for the benefit of their workers is 25 per cent. Under the 1978 scheme, most of the companies involved have put aside only 5 per cent. of their shares, and most of the schemes under the 1978 Act are in public companies or subsidiaries of public companies rather than in private companies. Yet more than half the employees in this country are employed in private companies.

I do not have time to go in detail into all the benefits, but there is no doubt that the economy will benefit from the introduction of ESOPs through better productivity, better output, improved financial performance and—this will interest Opposition Members—increased regional regeneration if companies are taken into employee hands when the current owners wish to sell rather than into the hands of a publicly quoted company, perhaps based out of the area.

The employee benefits because he has a much greater sense of purpose in the company, and the company benefits because there is a unity of interest within it, and that is in its very success. It could also have a beneficial and important impact on reducing inflationary wage claims.

There is still much to be done. I note with pleasure that in the other place there has been a sympathetic response to proposed amendments to the Companies Bill, a point to which the Financial Secretary referred last night in the House. But the financial assistance provisions in the Companies Act 1985 must be looked at closely because at present they restrict a company's ability to provide financial assistance and guarantees to ESOPs.

I shall be looking carefully at the detailed proposals in the Finance Bill. We were sad that there was no capital gains tax roll-over relief for sales to ESOPs, and we were concerned that there were not further changes to provide an inheritance tax concession for sales to ESOPs. But, on the whole, those are details. Most important has been the tremendous advance achieved for ESOPs by including a clear statutory recognition and corporate tax deductibility in the Budget. It would therefore be churlish of me to be critical.

I urge the professional investors' organisations to be more generous in their attitudes to the dilution problems which could come if companies issue more shares to their employees. The position is often misunderstood by many in the City, who believe that only the Government can improve the situation in areas such as ESOPs. That is not

the case. I have praised the Financial Secretary. I also praise my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) who, before his enforced silence as PPS to the Chancellor, had an active role in the House in encouraging advances in employee share ownership.

I make the rallying cry that every future privatisation should have an ESOP. I want to make sure that every Department now takes the lead from the Treasury. We want ESOPs in the electricity industry, in the future privatisation of coal, in British Rail—in all of them; and I noted, in respect of the water industry, an announcement by the Minister yesterday about discounted shares as well as free shares. By itself that is not enough. We must have an employee share ownership structure through an ESOP.

It is not sufficient to have a one-off benefit to employees through share distributions at the time of privatisations. We must set up a trust which will ensure continuity of employee interest, not only for those who are in the firm now but for the benefit of future employees. That is what an ESOP enables us to do and why it is so important. In this Budget we have had the next stage of the Conservative capitalist revolution, which opens up capital-owning to the nation's working population. We must follow it through.

8.30 pm

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): In the last 12 months since the previous Budget we have seen a radical transformation in the image of the Chancellor. I am sure that many hon. Members will remember the banner headlines in the newspapers after the last Budget. The *Daily Mail* was a good example: its headline was "Lawson the ladies' man". I must admit that when I saw that I thought it was a matter of taste, because he had not done much to help women. There is no doubt that after this Budget I and many other women will know that although people may say "Lawson the ladies' man", it is all promise and no delivery. The majority of low-paid people, single parents, pensioners and carers are women, and we have to ask ourselves what there is in this Budget for them.

I have sat throughout the debate this evening and the most stunning comment was one made by the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who described the Budget as "something for everyone". I wish that he was here now so that he could explain what he meant, because for many women in the categories I have just listed the Budget holds very little. In particular, it holds very little for pensioners. Sixty-six per cent. of all pensioners are women and I can guarantee that they will take no comfort at all from the Budget.

The changes in the earnings limit and the age allowance will help only a very small minority of pensioners. The elderly will now be able to work without penalty, which, as many Members of the Opposition have said, we welcome. But it has to be said that the meagre size of the state pension will mean that many women and men pensioners will have to work if they are just on a state pension, because they will not be able to live on it. The Budget is worth nothing to those pensioners, the many who survive just on a state pension. We all know why. It is because the pension has fallen behind what it would have been if the policy of increasing it in line with prices or earnings, whichever were higher, had continued to be followed since 1979. We all know that since 1979 the single pensioner is £10 worse off and pensioner couples are £15 worse off.

Hon. Members must realise, however, that it is not just the loss of money that is causing worry to pensioners now. Many pensioners are equally concerned about inflation. They know that their pensions and benefits will go up by 5·9 per cent. in April, and they know, because the Chancellor has told them, that inflation will go up to 8 per cent. This, for the two thirds of pensioners who survive on a state pension, will make life very difficult.

It has to be remembered that, for the 300,000 pensioners who are on transitional payments, the loss will be even greater. I hope that the Financial Secretary this evening will have something to say to those pensioners who are on transitional payments. They are expecting an increase in April, and they will not get it. They come to see me in my surgery, as a couple did last week, and ask how they are expected to manage without it. They telephone the office in Glasgow and they write letters because they think that there is some confusion or mistake. They do not understand that that money is to be denied them.

There is absolute bewilderment on the part of many pensioners as to why that has happened. If one bears in mind the fact that they will have lost their transitional payment, their pensions will not go up in line with inflation, they have the increase in water and electricity prices, they have the continuing problem of the TV licence and they have rent and rate rises before the benefit goes up, one begins to understand why so many pensioners are concerned.

It is all very well for Government Members to say the Budget has helped some pensioners. We readily acknowledge that, but I would like to hear what the Financial Secretary would say to two women pensioners who came to see me in my surgery last Saturday from Dormanstown and said that they could no longer manage. They are not extravagant or silly, but they seriously doubt their ability to manage. The poll tax looms in the future for them and they do not know what to do. There is an air of frustration, desperation and bewilderment of which hon. Gentlemen must take note because, even though the Budget will help some pensioners, it will not help the two thirds who are on state pension.

A second group of women who will not benefit from this Budget are the 55,000 war widows who lost their husbands before 1973. My hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) pointed out in his contribution to the debate that he asked the Prime Minister about this specifically this afternoon. She avoided the question. What she cannot avoid is the letter that she wrote as Leader of the Opposition in the 1970s, when she made that commitment to those war widows. We did not hear that this afternoon. She ignored that part of the question. That commitment was there and she ought to go back and look at what she said in the 1970s and not try to fob people off and ignore them.

If the Chancellor is serious about helping the low-paid, two thirds of whom are women, he could do so by increasing child benefit. It has been said by hon. Members in all parts of the House that the one clear, easy way to help those women would be to restore child benefit in line with inflation. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made the point quite clearly that child benefit is now 13 per cent. down in real terms as compared with 1983. The Minister should think about what that freezing of child benefit means in terms of this Budget, when something could have been done. It means that 1,000 to 2,000 more families will become dependent on income

[Ms. Marjorie Mowlam]

support; 2,000 to 3,000 more families will become reliant on housing benefit; and 20,000 to 25,000 more families will claim family credit. That is the impact of freezing child benefit. I should be very interested to hear whether the Minister, in his closing remarks, can explain how that helps low-paid people, particularly the majority of them who are women.

There are other problems for women workers, whether they be low-paid, part-time or even in full-time employment because of the wages they receive. This Budget will not touch them. More than 50 per cent. of all adult women full-time workers, including nearly 90 per cent. of all manual workers, earn less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold. That is the impact of low pay in this industry. The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) said that he understands and sympathises with the points made by Opposition Members. I am afraid there comes a point where sympathy is appreciated but in the end it means very little to people living on those wages.

Taking together the 1988 and 1989 Budgets—this has to be done with the social security changes in the last two years because the two have to be run in unison—the impact on a single women with two children earning £74 a week is that she has lost £4·42 by this stage of this Budget. If we look at specific cases we begin to realise the effect of this Budget on women who are low-paid, single parents or pensioners. Those are the examples that we have to look at.

One problem that the Budget does not address is the one which many women face in looking after a family and earning a living—the problem of the care of children. The Chancellor failed to abolish the tax on workplace nurseries. That shows his genuine failure to understand what would really help many women. We have to ask ourselves why the Chancellor did not do this. In what conditions would the Chancellor consider abolishing this tax? The Chancellor himself has not said much on this, but a number of his colleagues have. His hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), who, ironically, chairs the Tory ministerial group on women's issues—I wonder how that choice was made—in an interview in *The Guardian* at the beginning of this year, said:

"I don't think the state should step in to help the working mother unless her life has collapsed."

Those are the conditions in which the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon considers that working mothers should be given a hand.

We also have to look at the comments made by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury yesterday when he was asked this question about the burden of taxation of workplace nurseries by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe). He said:

"I understand the sensitivity of that issue but it is predominantly a matter for employers, not for the tax system. We look to employers and employees to make these arrangements."—*[Official Report,* 15 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 433.]

That is a complete and absolute abdication of responsibility. Workplace nurseries are the subject of taxation and that is clearly the responsibility of the Treasury. I wonder what the right hon. Gentleman does at the Treasury all day if he does not consider that part of his responsibility.

It is not only Opposition Members who are concerned about workplace nurseries. A survey in the *Sunday Mirror* in which 300 Members of Parliament took part showed that a large majority of Members of Parliament not only wanted tax relief on workplace nurseries and some incentive to employers but were in favour of a creche here. That would be an advantage to woman and men Members of Parliament. I have it on good authority that even the Prime Minister wished to see that introduced, but certain individuals in the Treasury were not so keen and managed to avoid including such provision in the Budget. Hon. Members on both sides of the House support it, and the thousands of letters to the *Sunday Mirror* since that poll was published show how many working parents would appreciate such a change.

If women are to enter the labour market and achieve their full potential in the workplace, Britain must have comprehensive nursery provision. Yet Britain lags behind the majority of European countries. Italy and France have a higher proportion of three to five-year-olds entering full or part-time nursery education. Opposition Members would like that to be changed.

We should be encouraging nursery education. Parents with children in nurseries provided by their employers have the imputed value of that service added to their taxable income if they earn more than £8,500. The tax raises only £1 million, so what is its purpose? I asked that question during last year's Budget debate and I ask it again tonight. Why are company cars taxed more favourably than workplace nurseries? Does the Chancellor believe that cars are more important than kids? The Government offer tax incentives for cars, sports facilities and canteens, but the Chancellor seems to have some mental block on providing workplace nurseries as a facility for working parents. That would be the one way to get women back into employment and allow them to work and look after their families at the same time.

It is not just a matter of workplace nurseries; there is a necessity for adequate state provision. An examination of local authority nursery provision shows the Labour party's commitment in contrast to that of the Conservative party. The 24 authorities that have the highest proportion of three to four-year-olds in pre-school nursery places are all Labour. The bottom 24 are all Conservative authorities.

This year the Chancellor had the opportunity to bring more women into the work force on the grounds of equality and efficiency. He could have offered incentives to employers to set up more nurseries, but he has not. Far from showing that he wants to help women and children, he has done exactly the opposite.

8.43 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Before making a very gentle speech, I must say that I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) in their assessments. In Scotland the debate is against the background of the poll tax, which is causing endless trouble in all Scottish constituencies. I do not think that Ministers or anyone else really understands the amount of difficulty that the poll tax will cause.

My first question refers to taxpayer confidentiality. The Chancellor said:

"In particular, it does not cover information in the possession of either the Inland Revenue or Customs and

Excise concerning the private affairs of specific taxpayers . . . I therfore propose to introduce provisions in this year's Finance Bill to ensure that it will continue to be a criminal offence for officials or former officials of either of the Revenue Departments to reveal information about the private affairs of a specific taxpayer."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 298.]

I do not understand why that was not included in the official secrets legislation, as was requested by a former Home Secretary my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), at business questions this afternoon. Nor am I clear as to whether that is really necessary. I could be persuaded, but I should like to know whether it has been agreed with Tony Christopher of the Inland Revenue Staff Association. Is it not rather like using a hammer for cracking a nut?

I have great admiration for the Inland Revenue, and I think that the tax inspectors deserve the praise of the House. I do not particularly wish to single out any office, and as far as I know I have no constituents who work at East Kilbride, but I should like, as a constituency Member of Parliament with the tax problems that we all experience, to register the fact that the Inland Revenue gives extremely good service to Members of Parliament. I am also aware that there is a tremendous temptation for many tax inspectors to leave the Inland Revenue after a few years and work for private solicitors' firms for a markedly greater salary. Is it not a tinge offensive to change the criminal law to deal with a problem that, as far as most of us know, is non-existent? I have never heard of any revelation of private individual affairs. The Minister should tell us whether there is a problem. If it is not a problem, why tinker with the criminal law?

My second question is equally interrogatory. It refers to the Chancellor's statement:

"I have been particularly concerned about the impact of the European Court's ruling on charities. Unfortunately, charities' business activities cannot lawfully be shielded from the effects of the ruling."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 305.]

That raises the wider question whether we can amend or change European law on such matters. I do not wish to quote him out of context, but I have discussed this with David Edward, a distinguished Queen's counsel, whom the Government have appointed as one of the judges at the European Court. It was certainly his opinion that changes can be made, and perhaps our partners are not inflexible but have never been asked to make those changes. Has the Treasury really tried to persuade other European Finance Ministers to change the law on charities?

My third question arises out of the undoubted fact that an enormous amount of what the Chancellor has been able to do has resulted from privatisation. Without privatisation and North sea oil, the Government certainly would be in no position to produce such a Budget. Therefore, it is very unfair to refer to what the Labour Government did in the 1970s in totally different circumstances relating to oil and privatisation.

I shall home in on one particular aspect of privatisation —the curious statement from the Secretary of State for Employment on Monday. Apparently, on the advice of Deloitte Haskins and Sells, it was agreed that the skill agencies and skill centres should be the subject of a management buy-out. What estimate exists in the Treasury of the amount of money that will accrue to the Treasury and to those who will undertake the management buy-out? A great deal of money is involved. There are considerable properties, often in prime sites. Those of us who have visited skill centres have high regard for them. Certainly in the north they are doing a very good job. The skill centres that I have visited have much valuable modern equipment. To whom do the profits from this transfer go? What volume of profits are we talking about? This is a profoundly unwise policy.

I should like now to ask a rather different set of questions. This afternoon I interrupted the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to ask about debt, especially south American debt, and how it fitted in with the Budget strategy. There was some ill-informed laughter from the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. A Minister is very unwise to laugh at this subject. If the Financial Secretary laughs, I shall tell him that the chairman of Midland bank certainly does not laugh. I have spoken recently to Kit McMahon about his problems. If one inherited the difficulties of the Midland bank, or even those of Jeremy Morse at Lloyds bank, one would think it was no laughing matter.

Third world debt is a very dangerous matter. If we press south America too strongly on debt, the political consequences will be destabilising and harmful to many British and American banks. This is not the place to repeat my long contribution to the Consolidated Fund Bill debate last Tuesday morning, reported in *Hansard* at columns 157 to 165, but I ask the Treasury for some reflections on how they fit into decision-making.

Has any consideration been given to measures to encourage British banks with large exposures to Third-world countries, especially in Latin America and in Brazil, to reduce those countries' indebtedness in exchange for measures to protect and conserve their natural resources, especially tropical forests? I believe that the Minister for Overseas Development and the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs are very sincere about the matter, but if we are to be serious about the rain forests, we must also be serious about debt.

Secondly, has any consideration been given to provisions that could be made to encourage commercial banks to exchange Third-world debt for nature? What steps will the Treasury take to encourage the progressive reduction of Third-world indebtedness to British banks?

May I say to the Economic Secretary that it is very unsatisfactory for the House to be denied any information about the instructions that our Government give to the British director of the World bank? I am not blaming Mr. Cassell, who occupies that position as minister in Washington, and our executive director of the World bank —this complaint is not made personally about him—but I do not understand why we cannot have as full information as the Americans.

On 13 March, the Under-Secretary said:

"Environmental issues are being given much greater attention in the World bank, in part due to the efforts of the United Kingdom and several other members."

Could the Treasury write to me saying exactly what it has done in that regard? The Minister continued:

"The reorganisation of the World bank in 1987 strengthened its capacity to ensure that environmental costs and benefits are systematically addressed in projects appraisal. It is clear that the bank is aware of the sensitivities surrounding the proposal, but I repeat that we will need to look at the precise terms of any proposal."

I then asked a question of the Minister about the Americans and he replied:

"There is possibly a difference in approach between us and the Americans on this matter. It relates to our reluctance to

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

use our voting in the World bank as any kind of political lever or pressure—a reluctance which the Americans certainly do not go along with to the extent that we do."—[*Official Report*, 13 March 1989, Vol. 149, c. 172-3.]

I ask the Treasury Ministers whether they are sure that we are right and that the Americans are wrong. There is a very powerful case for adopting the American practice.

What environmental controls do we have in relation to the European development fund? Are we sure that a sufficient period of consultation for the British representatives in the World bank is provided to give a considered opinion, given that instructions seem to be given at the shortest notice?

I tabled a question recently asking the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on recent progress by the International Monetary Fund and the World bank on development loans to Brazil, relating to the power sector and rain forests. I received the usual courteous reply —that it was a matter for the Foreign Office. May I ask the Minister, even at short notice, to write to me formally saying precisely what is the role of the Treasury as opposed to the Overseas Development Administration with regard to ecological impact assessments in World bank and International Monetary Fund policy?

As another hon. Member has come in to speak, I shall end my remarks there.

8.56 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): It strikes me, on occasions like this when the clock is moving towards 9 o'clock, that it is better just to take a brief snapshot, so to speak, of the philosophy and attitudes that underpin the Budget. In particular, I feel strongly that this Budget builds on previous Budgets under our very successful Chancellor, although that has not been said so much in the media.

We have had a succession of tax cuts together with incentives that have led people perhaps to expect that that would go on indefinitely. There is no doubt, as my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) said, and as has been said in the press, that this is a cautious and clever Budget.

We have heard much talk of ESOP. I was reminded of Aesop's fable of the tortoise and the hare. Not for a moment would I refer to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer as a tortoise, but there are times for caution and prudence, and he who adopts that philosophy is most likely to succeed in the longer term.

The Budget fulfils three main criteria. I had an opportunity before the Budget to discuss this with some colleagues. I was asked what I would say if I was in a position to make proposals in a Budget. Bearing in mind that it is unlikely that I would be asked to do so, I said that I would choose three criteria. First, there would be savings. Secondly, there would be quality, by which I mean quality in performance of British industry and services. Finally, there would be care. It is my judgment that the Budget carries with it all three of those ingredients in equal measure.

Just briefly, as time is short, I remind hon. Members of what happened in Japan in the 1950s, when it re-geared its tax policy to put the emphasis on savings. In a nutshell, that has led to the yen being the most powerful currency in the world. There is much in this Budget that goes to the very heart of this question.

With regard to quality, one fact that we know is that we are consistently being outdone by imported foreign goods. The question is not whether we have a trade deficit, but why. On closer examination, it is invariably because British goods do not match the quality that imported goods succeed in achieving. I thoroughly applaud the provisions in the Budget that place emphasis on profit-related savings mechanisms, because people will have an incentive to produce higher quality goods. Essentially, this is a self-help Budget, combined with a practical opportunity for people to use their labour to improve the quality of the goods that they produce.

Everyone must admit that the provisions relating to the elderly are a significant step in the right direction to ensure that those who wish to remain in work, for perhaps only two or three years, may do so. The psychology of this measure is important because people can remain in work rather than feeling that at a given date there is a shut-off point and that they will be regarded as redundant and irrelevant, when they are not. The provisions in the Budget enable them to make choices. Choice and freedom of choice will give those people dignity and self-respect. I applaud the Budget for the reasons that I have given.

9.1 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): We have had a deliberately low-key Budget. It blames the people for high interest rates, and the Chancellor cheekily said that high interest rates were here to stay for the time being. Ordinary people, who borrow money to buy a car or home, will have to cough up; they will pay through the nose. The rich, who depend on unearned income for their life styles, will laugh all the way to the bank.

We have had a typically mid-term Budget, which gave nothing away, but which the Chancellor hopes will allow for a better Budget just before the next election. We have had a Budget that shows that the Chancellor is scared about the economic position, and that inflation will continue to rise higher. We have had a Budget that helps those who drink much alcohol and heavy smokers. It will cost the nation dearly when our hospitals and National Health Service have to treat the increases in drink-related disease and cancer of the lungs.

The debate has been well informed, and my hon. Friends clearly showed why the Budget strategy is wrong. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) made some pertinent remarks about the National Health Service. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), who is not present but no doubt will be soon, should not will taxation to provide services for our constituents, who desperately need them; the Chancellor has £15 billion at his disposal, but dare not spend it. The problem is, even if he did, he would not spend it on services for our people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) spoke eloquently about the plight of pensioners. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) detailed the problems with training schemes and the lack of training. Our next generation will pay dearly for the Government's lack of care in training. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), who dwelt on the handouts given to the rich and the super-rich in last year's Budget.

My hon. Friend the Member for Easington, (Mr. Cummings) spoke movingly of his elderly constituents,

and my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) spoke of workplace nurseries, the problems of women and the Government's apparent lack of concern about them. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), in his own way, asked not one or two but four or five questions. The Minister has half an hour to sort out some answers to his interesting questions, which the House will wait with bated breath to hear. My hon. Friend made an important point about the oil crisis with which the Labour Government of the 1970s had to deal, whereas this Government have had the revenues from North sea oil and the sale of the family silver at their disposal. That important distinction must always be remembered, and I thank my hon. Friend for making it.

I have two main themes to my remarks. First, the Government are showing a lack of care and irresponsible recklessness in not giving proper consideration to our infrastructure, public spending on roads, schools, houses, railways and services such as the National Health Service. The second theme is that the Government are economical with the truth when it suits them. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, they spend many hours on news management and disinformation. My hon. Friend dealt with news management and exposed the glib phrases used by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for what they were—shallow, glib phrases that added nothing to the debate.

In his Budget statement, the Chancellor said that Inland Revenue consultative documents would be issued. When I visited the Vote Office, I was told that it did not have them and to try the Library. I went to the Library, which said that it had some documents but that I had to read them there. There are three consultative documents —the tax treatment of swap fees, the tax treatment of foreign exchange gains and losses and the sub-contractor scheme reducing paper work. Will the Economic Secretary ensure that they are available in the Vote Office? If he is unable to do so, I hope that he will at least provide Opposition Front Bench spokesmen with copies. Preferably, they should be available to all hon. Members.

Mr. Kirkwood: And to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Dr. Marek: Yes, indeed—and to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow.

I would not be allowed to say, too baldly, that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was dishonest, but it is true that he was economical with the truth when he said that the index of manufacturing production was lower when the Labour Government left office in 1979 than when they took office in 1974. That statement is true, but it does not give the full picture. There is no mention of the oil crisis of 1974-75 or of the fact that the index of manufacturing production for the Labour Administration was always higher than under the Conservative Administration between 1980 and 1986. It is only now returning to its level under the last Conservative Government of the 1970s led by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

The contribution of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was an example of news management, was glib and made no contribution to the debate.

Let me give another example of news management. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury said yesterday:

"we are enjoying the longest period of growth since the war."
—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 435.]

Today, that was almost parroted by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he said:

"We are in our eighth year of growth."

If the average person were to hear that without giving it a great deal of thought, he might think that the economy was actually a success. The right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) had it right yesterday when he said:

"in the whole period from 1979, the growth rate has been unusually slow. The growth of manufacturing output since 1979 has been the slowest of the post-war period—that is, slower than any nine-year period before 1979."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 440-41.]

That is the fact of the matter. It is all very well to use glib words such as

"We are in our eighth year of growth",

but they are meaningless and add nothing to the debate. Indeed, it demeans Members on the Treasury Bench when they make statements like that without any thought as to what they mean and the impression that they may give. Such remarks are simply facile, and I hope that Treasury Ministers will turn over a new leaf.

Let me give another example of news management. At 10.30 pm on Tuesday, the day of the Budget, the Chancellor was giving his forecast on Radio 4. I am not sure that I have got it right, but he said something like this: "There has been a massive break-away from the policies of the past of high taxation"—the implication being that Labour is the party of high taxation and that he has broken away from that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] I hope that those hon. Members who are saying "Hear, hear" will explain carefully what they mean. I will give them every opportunity to do so.

Again, the Chief Secretary parroted in the House what the Chancellor had said on radio:

"Labour is the party of high taxation. We are the party of low taxation."

But he gave the game away earlier when he said:

"The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said, correctly, that the tax burden has gone up".
—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 425-29]

The tax burden has indeed gone up, and in the Red Book, page 18, there is a very telling table. Table 2.5 deals with non-oil taxes and national insurance contributions as a percentage of non-oil money GDP. From this table it can be seen that under the last Labour Government from 1974 to 1979 that percentage was never above 36 per cent., yet under the Conservative Administration from 1979 until 1989 it has never been below 36 per cent. Where now are all those Tory Members who were saying "Hear, hear", meaning that Labour is the party of high taxation?

Mr. Cash: A married man on average earnings who has two children is now earning more than £45 a week more in real terms than he was in 1978 to 1979, whereas real take-home pay under Labour increased by only £1.

Dr. Marek: That is exactly what one gets from Members of the Tory party. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I will give the answer in a minute. Tory Members are talking only about taxes on income. What about taxes on expenditure? Who raised VAT from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent.? It was not the Labour party. That is why I say that it is the Conservative party that is the party of high taxation, whereas Labour is the party of low taxation. We have no intention of increasing the burdens on the people of this country that have been placed on them by the Tory Administration not just over the last one or two years but over the last eight or nine years.

[Dr. Marek]

The Government have been paying back the national debt. It is a latter-day conversion. They cannot do anything else. It is simply a matter of expediency. They cannot use the Budget surplus for anything else. Certainly they do not want to spend it on services, and they cannot give any more handouts to the rich and the super-rich because problems of inflation have begun to come to the fore. So, what do they do? They fall back on the expedient of repaying the national debt. In fact, they are now frightening people with scare stories about Labour increasing national insurance contributions if they were ever to come to office.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington) *indicated assent.*

Dr. Marek: The hon. Member nods his head. One has only to read the reports of the debates of yesterday and the day before to see a number of references by the Financial Secretary and others to this matter. Labour Members think that it is unfair that the person earning £15,000 a year should be paying 9 per cent. in national insurance contributions, whereas a person earning £100,000 a year is paying in effect a little less than 1·5 per cent. in national insurance. We think that national insurance contributions should be raised for the person who is getting £100,000 a year. That would allow a reduction for the person earning £15,000 a year.

The Tory party, besotted with its huge majority in this House, thinks that it can indulge in any misrepresentations it likes and manage the news in any way it sees fit.

Let me turn now to the Chancellor's wish to doctor the retail prices index—another example of news management. It was a bit inconvenient for the Chancellor recently that, because of mortgage interest relief being included in the RPI, inflation was a bit high. It is a little bit high for the country—we all agree with that. But what does the Chancellor do? He does not want to do something about inflation. No. Instead he wants to doctor the RPI by taking mortgage interest relief out of it. He never mentions that the housing market in the United Kingdom is very different from those of other countries in the Common Market and for that reason we, with Ireland, have mortgage interest included in the RPI and in other countries, where the housing market is different there is an imputed rent, a rent that the property would attract on the open market.

Let me quote what the Chancellor said in his statement on 12 January 1989:

"So far as the recorded RPI is concerned, the position is complicated by the fact that, of all 12 nations of the European Community, we are one of the only two—the other one being Ireland—that is daft enough to include mortgage interest payments in its retail price index . . . It is again my task to seek to educate the Leader of the Opposition"—

the Leader of the Opposition came in—

"Of the other 10 countries of the European Community that do not include mortgage interest payments, there is a minority, it is true, that do have as a proxy for the cost of owner-occupied housing—it is a minority—imputed rents."

Well, if the figure were 10, four would be a minority at most. The Chancellor went on to say:

"The majority have nothing at all. So the Leader of the Opposition was trying to mislead the House, no doubt through his own ignorance."—[*Official Report*, 12 January 1989, Vol. 144, c. 1007-1008.]

I went and got hold of the OECD main economic indicators. I must say that these figures relate to 1980 so there may have been a change. I looked down the lists and found, for example, that the following countries, in making up their RPI, have some form of rent or mortgage included in the figure with some weighting: Canada, United States of America, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and Yugoslavia. Luxembourg does not. Greece and Portugal, I think, have. The OECD document does not say that they do not but the amount of detail is not sufficient. But it does say that the following EEC countries have a component for housing or rent: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Ireland, and the United Kingdom.

Who is right? Are the 1980 OECD main economic indicators wrong? Have several countries stopped including rent? Is the Chancellor badly advised, or is he trying to pull the wool over our eyes? The matter should be cleared up. Following the lead given by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, I should be grateful if the Economic Secretary would write to me with full details about the truth of the matter. It would certainly help the House. There would be much less news management and misinformation in this place, which is all to the good.

The Government are also obsessed with saving money on public services. Let us examine the railways. Ministers like to boast about high levels of investment in British Rail. We need only refer to any Transport Question Time to note the Minister and the Secretary of State for Transport boasting that investment in British Rail is at an all-time high, and comparing it with the position under the last Labour Government. I got the Central Statistical Office database figures relating to railway gross domestic fixed capital formation at 1985 prices. In 1974, it was £409 million, and in 1975 it was £517 million. The figure remains around that level until—surprise, surprise—we get to the Tory Administration, when it dropped to £370 million in 1980. In 1982, it was £283 million. The lowest point was in 1984, when it was £274 million. It has since gone up a little.

To provide an average, under the Government of the right hon. Member for Bexley and Sidcup it was approximately £350 million a year. Under the last Labour Administration it was £472 million a year. Under the first Conservative Administration led by the present Prime Minister it was about £307·5 million, and under the second Administration in 1983-87 it was £353 million a year. It is still less than the amount invested under the last Labour Government. It has gone up a little. I should like to see a record figure for this year—I do not have the 1988 figure —but one swallow does not make a summer.

Hon. Members should remember that it is no good the Secretary of State for Transport saying that, in 1988, we had the highest level of investment in British Rail since 1970. That is what he tried to do during Transport Questions last October. It is meaningless. It is a glib, empty and shallow phrase which conveys nothing and adds nothing to the debate. It does not fool any Opposition Member or the press.

The lack of investment in British Rail in recent years has had to be compensated for by revenue generated by British Rail's operations. These are higher fares and lower wages. In the past three years the increase in fares has been wel above the RPI. Let us remember that the basic rate for railway employees is now lower than that for agricultural workers. I do not say anything derogatory about

agricultural workers, but relativities have been upset. The lack of Government investment has caused British Rail to cut jobs. Since 1979, 50,000 jobs in British Rail have been lost.

There have also been improper maintenance, checking and control procedures. It is no use blaming the driver or the technician for the Clapham accident. If the old track layout had still existed, the Glasgow accident would have been impossible. The new layout allowed human error, perhaps, to cause that accident. An article in the London *Evening Standard* of 13 March stated:

"Signalling equipment in the Waterloo area of Southern Region has been deteriorating so badly that there have been three major failsafe errors in the past two years."

That is directly attributable to the lack of public expenditure on our railway infrastructure. Yet again in the Budget, the Chancellor has seen fit not to provide any more money for the public services that the country desperately needs.

British Rail is doing other things such as abandoning the systematic maintenance of lineside telephones. On the west coast main line, it has produced cars called pacers. They are too light, they leak and they will not go uphill. There are problems at open level crossings because there have been signalling failures, but the Government are trying to export the model. They did not get a single order at the Vancouver exhibition. I am not surprised. Every country knows exactly what we produce under the present Government.

In their search for public expenditure cuts, the Government relaxed conditions on open level crossings, which culminated in 10 deaths at Lockington, north of Hull, and resulted in Professor Stott's report. The Government have now put back barriers on about half the number of level crossings. Any hon. Member could mention other examples in other spheres of Government policy.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): The Prime Minister would not go on a train.

Dr. Marek: The Prime Minister does not like trains at all.

The Government are besotted with their huge majority in the House. They know that, whatever happens in the country, they have a secure majority in the Chamber. They have power over the media and news management.

Last year's Budget was notorious for its unfairness. The unearned income of the richest 1 per cent. has nearly doubled—there was an 89 per cent. increase—and last year's tax cuts have brought them about £400 a week extra. This year, there is no talk of putting that right. Conservative Members talk about balanced, fair Budgets. There is some sense in that, but hon. Members must remember that this Budget succeeds one of the most unfair Budgets this century.

In contrast, since the last Budget the poorest 2·5 million taxpayers—not the unemployed—got tax cuts of about 92p a week. Of course, those cuts have been wiped out by price rises, mortgage and rate increases and utility price increases. I do not have to spell out the figures. Any home owner with a mortgage knows the extra amount that they have to pay. The Government will not put up child benefits. That is scandalous. The figure is £7·25, and it should be £8·35. Above all, the Government have produced the highest balance of payments deficit ever and the highest interest rates and inflation rate of all the G7 countries except Greece and Portugal.

We have a Government who, on the other hand, are happy to throw away £40 million on the Chancellor's estimate, on the estimate of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury—and perhaps it will be over £100 million—as a tax subsidy to the wealthy retired for private medical insurance. It has been said before, but I think it should be said again, that the Prime Minister will no doubt benefit, but there will not be many pensioners in my constituency or my hon. Friend's constituencies who will benefit from this. There is no targeting or testing in this proposal, except in one respect. One has to be rich to take account of the concession.

The Chancellor could have expanded our training progrmme to develop our skills, because skills shortages are appearing everywhere. The Chancellor could have provided finance for more teachers. He could have cut National Health Service waiting lists. He could at least have valorised excise duties on drink and tobacco because of the nation's health. The Chancellor did nothing of the sort. I received a letter from the Privy Council Office signed by the Leader of the House saying;

"As Chairman of the Ministerial Group on Alcohol Misuse, I am writing to let you know that the first ever National Drinkwise Day will be held on 20 June 1989."

That day will be drinkwise all right. Drink will be cheaper and we shall be able to drink more of it for the same amount of money. I wonder what the Leader of the House thinks about the Treasury's action this year, which was taken because the Treasury was scared of adding 0·1 per cent. or 0·2 per cent. to the level of inflation, so it did not valorise, or even attempt to valorise, increases for alcohol or tobacco.

The Chancellor could have avoided increases in charges for water, electricity, public transport and prescriptions. That would have kept inflation down. Why did he not do that? He could have cancelled charges for eye tests, but he has not and instead we shall have a two-tier system of eye tests under which a person can go to an optician and have a quick test which would not detect cancer, diabetes or many other diseases.

The Chancellor could have produced a programme for public spending on essential services. The Government could have spent a little more to ensure that airlines—and in particular Pam Am—received the bomb warning immediately, rather than sending it by post at Christmas [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The Government send letters by second-class post at Christmas. If the Government provided a different policy for the Post Office, I am sure that it would take on many more people, but I do not want to take up time on that. The Government send letters by second-class post to Members of Parliament. I shall not name a Department because it would be unfair, but Departments are doing that. It is time that the Government got rid of their dogmatic obsession about saving public money and expenditure—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] It would have saved 200 lives at Lockerbie for a start; we should be clear on that.

People demand a proper level of service and a proper level of care from the Government. They are not getting it, and the Budget stands condemned because of that.

9.31 pm

The Economic Secretary to The Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): This has been an interesting debate, reaching a high point of the several days of Budget debate so far. It has been interesting, above all, because it has demonstrated the wide measure of support for the Budget not just among Conservative Members, among whom whole-hearted support has been manifest, but among a range of Opposition Members, among whom partial support has been apparent for individual measures.

There have been some notable contributions, especially from my right hon. and hon. Friends, beginning with a cogent speech from my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who has long been an advocate of popular capitalism and wider share ownership. He urged greater incentives for that and for savings. I am not wholly convinced of the necessity for any front-end relief for the savings that he favours, if only because it would, of necessity, have to be accompanied by considerable complications to prevent abuse. Above all, we want to keep matters such as personal equity plans as simple and usable as possible.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) continued the debate with a pithy description of the Budget as one with something for everyone. That was confirmed by the debate as a whole. He pointed out that the Opposition parties were largely unable to criticise the Budget because of its many popular features, which he enumerated.

My hon. Friend and neighbour, the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) eloquently expressed his concern about the health of manufacturing industry, and he sought an even more rapid recovery than it is manifestly enjoying at present. I confess that I remain unconvinced that his remedy of the Government setting priorities and targets and picking winners would be more successful than relying on greater enterprise and competition. However, I noted his speech with interest.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) made a forceful plea to encourage savings by a shift to indirect taxation. He will have seen that this is not the year in which we felt it right to increase the burden of indirect taxation—for obvious reasons.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) welcomed the abolition of the earnings rule. That feeling was echoed by hon. Members of all parties. Nobody opposed what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor described as that "long overdue" measure.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) rightly analysed the effect of the extra spending in the economy being the result not of the Budget changes last year but of increased borrowing. However, he was wrong to say that none of the extra money in the economy has gone into investment. Indeed, it is extraordinary that he should say that in a year in which we have seen a marked investment boom and business investment reaching the highest proportion of national income that it has been since records were first kept.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) made a lucid speech, saying that we must get our priorities right and put inflation first. That is precisely where our priorities lie, and that is what we intend to do. I thought his speech in many ways the best of the debate. It was marred by only one thing—his compulsive cynicism, which requires him always to find some nefarious motive for the Government's monetary policy. In this case, he believes that it is primarily designed to manipulate the equity market for our privatisation measures. If that were the case, I for one—although I have long worked in those markets—would not know quite what monetary measures to take to achieve the result that he thought we were seeking.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) asked for an assurance that the new tax rate for life assurance would be linked firmly to the basic rate. That is indeed the intention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. I hope that my hon. Friend and the industry will welcome that.

Unfortunately, I missed what I gather was an excellent speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor). I understand that he made a compelling case for the use of ESOPs. Before the Budget he played a leading part in advocating measures to encourage that. I shall read his speech with interest, as I did the excellent pamphlets that he produced ahead of the Budget.

Unfortunately, I also missed the speech of the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam), who asked for some statement on the tax position of workplace nurseries.. As I have said, although I did not hear the hon. Lady's speech, I have heard other references to that issue during the Budget debate. It is not always universally recognised that an employer who provides workplace nurseries or the cash for employees to hire child minders can set the money spent for that purpose against his profits for corporation tax purposes and receive full relief against his corporation tax.

The benefit to the individual from such payments or benefits in kind is treated like all benefits in kind. If, together with other income, the total is less than £8,500,. no tax is paid, but for those whose total incomes are over £8,500, benefits in kind, whether they are that sort of benefit or any payments made to help with the purchase of, for example, a season ticket, are taxed, and it is obviously right that they should be treated in the same way as other financial benefits.

I heard part of the speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who raised a catalogue of questions. I shall go through them and write to him in due course. I understand that he asked why the Official Secrets Act does not include the measures that we propose for the Finance Bill to protect the security of information provided by taxpayers to the Revenue Departments. The answer to that is simple. The Official Secrets Act concerns Government information, but we are concerned here with the private information that is provided by taxpayers and we want, above all, to give reassurance to private taxpayers. I believe that that is widely welcomed.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow also asked whether there was any hope of getting agreement within the European Community for any alteration in the results that we now know from the ruling of the European Court of Justice on the impact of the abolition of the United Kingdom's zero rates on certain previously zero-rated supplies, notably new construction for charities. Unfortunately, to achieve any change in a directive in the Community, one requires not just a majority of member states to agree with one—not even unanimity among member states, which would be extremely unlikely given the attitude of some member states to the existence of zero rates—but the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the

Commission. As the Commission brought the case in the first place, it is inconceivable that it will suddenly stand on its head.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow asked other questions of a more complex nature, and I shall write to him or ensure that he receives the information.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I had hoped that the hon. Member would have been content with that.

Mr. Dalyell: On the question of the World bank and the directions that are given to Mr. Cassell, I have asked Treasury Ministers whether they could not be as open as the Americans on this issue and also at some time to give a Treasury view on the concept of the debt for nature swap. Will the Treasury Ministers consult Sir Kit McMahon about the problems of the major banks in relation to the Brazilian debt?

Mr. Lilley: If those questions are not already on the list that my right hon. Friend has prepared, I shall add them and answer them as best I can in due course.

The debate was opened by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who was on his best and most pugnacious form. I have always thought of him as one of the best boxers in the shadow Cabinet, but today he was a shadow boxer. He paid an implicit tribute to the Budget by attacking only one measure—a small measure in financial terms—within it. By implication, I may take it that he accepted the rest, albeit with somewhat bad grace. His hon. Friends have tended to be equally resolute about specific Budget measures. They limit themselves to expressing generalised concern about inflation, about savings and about the trade balance. Despite expressing concern about those matters, they condemn the very policies that are essential to curb inflation, to encourage savings and to bring about an improvement in the balance of payments.

The shadow Chancellor, whose absence I regret, yesterday told my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary that he had never been in favour of stoking up credit, that he just wanted to cut interest rates. He had never been in favour of increasing domestic demand, he just wanted to increase public spending. Of course, he is a leading and distinguished advocate and I am sure he comes across that sort of plea all the time from bank robbers, caught red-handed—"Well, I didn't really mean to rob the bank, I was just there to help my friends open the safe."*[Interruption.]* I see that I have hit the bull's eye on this occasion.

The shadow Chancellor expressed his concern about inflation, but concern from the Opposition about inflation is always synthetic, and concern about an 8 per cent. rate of inflation is positively hypocritical. I looked up the last but one Budget speech of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) back in 1978, which began with him boasting that they had just got inflation down to single figures—to 9·5 per cent. By his next Budget, of course, it was creeping back into double figures. The Labour Government had one temporary dip whereas we have the occasional blip.

Dr. Marek: What is the present Government's highest inflation rate blip?

Mr. Lilley: It is about as low as the Labour Government ever got inflation. Their visit into the lower single figures was as fleeting as our upward movement in the single figures will be, because we are determined to give priority—as this Budget shows—to getting inflation back down. It is that feature of the Budget which probably has the greatest support on the Conservative Benches and in the country.

The Opposition expressed concern about savings and asked how the Budget would improve the aggregate amount of savings in the economy—*[Interruption.]*—and my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) answered them eloquently and excellently.

There is a simple straightforward answer to that question. The Budget increases savings by £14 billion. The £14 billion repayment of debt is equivalent to adding £14 billion to the amount of savings in the economy. That money is available to be borrowed to finance our current investment boom.

It is a strange paradox that the Left in Britain and in the House want the state to do almost everything. They want it to have a monopoly of health care, to be in charge of investment, to do all the research and development, training and education and everything else. Yet from their reaction to the repayment of the public debt it seems that the one thing they do not want the state to do is save.

The Government do not intend their revenues to be in permanent surplus. We intend to move gradually back to a position of balance. However, if during that period we can contribute to the overall level of savings in the economy, particularly during a period when private savings are being restored to a more satisfactory level, so much the better.

Before I return to the important macro-economic matters, I want to refer to two specific facets of the Budget which deserve greater attention than they have received. The first is the help that my right hon. Friend chose to give to charities. The Budget has been warmly welcomed in the charity world. The charities' VAT and tax reform group described it as "a significant Budget for charities", and so it is.

Central to that measure was my right hon. Friend's concern to protect charities as far as possible from the adverse consequences of the European Court of Justice's ruling on zero rates, to which the hon. Member for Linlithgow referred. In the first place, it was not necessary for the Commission to bring that case. It was able to do so only because of the Labour Government's assent in 1977 to the directive under which it was brought. Its decision to pursue it is a symptom of its obsessive passion for uniformity throughout the Community. It ignores the fact that different countries have different ways of organising things. We in particular have a well developed and important charity sector, which is not present in many other continental states.

Mr. Kirkwood: We need the charities more than they do.

Mr. Lilley: What a petty point. Britain has an important and worthwhile tradition of voluntary activity and voluntary giving, which I am proud of and would not seek to denigrate. *[Interruption.]* This is not something that we have had to resort to. Britain has a history of prosperity that few other countries have had.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that many of the major charities in the world have their roots in Britain and that they are helping people abroad, not in Britain?

Mr. Lilley: That is right, and that reinforces the disdain that I feal for the point made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

We have endeavoured to interpret the court's ruling in a way as favourable as possible to the charity world, but we are not able to protect the charities' business activities as defined in VAT law. We have been able to ensure that charities' non-business activities are protected and that residential buildings, including hospices, old people's homes and churches are protected, but we have not been able to protect their business activities. Therefore, we have looked for other ways to ensure that charities are helped as much as possible.

My right hon. Friend has taken VAT off charities' fund-raising activities. Until now, charities escaped VAT only if they succeeded in keeping the revenue from such events below the registration threshold, which often required a complex sub-division of their activities. My right hon. Friend has also exempted classified advertising, thereby extending an aspect of zero rating that he introduced in a previous Budget. He has extended it also to sterilising equipment. My right hon. Friend also removed VAT from car tax. I refer not to vehicle excise duty, because arrangements for that already exist, but to the tax on the value of cars leased to the disabled, largely through Motability. That involves a large sum of money for each car, and that measure has been warmly welcomed by the disabled.

My right hon. Friend has relaxed rules on covenanting membership of and subscriptions to heritage and conservation charities. He has also improved the payroll giving scheme by doubling the limit to which people are able to donate, tax included, to charities of their choice. That improvement will give a further fillip to that excellent scheme.

All that is a continuation of measures undertaken in a series of Budgets presented both by my right hon. Friend and by his predecessor, my right hon. and learned Friend the present Foreign Secretary. They add up to a formidable list. They include improvements to covenanting and to the ability of companies to make one-off donations, changes affecting value added tax liability, and an enhancement of the payroll giving scheme. Today, I answered a parliamentary question by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith), asking me to list all the financial measures introduced by the Government to help charities. I warmly commend my reply, which will be published in the *Official Report* tomorrow, to all my right hon. and hon. Friends, who will find that it serves as a handy reference to all the Government's measures of benefit to charities.

The value of the grants and reliefs that the Government now give the charitable movement is more than £1·5 billion, which in real terms is twice the sum given 10 years ago. Even more important is the fillip to private giving by covenants, the payroll giving scheme, and other means. Above all, there is the series of tax measures that have left people with more of their earnings from which to make donations if they so choose.

It is often said by the Opposition that we encourage selfishness. If that were true, we have failed—because there has been a great increase in generosity and in the level of giving in this country. Private giving to charities has more than doubled in real terms during the lifetime of the present Government. That is something that all right hon. and hon. Members must welcome.

Another measure that was welcomed in all parts of the House—possibly even by the Liberal party, grudging though its members may be—is the decision to encourage the use of unleaded petrol. There are three ways of encouraging greater take-up. The first is price. There was already a considerable fiscal differential in favour of purchasing unleaded petrol. We are increasing that differential by a further 4p a gallon, making it the biggest differential in favour of unleaded petrol of any country in the European Community, with the solitary exception of Denmark.

The second is by improving unleaded petrol's availability. Although the number of garages offering unleaded petrol has increased severalfold since the last Budget, they still number only about 5,000, or a quarter of all garages in the country. The number is rising fast. About half of all garages devote storage capacity and pump space to two-star or three-star petrol. Therefore, we made the decision—the *Financial Times* called it a master stroke—to increase duty a little on two-star and three-star petrol, so that its cost would be much the same as four-star. By encouraging the phasing out of two and three-star petrol —sales of which are fast dying out anyway, to only 6 per cent. of the total—we are encouraging stations to increase availability of unleaded petrol.

The third way of encouraging greater use of unleaded petrol is through greater information. We have already referred to the myths surrounding unleaded petrol. Few people realise that most cars can take unleaded without conversion, or with a simple conversion costing only £15 or £20, and sometimes available free. Motorists who change to unleaded petrol can easily switch back to using four-star leaded petrol if unleaded is unavailable, and there is no difficulty about mixing the two in the tank. I understand that my right hon. friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will in the coming days and weeks step up the information campaign to ensure that these points are widely understood. I am sure that the House will welcome that.

Another important issue which has featured in the debate is the trade balance. The shadow Chancellor said that it was a more important indicator of the success of economic policy than the standard of living. That is a wonderful return to the old mercantilist fallacy. The ultimate end of economic policy is to improve the standard of living of ordinary people. In that respect, we have been immensely successful; our record completely out-classes that of former Labour Governments. Perhaps that is why the Labour party has to look for other measures of economic success with which to judge us.

The Government believe that, as regards the instruments and measures of economic policy, the main priority should be inflation. The measures necessary to bring about a reduction, and the ultimate elimination, of inflation are precisely those which will, in time, bring about an improvement in the balance of payments. The importance which the Opposition attach to the balance of payments is quite clearly out of line with that of the rest of the world. They are content, willing and anxious to finance the investment boom that lies behind much of the imports to this country and therefore to finance the deficit.

I noticed the contrast between the words of Opposition Members and those which characterised the foreign financial press corps, whom I met yesterday and who grilled me about every aspect of British economic policy. They concentrated on inflation and every aspect of the Budget; only at the very end of the evening did one person mention the balance of payments and balance of trade. They have their priorities right, and the Opposition should learn from them.

The Opposition made much of one measure in the Budget—one would think it was the only measure—that seemed to rile them beyond belief. That was the measure to encourage private health insurance by the over-60s. As regards the National Health Service, I start from exactly the same standpoint as the hon. Member for Livingston and other Opposition Members. I have always supported the NHS and believe that the rich must pay for the poor and the healthy pay for the care of the sick. It is a privilege for us to do so and a duty from which no one has the right to opt out. However, there is absolutely no reason why, if they wish and can afford to, people should not opt out of burdening the NHS with the costs of their own health care.

It is extraordinary that the Opposition seem to resent that, because when people do so they reduce the burden on the NHS and the length of queues. They release beds and resources and make it easier to finance improved health care.

Mr. Budgen: That argument could have wider applications. Is my hon. Friend now promising tax relief for people of all ages?

Mr. Lilley: There is a particular case for those who have reached 60 or retirement age. Many of them who have been covered, during their lifetime, by schemes paid for by their employers or by job-related schemes, find when they retire that the cost of health care rises and their ability to pay falls. As a result, the market in provision of health care for the elderly has not been as developed as we would like, and we wish to give it a stimulus—as this measure does.

The Opposition bandy about absurd figures and suggest that attracting additional people into private health care will not save money. That is manifest nonsense. The cost to the Exchequer of every extra person who, as a result of this incentive, takes out private health insurance, is—at most, if he or she is a top rate payer—40 per cent. of the cost of that insurance. The saving to the Health Service is 100 per cent. of the health care that those people no longer require from the NHS. Unless the cost of private health care is 100 over 40—2·5 times—the cost of NHS provision, there is a net saving at the margin from the scheme.

The Budget is commendable on three counts. It demonstrates the improvement of our public finances from a borrowing rquirement of some £25 billion, in today's terms, under the last Goverment to a surplus of £14 billion. It demonstrates the improvement of our economy, which has risen from the bottom of the growth league to the top, where we are still riding high. It has also transformed the politics of this country. The Opposition are now constantly at a loss as to what to do. They know that the policies that we have introduced are working, are seen to be working and are welcomed by the country as a whole —as I believe will this Budget.

Debate adjourned.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

That the draft Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) (Amendment) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 14th February, be approved.

SOCIAL SECURITY

That the draft Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 16th February, be approved.

EVIDENCE

That the draft Evidence in Divorce Actions (Scotland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 22nd February, be approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Child Abuse

10 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I wish to present a petition on behalf of 7,000 people from the county of Humberside.

The petition was organised by Mrs. Jane Day of 8, John Harrison close, Barrow on Humber. Mrs. Day is a constituent of mine. She obtained the 7,000 signatures over the course of the last few months from shopping precincts in Grimsby, Scunthorpe, Winterton, Brigg and Barton. The petition was inspired as a result of a tragic case in my constituency some time ago in which a six-month-old baby girl was raped and left blind and mentally handicapped, and by an Old Bailey case of parents who starved to death a 10-month-old baby boy.

The petition reads as follows:

The humble petition of the people of the county of Humberside sheweth that

Sentences for child abuse, in all forms sexual, physical and mental, are too lenient. The Petitioners look to the Government to protect all children, through legislation.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House:—

Ensure, through legislation, that laws are enacted to protect all children;

Implement a clearly defined deterrent against child cruelty and abuse;

Ensure, through legislation, that the deterrent serve its purpose;

Ensure, through legislation, that funding meets the ever-increasing demands on those working to protect children and those detecting abuse and cruelty in children.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Aircraft Accident (Manchester Airport)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

10.2 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): This is a very sad but important parliamentary occasion and one that is shamefully overdue. It is the first time that the House has been able specifically to discuss the deeply grievous accident to the British Airtours Boeing 737 at Manchester airport on 22 August 1985, in which 55 people died and many others were severely injured when their holiday jet burst into flames on the runway.

The accident happened when the House was in recess, so there was no ministerial statement; no oral questioning of the Secretary of State by Members with constituents who were killed or hospitalised; no parliamentary tributes to emergency services which are among the finest in this country; and no opportunity for the House to express the condolences and sympathy which customarily go to the bereaved and those injured in major accidents.

That being so, right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House expected an oral statement by the Secretary of State when his air accidents investigation branch finally reported on the Manchester accident on Monday this week. It was then more than three and a half years after a major accident about which there had never been a ministerial statement, but the right hon. Gentleman did not make a statement. In fact, he had already made it clear in a letter to me that he would be doing no more on the day of publication than place some copies of the report in the Library.

The Secretary of State's decision to release the report without comment is widely resented, not least among the bereaved and injured. There is also deep and widespread resentment about the Civil Aviation Authority's decision to pre-empt the report's publication, at 1 pm last Monday, by staging a press conference about it at 12 noon on that day. The CAA acted in total contempt of Parliament last Monday; it also gave further offence to the bereaved and injured, many of whom heard the CAA's self-justifying comments in broadcasts before seeing the report.

I am sure that the Minister for Roads and Traffic, who is to reply to this debate, will know that the report did not reach hon. Members until after the CAA's press conference and that he will understand the resentment that has been caused.

As the right hon. Member in whose constituency the accident occurred, I did not receive the report until 2.30 pm last Monday. It came with a note from Lord Brabazon, the Minister for Civil Aviation, informing me that its publication was timed for 1 pm and that the report was strictly embargoed until then. Yet I had been approached before 1 pm by journalists who already had the report and the CAA's comments.

The CAA's tactics are now seen as a shabby exercise in news management which made worse the Secretary of State's decision to publish the report on 13 March, the day before the Budget, when the media's attention was certain to be heavily concentrated on the Chancellor's options the following day. Many people feel that the choice of publication date was a calculated attempt to bury the report—a document of very considerable importance for the travelling public—with grossly indecent haste.

This debate is about making sure that the report is not buried and that, in keeping with the campaign mounted by those who were bereaved and injured in the Manchester accident, its lessons are fully learned and quickly acted upon.

In an important and moving letter from William Beckett, the co-chairman of the campaign, whose 18-year-old daughter died in the accident, he told me of their

"total lack of confidence in the CAA"

and of their determination to ensure that the report is used to secure radical and wide-ranging improvements in passenger safety.

In the Secretary of State's recent letter to me, before publication, he wrote in high praise of the report; but ultimately any such document can only be as good as those charged with the task of giving its recommendations effect. By that test, the prospects for the report of the Manchester accident are not at all good.

The CAA, with its responsibility for aviation safety, claimed at its press conference last Monday

"to have moved quickly to improve safety standards since the Manchester accident."

Yet Tony Parry, Greater Manchester's chief fire officer, whom I hold in high regard, says that if the same accident had happened today the same number of people would have died. That is biting criticism of the self-congratulatory news release put out by the CAA last Monday, and from a very senior and respected fire officer.

For their part, the survivors and relatives of those who died in the accident have reacted even more sharply. They said, after publication of the report, that they will

"take legal action against the CAA unless it instigates safety regulations urged by the Department of Transport within six months."

Moreover, they feel strongly that the Secretary of State must now himself offer some leadership if improvements in passenger safety are to be secured, and they want to hear an assurance in this debate that he accepts his responsibilities.

Urgency is now demanded for compulsory replacement rather than repair of cracked combustor cans, for removal of passenger seats blocking emergency exits, for action on the report's recommendations about water sprinkler systems, for the mandatory introduction of smoke hoods and, among other safety measures, for widening the aisle between the two forward galleys/bulkheads. The Secretary of State must have a view on these important matters and he has a duty to the travelling public to make it known in this debate.

In regard to smoke hoods and water sprinkler systems, the right hon. Gentleman will know of the important recent announcement made by British Airways. I welcome its important initiative in supporting work on a cabin sprinkler system and in calling for tenders for the supply of smoke hoods to its passengers. In this regard, I ask the Minister to comment tonight on the fact that, although the Civil Aviation Authority was kept abreast of the progress of the AAIB's findings in investigating the Manchester accident, it was more than two and a half years after the accident before a specification for passenger smoke hoods was issued. Many people find such dilatoriness on so crucial an issue beyond comprehension when there is clear evidence that 45 of the 55 lives that were lost in the accident could have been saved by the use of smoke hoods.

Smoke hoods are already provided for crew members and there is now the possibility that, with an in-flight fire,

an aircraft could land with the crew alive and the passengers dead. I am told—the Minister will perhaps be able to confirm—that members of the CAA and of the AAIB routinely carry smoke hoods themselves. In any case, if there were to be a further accident in which it could be shown that passengers had died as a result of the inhalation of toxic fumes, the CAA could be legally liable for breach of statutory duty, namely, failing to fulfil the general objectives set out in section 4(1)(b) of the Civil Aviation Act 1982. It is not, however, action after another tragic happening that any of us wants to see, but the prevention of further tragedies by applying the lessons already learned at such very high cost in human life.

There is, of course, an overriding need to vouchsafe rapid evacuation from an aircraft that is on fire but, as the report shows, other important requirements must be met if lives are not to be lost preventably. While it should be possible to equip new aircraft with sprinkler systems for fire suppression, I understand that there would be very real difficulties in requiring operators to retrofit such systems. Their provision is thus a longer-term aim and, even when it has been secured, smoke hoods will still be required as part of a "twin strategy". To make them available is an urgent necessity, as is limitation of the number of seats, improving egress from aircraft and a strict insistence on elevating passenger safety above profit in our approach to all the problems and prescriptions dealt with in the AAIB's report.

The Minister will know that many news editors, much to their credit, were more than a match for the news managers when the AAIB's report finally saw the light of day last Monday in that they gave very wide coverage to the reaction of Greater Manchester's chief fire officer and to the views of the bereaved families and survivors of the accident, among other critics of the CAA's serene self-satisfaction. The AAIB's in-depth study of survivability was given due praise but the Minister will know that many parts of the media are strongly critical of the delay until more than three and a half years after the accident in publishing the report. I questioned the Secretary of State about the delay on 10 January—as reported in *Hansard*, column 691—and he replied with an expression of "considerable sympathy" for my criticism. I hope we shall hear more tonight about why it took so long to publish the report.

There are some who seem to know more about this than has been reported to this House. Listen, for example, to *The Times* leader of 14 March:

> "The exceptional delay in bringing out the report is not explained entirely by the comprehensiveness of the investigation that ensued. It resulted also from objections to an earlier draft of the report by some of the interested parties in the United States. There is cause for concern here."

We need to know, before this debate concludes, how the Secretary of State responds to that concern.

The Times leader went on to say that such exceptional delay, even if not deliberate prevarication, may have put at a disadvantage some of those who were negotiating for compensation, and it proceeded:

> "The findings of such inquiries should be in the public domain as early as possible, for obvious reasons, and it may be that the remedy is to make sure they have the necessary legal privilege. Let there be a second report registering objections and conceding or answering them; the public interest is not served by the sort of time-lag that has occurred in this case."

Again, the *Manchester Evening News*, in a strongly worded leader on the same day, entitled "Far too little, far too late", argued for much more openness in investigating aviation accidents:

> "We remain convinced there should have been a full public inquiry into the runway fire. The Clapham rail disaster in December claimed 20 fewer lives yet a public inquiry was immediately promised with a pledge that it would publish its findings rapidly. Why should that be?"

The Secretary of State must accept that there is very widespread concern about the issues raised by the Manchester accident and the way in which they have been dealt with since August 1985. I make no apologies for having referred so frequently tonight to the reactions of the bereaved families and those who were injured in the accident. They have a prescriptive right to be heard by the House—I am sending the Secretary of State a full statement of their recommendations on the way forward—and it is quite shocking that they were still awaiting copies of the AAIB's report while the CAA was holding its press conference in the Connaught rooms last Monday. They feel bitter, as John Beardmore, a survivor who was in intensive care after the accident, made clear last Monday afternoon. Talking of the CAA, he said:

> "They let us down once by certificating that aircraft as safe when it was a death trap. Now they have let us down again by not taking enough action to improve safety in the most important matters—smokehoods and exits."

That is the authentic voice of those who have taken the closest interest in developments since the Manchester accident happened. They have strong public backing for their demand for higher standards of aviation safety. To give just one example, of which I was reminded today by Dr. James Vant, who has done so much to advance the cause of passenger safety, 18,081, or 97 per cent., of 18,666 people questioned in a recent attitude survey said it should be mandatory for airlines to provide smokehoods for passengers.

The accident at Manchester airport was an unusual one, but its lessons are widely applicable. If they are fully heeded, more lives will be saved and fewer people will be scarred by preventable injury. We must never again allow passengers to die on board a stationary aircraft after an engine fire on take-off as they did in Manchester on 22 August 1985.

10.18 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): The whole House wants transport safety to be maintained and improved. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) has made the point that the Manchester accident was an unusual accident followed by an unusual number of deaths. He will accept that, if much can be learned from the investigation following that tragic accident, people who fly throughout the world will benefit.

I reject completely any suggestion which people may infer from what the right hon. Gentleman said that either the air accidents investigation branch of the Department of Transport or the Civil Aviation Authority had turned their back on things that were obvious. I can illustrate that point by saying that if other countries had smoke hoods that would meet people's needs and could be put on easily and without delay when getting out of an aeroplane, they would be more common elsewhere. We ought to learn from the expert investigation and see how far forward we can go on the 31 recommendations.

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

Although the Civil Aviation Authority can speak for itself, I must reject some of the chronology to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. I do not question his motives or his sincerity. He has demonstrated in the House and outside a very keen interest in achieving the maximum possible aviation safety. Both I and the Secretary of State for Transport join him in that aim. He says that inquiries should be in public. I believe that it is far more important that the public should have the assurance that experts have done the investigation, and that the report should be published. I do not believe that strong accusations should be made in public as the experts go through the investigation. The primary cause of the Manchester air disaster was quickly identified.

The right hon. Gentleman has asked me what was the Civil Aviation Authority's response to recommendation 4.8:

"direct fusion weld repair of circumferential cracks in the JT8D engines combustor cans should be deleted from all approved engine overhaul manuals."

The CAA has accepted that recommendation and has issued an airworthiness directive. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will accept that the CAA has responded to the recommendations.

The CAA press conference, to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, began with a review of fire research, specifically without direct reference to the report. Reference to the report was made only after the publication time. I hope that those listening to this debate will recognise and accept that.

The publication date was the earliest possible, as determined by the chief inspector. It might be inferred from the right hon. Gentleman's remarks that the Department of Transport was trying to smother publication of the report or that there was prevarication. *The Times* leader applied that description to me on a different day. I reject it for myself, as well as for the Department, over this report. Prevarication, at its gentlest, means "to walk unsteadily", which is an accusation that I hope no one would make of me, certainly during Lent. It can also mean to "deliberately try to mislead".

In matters of aviation safety, as in other aspects of transport safety on the road and at sea, the Department of Transport has no interest and no record of misleading people. We have a greater interest in enhancing and maintaining safety than any other group of people in this country. The Secretary of State and I and our colleagues, as well as our predecessors and successors at the Department, carry the burden of attending incidents such as the M1 crash at Kegworth, and we watch the emergency services at work. We were the people who were called to the King's Cross tube disaster. I mention just two incidents that I have attended and leave aside the representative samples of the 5,000 deaths on the road each year. Any suggestion that we do not care or that we shall not do everything that we can to improve safety is wrong.

I shall not take up other remarks made by the right hon. Gentleman about quotations from others, as I suspect that those remarks were made before the CAA stated its position on the recommendations in the air accident investigation branch's report.

Towards the end of his remarks, the right hon. Gentleman asked why people whose reputations may be affected must be provided with an opportunity to comment in the report. A legal requirement to do that applies to each of the AAIB reports. I refer the right hon. Gentleman and the House to regulation 11 of the Air Accidents Investigation Regulations 1983.

The comments of those whose reputations may be affected might affect the reports conclusions. It is perfectly reasonable that people should be given the opportunity to make their comments known. I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the report, which is more than 200 pages long. Producing it has taken months, which is reasonable, because world-wide attention will be focused on it, and it deals with issues that the right hon. Gentleman rightly mentioned. I hope that this opportunity to reply to the right hon. Gentleman will correct some of the impressions that have surrounded the accident and subsequent investigation.

The right hon. Gentleman reminded us that 55 human beings died in an accident that should have been completely survivable. I think that that is the main point that he advanced. The report states that many factors came together to produce this tragic result. It made 106 findings and 31 recommendations. The complexity of the interrelated causes of the fatalities and the thoroughness with which the accident has been investigated are self-evident reasons why the report has taken so long to produce. Recent accident reports have appeared, on average, 15 months after the accident. This one is exceptional in every way. It is a landmark report in the investigation of aircraft fires. The House will want to join me in paying tribute to the investigators.

The delay in publication has had no effect whatever on the timing of recommendations and subsequent action. The inspector makes recommendations to the appropriate organisation as soon as he has concluded that such a recommendation is warranted. The CAA, which has the statutory responsibilility for the safety regulation of civil aviation, took note of the recommendations addressed to it and acted on them immediately. Immediate action leads to results in the future.

The CAA was aware of previous research on smoke hoods, which did not entirely accord with the view in the report. Some of the comments made on the day of the release of the report suggested that some people who were quoted as experts held views and were contributing to the debate. Research, in concert with the United States, France and Canada, was carried out and a specification developed which was presented to other people for comment. The final specification was agreed. It might be worth while the right hon. Gentleman acknowledging that that was a good action to take with others who have a keen professional interest and knowledge. I understand that three types of smoke hoods have recently been presented to the CAA for possible approval. All this takes time.

Some people say that the CAA specification is too demanding. As a frequent airline passenger, I agree with the CAA. I am offering a view not as an expert but as someone who realises that, if all the miles travelled on road were travelled in the air, instead of 5,000 there would be 650 deaths. The CAA believes that the donning of, and possible false sense of security given by, smoke hoods may delay evacuation. It would be quite wrong, because it could increase fatalities, to provide the worst of both worlds by delaying evacuation as a result of a less than adequate smoke hood.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned sprinkler systems, which promise a great leap forward. The best distribution

system must be determined for in-service aircraft, not just for scrap cabins used for fire drills. The question needs to be raised whether the system could go off inadvertently in flight. If it did, what would be the effect on the aircraft's electrical and electronic systems? We do not yet know the answer to these questions and the work takes time.

The need for such consultation, research or development applies to 24 of the 31 recommendations in the report. The remaining seven resulted in definitive action soon after being made.

Fires in aircraft are not new. The AAIB report on the Boeing 707 training accident on 17 March 1977 included a recommendation that further research should be urgently undertaken into the prevention and control of aircraft interior fires. Work was carried out and, indeed, was being carried out prior even to that accident. Much of the effort went into preventing fires occurring in the first place, such as the anti-misting kerosene research.

Until the Manchester accident, the main thrust of the research was directed to preventing cabin materials from cathcing fire. In fact, on 20 May 1985, three months before the Manchester tragedy, the CAA issued a directive requiring improved fire-resistant materials for aircraft seats. Since the accident, the industry now appreciates that the gases and fumes produced when these materials ignite is just as important as, if not more important than, their initial ignition.

I have dealt with those few items in some detail rather than trying to cover, necessarily superficially in the time available, all the recommendations. The ones that I have chosen are, together with the apparent delay in publication, those that seem to be of most public interest and have on occasion been the subject of the least-informed comment.

It has to be remembered that fire casualties form a small proportion of aircraft accident casualties. Effort must be allocated according to the degree of risk to passengers. For example, from the investigation of the Kegworth crash we may discover different needs. I refer not just to the primary cause but also to the secondary events, which, as so tragically at Manchester, can lead to the loss of life.

No one would suggest that the regulatory authorities or, indeed, the accident investigators have a monopoly of expertise in aircraft safety. In comments on this accident, we have seen too many specialists extrapolating expertise to wider areas where different circumstances apply. The best way of preventing such accidents in the future—which is what the right hon. Gentleman and I are dedicated to—is informed debate and consultation worldwide. Short cuts to conclusions, which we have seen outside this House, can only serve to deflect the effort of those concerned away from their primary task of making air travel even safer.

I am sure that the whole House is grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for raising this subject. There may have been one or two minor points of disagreement between us, but the general concern to make aviation travel—airports and planes—safe is one that we all share.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 17 March 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Overseas Development

9.36 am

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the widespread poverty, malnutrition and infant mortality, that afflict so many nations in the developing world; calls on the Government substantially to extend measures of debt reduction for both the poorest and middle-income heavily indebted nations; requests that the Overseas Development Administration establish a timetable to achieve the UN target for overseas aid of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product; and urges the Government to work to achieve international agreement to ensure that the negative transfer of resources from the developing to the developed world is reversed.

I was in some doubt as to where I should stand when moving this motion. As Opposition Front Bench spokesperson on aid and development I became frustrated by the fact that we were never given a Supply day because the Government did not consider the subject important enough to grant us a day's debate. Therefore, I decided to chance my luck and put in for a Back Bench motion, and I considered moving the motion from the Back Benches and coming down to the Front Bench to intervene during the debate. I thought that might cause confusion and, therefore, decided to do both from the Front Bench and thus, perhaps, enhance the status of the debate. After 19 years in the House—including a short break when resting —[HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."] It was disgraceful, I agree, but the electorate can be fickle. This is the first time that I have had the good luck to come first in the ballot for private Member's motions.

I decided to put down the motion in this form because I wanted to make it as wide as possible to allow hon. Members to raise their particular interests during the debate. I shall concentrate on one or two particular matters—obviously, I shall have to leave out others.

At 1 o'clock on Tuesday morning, we managed to have a debate—when the Minister for Overseas Development was travelling back from a visit abroad involving these very matters. We are indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for raising the subject of rain forests—and doing so in a graphic and startling fashion. Although I cannot pursue that subject today, I know that yesterday he asked several questions about it during the Budget debate. I hope that the Chancellor, or whoever is responsible for such matters, will deal with my hon. Friend's questions urgently, because they are extremely important. If we had time this would bring us to the Bruntland report and to what is happening to the environment in many developing countries. I hope that other hon. Members will deal with the EEC and 1992 and Lomé, and the problem of where we go from here.

In recent years the people of this country and many other parts of the industrialised world—there was evidence of it again only last week—have responded generously and with great feeling and commitment to the horrors of famine, war, disease, malnutrition, drought and debt that have confronted them in the media. UNICEF estimates that in the past 12 months 500,000 children have died as a result of the slowing down or reversal of development. That has been enough to make people respond generously, as they did for Comic Relief—and to ask why it is happening. For these children are dying not from the causes I mentioned a moment ago—famine, disease, war or drought—but from the failure of efforts to increase their chances of survival. The figures show that their chances are often reduced in spite of our efforts and the efforts of the Government, voluntary organisations and the British public, who have responded so generously to the various appeals.

UNICEF's recent disclosure that throughout Africa and Latin America average family incomes have fallen by between 10 and 25 per cent. since 1980 has shown that the availability of the bare necessities of life has been restricted for the poorest people. Child malnutrition is now on the increase in many countries. I remind the House—although many hon. Members are aware of it—that a third of all child deaths occur in just three countries—Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. It is tragic to witness that and to have to acknowledge it almost 30 years after the United Nations proclaimed the first development decade.

Governments in debt to the richer nations have been forced to cut expenditure on social services; 40 of the least developed countries have slashed spending on health by 50 per cent. a head and on education by 25 per cent. a head in the past few years. The proportion of six to 11-year olds who are at school in Third world countries is now falling.

There is, too, the problem of the southern African front-line states. In a spirit of agreement or fellow feeling, I want to point out that my union, the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union, launched an appeal for Mozambique and, on behalf of UNICEF, I went to see what was happening there and to witness the devastation that has been caused by the bandits Renamo. When I returned and reported the plight of a particular hospital in the Gaza province to the Minister he contributed £60,000 to the appeal to equip the hospital. When I saw it it had no blankets, medicines, mattresses, or bandages—it had nothing. It had been starved and robbed by the bandits, who are destabilising the whole country.

In the context of the south African development co-ordination conference countries, it is unfortunate that our bilateral aid in 1987 was only 64 per cent. of its 1979 level in real terms. That represents a cumulative loss up to 1987 of about $480 million in real terms. The Commonwealth committee of Foreign Ministers on southern Africa reported in February this year that the cost of south Africa's destabilisation has been well over one million people killed and several million disabled and estimated damage of about $35 billion since 1980. So whatever we do to help Mozambique—the Government have done much more for it than for some other front-line states—these countries are being destabilised and are losing out rapidly.

Whether we are discussing the front-line states or other parts of the developing world, those of us who have seen the results of poverty, malnutrition, drought, disease, famine and war, as many hon. Members and the Minister have frequently done, know that for these millions of people the name of the game is survival, and that many are

[Miss Joan Lestor]

losing that game. The children of Third world countries are paying those countries' debts with their lives. That is one of the most appalling things that we must recognise.

I pay tribute to all the Government and voluntary agencies and the people who are working in Third world countries and doing their best, often in appallingly difficult circumstances, to meet some of the challenges of directing programmes to the poor and of doing as UNICEF and other bodies have done—carrying out programmes of immunisation to try to save children and taking part in a variety of projects. They know the long-lasting effects that such work will have. Our Government are responsible for ensuring that they make a far greater contribution than in recent years.

In the 1960s the United Nations proclaimed the first development decade in a spirit of optimism and progress that has been short-lived. The 1980s have been a decade of debt, not development. Economic growth and social progress have been stalled. There has been little or no development. In its place, debt has grown, accompanied by rising malnutrition, poverty and infant mortality throughout Africa and Latin America.

When I first took up these responsibilities I went to see the IMF and the World Bank, institutions that were not well known to me at that time, and like my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland)—for many years he has done a great deal of work in this area—I became convinced that the one overwhelming problem that we now faced was is debt.

The most graphic illustration of the debt decade is the negative transfer of funds from north to south; the positive investment and development of the 1960s and 1970s have been reversed. Since the early 1980s, the heavily indebted countries of the Third world have been forced to make massive annual repayments. A positive transfer in favour of the Third world of more than $30 billion has turned into a negative flow that amounted to $29 billion in 1987. The major debtor countries, most of which are to be found in Latin America, have thereby had their long-term growth prospects undermined, and domestic investment has collapsed. Per capita income has fallen by 30 per cent. in real terms. To sustain their debt service these countries have been forced to boost exports and to cut imports. Their volume of imports has declined by 40 per cent. since 1980. Import compression on this scale has caused a similar massive decline in domestic investment, which diminishes prospects for further growth.

Despite these efforts, the burden of debt is increasing. According to an analysis by the United Nations conference on trade and development, the aggregate debt profile of the most heavily indebted countries is worse today than when the crisis first emerged in 1982. Their debt as a ratio of GDP rose last year to 50 per cent. from 42 per cent. in 1982. The debtors' plight in Latin America and elsewhere remains a drag on world economic growth and harms the trading interests of the creditor nations.

The leaders of the industrialised nations have yet to understand the lessons of interdependence that were so powerfully expressed in the original and subsequent reports of the Brandt commission—a best seller in its day, which proves the point that I made about the interest of large numbers of people in these matters.

The debt problems of the developing countries caused by monetarist policies of deflation and high interest rates have damaged north-south trade. Overseas sales and domestic growth in the industrialised countries have been lost. According to UNCTAD, by 1984 total OECD exports to developing countries were about $46 billion a year below their average for 1980-81—a trade loss that has cost as many as three million jobs in industry in this country and diminished tax revenues from companies and employees throughout the industrialised world.

Despite the 1985 plan proposed by former United States Treasury Secretary Jim Baker, negative transfers persist. While the debt crisis may have been contained, it has not been solved. The major debtors are making unparalleled repayments at huge economic and social cost while the creditors lose both export markets and jobs.

Meanwhile, the commercial banks have led a private sector stampede away from the business of overseas development. The banks have offered virtually no new loans to the debtors since 1982. According to the IMF, there has been a precipitous drop in private financial flows to the Third world. The banks have unambiguously declared their refusal to consider a new wave of lending to refinance even the most successful adjustment programmes and efforts of the debtor nations.

As a result, as the House is aware, the public sector is forced to fill that financial gap. The share of total finance to the major debtors accounted for by the public sector has risen from 10 per cent. between 1979 and 1982 to more than 60 per cent. between 1983 and 1987. It is high time that policy makers in the leading industrialised countries accepted the market's hidden realism about the debts crisis. I hope that the new plan proposed by the United States Treasury Screetary Mr. Brady will mark a significant shift in policy. I know that it is too early to know what the scheme offers, but I hope that the forthcoming spring meetings of the World Bank and the IMF in Washington will break new ground.

A co-operative and explicitly political solution to the debt crisis is undoubtedly needed. The scope exists for a bargain to be struck between debtors and creditors, both public and private. We need to achieve debt reduction that will enhance growth in trade. A number of proposals already exist for the creation of an institution, perhaps an affiliate to the World Bank, capitalised by the creditor nation Governments which can offer funds or guarantee to facilitate debt reduction. Such schemes might involve the provision of fixed interest bonds against which commercial banks can exchange, at a discount, some of the developing country loans in their portfolios. As a result of that, the burden of the debtor nation would be reduced, stimulating development and trade while the bank's balance sheet would also improve. All those proposals are worth considering.

Critics of debt relief argue that taxpayers' money would be offered to bail out the banks. However, the taxpayer is already giving relief to the banks for debt improvisation and more widely suffering the lost revenues resulting from diminished trade and employment caused by the debt crisis. To be credible and fair, any scheme of debt reduction must ensure that the banks shoulder a significant proportion of any loss.

Inevitably, the public sector must play a key role in debt reduction. The World Bank and the IMF are already providing publicly funded resources to assist the adjustment processes of the Third world. Those agencies

are obviously central to a programme of debt reduction and they will need greater resources in future. The surplus nations of the group of 7, especially Japan, could make a substantial major contribution.

Debt reduction does not imply a generalised write-off of the liabilities of countries like those in Latin America. The magnitude of capital flight from that region clearly illustrates the moral hazard of unconditional debt relief. Any new mechanism for debt reduction, probably managed by the World Bank, would of necessity adopt a case by case approach offering phased rather than one-off debt reduction. I am glad to see that the Minister thinks that that is a good idea. Those are the broad parameters of a politically feasible scheme of debt reduction. Such a co-operative approach would offer the prospect for shared benefits by debtor and creditor nations alike while promoting international trade and world economic growth.

In the absence of agreement on debt relief, there is a real threat that the present strategy of containment of the debt crisis will break down. The debts of Latin America and elsewhere are highly sensitive, as we all know, to rising dollar interest rates and the prospects of improvement in the trade deficit of the United States. Therefore, action now to achieve debt reduction would sharply reduce the risks of a recession caused by economic adjustment in America.

The lesson of the debt crisis is that international financial flows need public sector guidance. The bank lending spree of the 1970s produced the classic market failure of boom and bust. Today all forms of private finance, including direct investment and bank lending, have made an ungainly retreat from the Third world.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): This is very important. I understand entirely what the hon. Lady has said about debt reduction. I was heavily involved in making many of those loans when the lending boom was going on. I recognise that many of the loans that were made then were unwise on the part of the banks and probably unwise from the point of view of development in those countries. However, it is important to remember that those loans were borrowed at the instigation of the countries that borrowed them. Very few of the loans made to Latin America were made other than to the Governments of the countries concerned. The proposals put up for those loans were backed by development information which clearly showed that that country not only believed that it could repay the loan, but that the loan would be beneficial to the country's development. Our problem in the future, as I understand it, is that if we are to do what the hon. Lady has suggested, we must somehow control how those countries use the money that they borrow.

Miss Lestor: I do not disagree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. However, I find it incredibly easy to borrow money. I receive invitations daily telling me how simple it is to borrow. I need only take this mock cheque or whatever and I can have as much as I like. Of course the loans were made at the request of the Governments concerned, but, my God, it was made extremely easy for many of them to borrow and the fact that things might go wrong was left out of the account. I do not want to pursue that because I want to achieve agreement in the House on these issues. I do not want people to look back. However, if we consider the history of some of the loans, it is obvious that they were made extremely attractive. The posibility of the economies going wrong was left out of the account. Similarly, if the interest rates and mortgage rates rise in this country and if commodity prices fall, what happens then? I am sure that the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) will make his contribution later.

In future we must ensure that there is a positive and more sustainable balance of public and private sector finance for development. Measures for debt reduction are essential to reduce today's negative flows of funds from the south to the north. Fortunately, sub-Saharan Africa has already gained some measure of debt relief. Africa's financial quagmire is forcing the conservative advocates of sound money and balanced budgets to think again. Nevertheless, the continent is today suffering from an acute financial famine.

According to the recent report to the United Nations secretary-general prepared by an expert group under the chairmanship of Sir Douglas Wass, Africa needs a minimum of $5 billion a year to overcome its chronic debt and development crisis. The report warns that almost all of sub-Saharan Africa is suffering from import strangulation. Machinery is breaking down for want of spare parts, development programmes are under threat and per capita GDP has fallen by 2·9 per cent. each year during the 1980s.

I acknowledge that some progress on African debt has been made. For example, we have the much trumpeted plan from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. As the House will be aware, at the recent annual meeting of the World Bank and the IMF in Berlin, agreement was reached on a plan, which was jointly promoted by Britain and France, to assist the poorest African debtors. The plan offers debt forgiveness, reduced interest rates and longer-term loan rescheduling. The Labour party fully supports that plan as far as it goes. It would be churlish of us not to do so. I welcome it and hope that other industrialised countries will act on the urgent need for debt relief in Africa.

It is not hard for us to offer bipartisan support for the initiative, because the scale of Africa's plight warrants a united approach and because the plan was of course inherited from the Labour party. As long ago as 1978, Judith Hart, the then Minister of State for Overseas Development, negotiated an agreement at UNCTAD to turn former official aid loans to the poorest countries into grants. That scheme freed the debtor from many outstanding repayments and covered public as distinct from private debts for many low income countries.

The Conservative Government elected in 1979 continued that policy. Subsequently, about £1 billion has been written off, of which £260 million was owed by African debtors. Reduced interest rates and longer-term rescheduling figured prominently in our policy statement on overseas development that was published at the time of the last general election. It is gratifying that the Chancellor has borrowed from that policy and is carrying forward the achievements of the last Labour Government.

However, it remains distressing that there has been a massive real decline in Britain's aid programme and in the assistance that we give to Africa. The Tory Government have allowed aid as a percentage of our gross national product to fall to a record low of 0·28 per cent. As a result, our level of aid to sub-Saharan Africa in 1987 was 26 per cent. lower than that achieved in 1979. The accumulative loss in real terms over that period was a massive £600 million.

[Miss Lestor]

At a recent sports event to raise money in the Minister's constituency, he and I took part in the presentation of a mock cheque for that amount, to show what the aid budget would have been had the achievements of 1979 been carried forward. However, I am aiming for unity today and I do not wish to score points.

The Chancellor's credibility in championing debt relief for Africa collapses in the wake of such an appallingly low level of development aid. Of course we welcome moves towards debt relief, as I have already said, but when one compares it with the declining level of aid given, the comparison is not flattering. As long ago as 1983, the Prime Minister accepted that the Government should move towards the United Nations' target for overseas aid "when economic circumstances permit". I cannot imagine that there is any excuse today for not substantially increasing our aid programme. On Tuesday, the Chancellor revealed to the House that he had a surplus of more than £14 billion, so he certainly has the resources available.

The Chancellor says that he cannot spend those funds, because he is worried about domestic inflation and our balance of payments, but those constraints do not apply to overseas aid. Such expenditure would not be inflationary since the money would go abroad and, by assisting British industry, would also help our export performance. The case for a substantial increase in aid has never been stronger, as the words of the Prime Minister herself demonstrate.

Britain must improve her performance in respect of overseas aid. It is shameful that the OECD's recent review of the British aid programme is sharply critical of our record, as was the report of the Select Committee. The OECD states unequivocally that the time has come for Britain to reverse the decline in her aid to GNP ratio. It refers also to burden-sharing among the major donor nations, with a straightforward and deeply humiliating expression of concern that Britain is not pulling her weight or honouring her commitment to reach the United Nations' target—a target that has been accepted even by the Prime Minister.

The motion before the House urges the Government to re-establish a timetable of expenditure increases to reach the United Nations' target. That proposal was also made in the last Session, in a Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). I hope that the Minister will reconsider his opposition to the expenditure timetable, because without such a measure of progress the Government will never restore the ratio—at least, not to the level they inherited from the last Labour Government.

More aid must be combined with more debt relief. The debt crisis emphatically demonstrates the inadequacy of the existing Bretton Woods institutions—the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Those institutions were established in 1945 to promote the financial and economic reconstruction of post-war industrial Europe, and not the development of low-income countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Their management structure and economic assumptions have not adapted to the new diversity of problems.

Changes to the Bretton Woods institutions have been resisted by conservative governments in the West, but new opportunities for modernising them are on the horizon. The increased self-confidence of the EEC as it moves towards 1992, and the new interest of the Soviet Union and of China in possible membership of those institutions suggest that there is a serious prospect of modernisation in the 1990s. My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall has done a great deal of work in respect of all those matters.

Africa has accumulated a heavy burden of debt to multilateral agencies, especially the World Bank. Much of that debt cannot be rescheduled for fear of damaging the bank's own credit rating, but without relief, many countries risk falling into arrears with the World Bank, as some have already done with the IMF. The bank may soon become part of Africa's debt problem rather than be a contributor to its solution.

Debt service to the World Bank in 1986 amounted to 67 per cent. of Tanzania's public debt service, 46 per cent. of that of Zambia, and 30 per cent. of that of Kenya. The Nordic countries have, in response, proposed the creation of a facility to refinance a substantial proportion of those debts. The World Bank responded to that idea by creating a special fund through which donors can offer additional aid. The fund will pay for the ending of some outstanding loans, thus alleviating the burden of repayment for the debtors. The British Government should be prepared to contribute to the Nordic scheme. I have made that point before, and I look forward to the Minister's comments.

The World Bank should also offer to convert outstanding soft loans offered by the International Development Association to grants. IDA credits now amount to 29 billion dollars. The next IDA replenishment, which will be negotiated early next year, should be wholly in the form of grants, not loans. I understand that former IDA recipients such as South Korea might benefit from that scheme. The Minister made that point to me when we last debated these matters in Committee, and I accept the truth of it. However, special arrangements could be negotiated so that countries no longer eligible for IDA funds could make special repayments equivalent to their outstanding loans. There does not have to be one overall policy for all countries. Such payments could be made into the Nordic facility that I mentioned.

A package of additional measures of debt relief combined with increased aid, which is urgently needed, would help to break Africa's downward spiral of poverty and debt. Today, as in the past, we are trying to play a constructive role in tackling the debt crisis and promoting growth in and trade with the Third world.

Our strategy is to meet the challenge of development. If we do not meet that challenge, we shall find that there are serious repercussions. Monetarist dogma has made the 1980s the decade of debt. As we reach the 1990s, we must ensure that we move out of debt and into development. If we fail, more children will die. I began my speech by referring to the increase in child deaths. Without aid, more services will be cut and the gap between the developed world and the developing world will widen. The consequences are too terrifying to contemplate.

10.8 am

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): I congratulate the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) on her luck. I am extremely glad that, having won

the ballot, she chose to debate this subject. I suppose, to follow the hon. Lady's remarks, that it is rather like winning first prize in a raffle and choosing to have dinner with one's self.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): One could not make a better choice.

Mr. Patten: I much agree with the hon. Gentleman's comment, but do not want to be accused of making a sexist remark. We all thank the hon. Lady for choosing the subject of overseas development. As she said, the House does not often have an opportunity to debate aid and development. That is not because of any lack of public interest, because we saw from the response to Comic Relief how much public interest does exist. There is certainly public interest, but I do not think that there is much public controversy about our aid programme, with one exception. That general agreement is reflected in the main reports of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and in what the Public Accounts Committee had to say the other day, namely:

"We consider that the Overseas Development Administration have adopted a generally sound approach to monitoring and controlling the Multilateral Aid programme."

I am delighted with that endorsement, and only sorry that it was not reflected in all the press reports on the PAC's findings.

We have a sensible and effective aid programme, the quality of which is generally reckoned to be as high as anyone's. Of course it is not perfect; we go on trying to improve it and to sharpen our performance in helping poor people and countries, and in helping to promote sustainable development. The controversy, such as it is, concentrates not on what we do but on how much we do. I intend to deal with that at the close of my remarks, but first I want to present a general review of how our aid strategy touches on some of the main points raised by the hon. Member for Eccles.

I think—at least, I hope—that the hon. Lady will accept that the story of aid and development is not one of unmitigated disaster. We tend to concentrate on the problems that confront developing countries. That is not surprising as those problems are so formidable, but we should remember some of the successes, too, and learn from them. Aid in the past couple of decades has helped developing countries to secure a fall in child mortality rates far sharper, and over a shorter period, than we have ever managed in most developed countries, although the rates are still far too high. It has helped developing countries to increase life expectancy rather more rapidly than we have managed in developed countries. It has also helped to improve literacy rates and enrolment in primary schools more rapidly, and to increase access to potable water. Those are all successes, and I think that they justify the use of aid for sensible, effective and well targeted programmes.

We can also point to individual sectoral and national success stories. We can point, for example, to the green revolution in Asia, the extraordinary agricultural successes in a number of Asian countries—as a result partly of farmers being offered a decent price, partly of the application of appropriate science and technology to agricultural techniques and partly of the development of good and effective agricultural extension services. We have also seen the spectacular take-off of individual Asian economies—particularly those in east Asia, although they are now being followed rapidly by a number of economies in south-east Asia.

How have those countries achieved so much? First, they have had a good deal of support from outside, both official development assistance and private investment, and they have used that support well. Secondly, they have attracted private investment because of the sensible way in which they have run their economies. Thirdly, they have usually enjoyed political stability. Fourthly, they have followed a market-oriented economic policy and prudent financial policies, and have believed in the price mechanism. Fifthly, they have placed equal emphasis on a few simple social goals, above all, basic education and training and basic health care. They have invested in their people, and the rest of the world has therefore invested in them.

It is interesting to note that 25 years ago everyone thought that Africa would be the success story in development and that Asia would be where all the tragedies were played out. It has, alas, turned out to be the other way round. We certainly should not under-estimate the scale of the problems that Africa has had to face in the past few years—war and civil conflict, ecological degradation, appalling health problems and now the terrible scourge of AIDS. It has had to face a fall in the price of many of the basic commodities that it exports; it has often had to face an unfavourable international economic environment. At the same time, too many African countries have been implementing policies that have been at best inappropriate and at worst disastrous.

As a result, in the 1980s much of Africa has suffered a slump in living standards rather greater than the one that we suffered in the north of the globe in the 1920s and 1930s, and it has done so albeit from a far lower standard of living. I think that it is fair to argue, however, that we have now reached a turning point. Let me quote from the recently published report by the World Bank and the United Nations development programme on Africa's adjustment and growth in the 1980s:

"The evidence of the past three years leaves room for optimism. These encouraging signs, though still preliminary, augur well for the future."

The vice-president of the World Bank responsible for the Africa region, and the assistant administrator of the UNDP responsible for the regional bureau for Africa, say in their foreword to the report, "Recovery has begun."

As the report says, the evidence of the past three years gives us some grounds for hope. The report refers to the growing economic reform movement in Africa, which is gathering strength throughout the region. More than half its countries have now undertaken significant reforms. They are cutting back unnecessary bureaucracy, setting more realistic exchange rates, curbing inflation, improving incentives for farmers, liberalising their economies and encouraging the private sector. We know that that reform process can be uncomfortable and even painful; we also know that it requires considerable political courage to implement many of the reforms.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The Minister will be aware of the argument that the instructions given by the Government to the British director of the World Bank —at present Mr. Cassell—are less publicised than those given by the Americans to their director. Would it not be proper to tell the House exactly what we are saying to our director, and how we operate?

Mr. Patten: I note that the hon. Gentleman made that point in his recent speech. I am delighted to deal with it now, although it interrupts the flow of my argument. If the hon. Gentleman does not mind my saying so, he makes something of a false point. It is of course inconceivable that I could avoid explaining in terms to the House what the Government proposed to do about a matter as controversial as the one that I think gave rise to his question—the World Bank loan to the power sector in Brazil. Beyond that, I have given an assurance to environmental NGOs and other interested parties that we will consult them before making up our mind what to do on the board of the World Bank about that proposed loan, and about other equally controversial matters affecting the environment. I do not think that it is reasonable or possible to be much more open than that, while at the same time taking account of the need for commercial sensitivity from time to time in view of some of the operations that we are discussing on the board.

I agree, however, that the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised has caused concern to many people over the years. My strong feeling is that it is always better to say more rather than less on these issues and that, as we have to do that anyway at the end of the day, we might as well start off by doing it. I hope that I have answered the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Dalyell: I thank the Minister.

Mr. Patten: Two things stand out reasonably clearly so far from the success of the reform movement in Africa. First, to carry on with misguided policies has only one result. It impoverishes those who are already poor. Secondly, the reform programmes are starting to show results. The results are set out in terms in the report to which I referred. The most obvious consequence is a revival of growth, especially in the agricultural sector. For many countries that have abandoned the failed policies of the 1970s, not only is growth higher but their exports are higher. Farmers' real incomes have also increased. The policies have attracted donor support, by means of both conventional aid programmes and debt initiatives. We have been, and we shall remain, prominent on both counts.

The House knows that we are providing a growing share of our aid programme to support economic policy reform, especially in Africa but also elsewhere. Just over a year ago, we pledged up to £250 million of bilateral programme aid—balance of payments support—over three years to the World Bank's co-ordinated special programme of action for the poorest and most heavily indebted countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In 1988, we made new programme aid commitments to sub-Saharan Africa of over £100 million. The House also knows about the central role that we have played recently in support of the Nigerian economic reform programme. We played the leading role—I think one can say that without vanity—in co-ordinating the international community's assistance to the Nigerian economic reform programme. We decided to contribute $100 million to that reform programme. Over two thirds of it was new money. It was a genuine addition to our published aid programme. I am delighted that we have made such good progress in bringing together support for that crucial reform programme in west Africa.

Last month I was in Uganda. While I was there I was able to commit a further £21 million of grant aid to Uganda, including £10 million of programme aid to that country's economic reform programme. That brings to about £110 million the money that we have either committed to or spent in Uganda since President Museveni came to power. It is clear that President Museveni and his Government face problems of Herculean size in the next few years, after the horrors of the last 10 to 15 years. I was extremely impressed by the progress that Uganda has already made in starting to tackle some of those horrific problems. The country deserves and, for my part, it will continue to receive as much support as possible.

I am sure that the House is also aware that one of the most successful stories of adjustment is that of Ghana. I am pleased to be able to tell the House that we propose to pledge a further £20 million to support Ghana's economic recovery programme and that we also intend to spend an additional £10 million to support Kenya's programme. The House may recollect that we have agreed to make the largest single contribution to the interest subsidy account of the International Monetary Fund's enhanced structural adjustment facility. Britain's contribution will be sufficient to subsidise up to £750 million of new lending.

I should like to deal with two additional points that are also relevant. First, I believe that there is a remarkable convergence of thinking within and between OECD countries and developing countries about the need for policy reform if growth prospects are to be restored and poverty is to be overcome. There is wide consensus that aid for bad policies is wasted aid. However, our critics suggest that there is a severe social impact as a result of the reform programmes and that there is still a shortage of funds to support reform and economic development.

It should be recognised that there is a calamitous social impact if countries do not reform. However, it is a fair point that in the early stages of the reform movement not enough account was taken by all donors of the social or environmental impact of structural adjustment programmes. That position is changing—partly, no doubt, thanks to the advocacy of organisations such as UNICEF. When programmes are designed, we are now taking far greater account of the social dimension. We are playing our part —I refer to what we are doing in Tanzania and Ghana —and we shall also play our part in paying for the consequences.

Although it is true that reform has attracted greater finance from donors, more funds will be needed as more aid recipients embark—as we all hope they will—on restructuring programmes. It is wrong to misuse figures. The last part of the motion tabled by the hon. Member for Eccles is seriously misleading and she developed the point during her speech. She referred to a large net transfer from developing to developed countries and used a World Bank figure. Given the statistical parameters within which she was working, she could have used the large figure of $43 billion that has been reported in the press during the last few days.

The way in which figures have been used is misleading on a number of counts. That figure covers all developing countries. There is no reason why the newly-prosperous developing countries, such as Korea, should not pay back the money that they have borrowed to develop their industries. It does not make sense to behave as though Korea and Mozambique are in precisely the same category. We should be concerned about the position of the poorest countries. It is even more significant that the

figure that the hon. Lady used takes no account of other flows, such as grant aid. The figure measures only the difference between the repayment of loans and known and new lending.

If we include grants—which seems to me, as we are talking about overseas development, to be not unreasonable—and look at net capital flows to sub-Saharan Africa, a very different picture emerges from that which was suggested by the hon. Lady. According to the OECD figures, the flows of funds to this extremely poor region—probably the poorest region in the world—have been strongly positive throughout the 1980s. In 1987 they amounted to $20 billion—or, to be strictly accurate, to $15 billion after deducting interest payments. That is, to repeat myself, a different picture from that which was painted by the hon. Lady and by her motion.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): As the Minister is dealing with statistics, can he tell the House when the Government expect to achieve the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. GNP?

Mr. Patten: As I said at the outset of my remarks, I intend to deal with volume and the percentage of GNP at the end of my speech. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall not disappoint him. I shall turn to the issue with considerable relish.

Debt naturally affects capital flows. The hon. Lady was right to make that point. She made a number of interesting observations about it. Third world debt is over $1,000 billion.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Before my hon. Friend moves on to his next subject of debt, will he give the House the details of the amount of money that he has transferred from the Indian and Asian programmes to Africa in the past two or three years, as there has been a major change of thrust and in the amount of money from ODA into Africa?

Mr. Patten: It would be fairer to say that we have used the welcome increase in our aid programme to support our programmes in Africa. We have spent less in India in the past two years mainly because we did not have sufficient projects in the pipeline, but I am about to announce new projects in the pipeline which may adjust that balance in future. Nevertheless, it is true, as my hon. Friend suggests, that the bulk of our new enhanced expenditure will be used to support economic reforms in sub-Saharan Africa.

As I said, half of Third world debt—about $500 billion—is in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. As the hon. Lady made clear, that sum has been the focus of particular attention. The poorest indebted countries are those in Africa and they owe about $100 billion in debt, mainly to the multilateral institutions and to Governments. We have put a great deal of effort into trying to help solve their problems. The House will be aware of our successes. Last year we finally achieved international agreement on the Chancellor's debt initiative at the Toronto summit. It provides a menu of different ways for providing concessional rescheduling of bilateral official debts from the poorest and most heavily indebted countries that are trying to pursue sensible policies. We shall agree to long-term rescheduling of bilateral official debt at concessional interest rates. Already seven African countries have negotiated concessional Toronto terms in the Paris club, and more will follow. As regards aid debts we have led the way in converting past aid loans to grants and the policy of retrospective terms adjustment has relieved the poorest countries of aid debts totalling more than £1 billion. As the hon. Lady said, that includes 13 of the poorest countries in Africa at a cost of £260 million. I am delighted to learn that one of my predecessors, Baroness Hart, had the same idea. Fortunately, after the 1979 general election we were in a position to do something about it.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Oh, that is very clever—really clever.

Mr. Patten: I am sure that the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) made a major contribution to the fact that we have been able to discharge those obligations.

Latin America has debts of some $400 million, mainly owed to commercial banks. We have been seeking a country-by-country solution combining economic reform, substantial support from the IMF and World Bank and voluntary agreements between the debtors and the banks on how to deal with the outstanding debts. That strategy has made a valuable contribution to dealing with the problem of middle income debtors. We shall be looking carefully at the latest United States proposals for debt reduction in the run up to the IMF-World Bank interim committee meeting next month to which the hon. Lady referred, when we expect they will be further discussed. We have yet to see detailed proposals.

The existing debt strategy provides for voluntary debt reduction, and to that extent the United States proposals may be seen as an extension of present strategy. Our wish is that we should not transfer the responsibility for commercial debts from the banks to the taxpayers, nor should we deter commercial banks from future lending to those countries and, of course, the hon. Lady referred to the problems of moral hazard.

The aid programme is primarily about sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty. Sustainable development requires sound policies including an enhanced role for the private sector, care for the environment, both local and global, and the strengthening of local institutions to sustain what is created by donors' help. Alleviating poverty requires economic growth, and for economic growth to be politically and environmentally sustainable it requires an attack on poverty.

What do I conclude should be the key elements in our aid programme? I have already said much about our support for economic policy reform. Let me assure the House that environmental issues will be given equal prominence. I have absolutely no doubt about the importance of helping developing countries to tackle their environmental problems and to participate in the initiative to counter global and environmental damage.

Mr. Dalyell: The Department's foresters under Ron Kemp have a good international reputation and are people of the highest quality, but with all their work with the International Tropical Timber Organisation and the tropical forest action plan, and answering public inquiries and inquisitive Members of Parliament, they are really overworked. Is the Minister satisfied that he has the number of people in his Department necessary to carry out that environmental work?

Mr. Patten: It is perhaps a mild comfort that we have rather more expertise available than some other donor

[Mr. Patten]

agencies, but of course the hon. Gentleman raises an important point. As we attempt to do more in the forestry sector there are bound to be consequences for the expertise and manpower that we have available and we shall have to keep the issue under careful scrutiny and attention. I have no doubt about the validity of what the hon. Gentleman says but we can draw on other expertise, for example, the work of the Oxford forestry institution and other academic institutions.

We intend to use our influence in the multilateral agencies to ensure that they put greater emphasis on environmental needs in allocating their resources. We shall set an example in the way that we manage our own bilateral aid programme. Today we have published a manual for our aid programme managers on assessing environmental impact. We already do that through our forestry initiative, which was described in detail in my hon. Friend's reply to the debate on tropical rain forests earlier this week. I join others in congratulating the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on initiating that useful debate in the middle of the night.

I learnt first hand about the Amer-Indian perspective when I met Chief Paiakan of the Kayapo tribe before Christmas. Naturally, it is extremely important that we raise issues of forestry destruction with other states constructively in a way which makes clear our respect for their national sovereignty. Forests are not global property, even if their preservation has global significance. Undoubtedly, Brazilian Government policies have contributed to the destruction of the rain forests but there have been recent and hopeful policy reforms. We must welcome them and encourage their effective implementation while continuing to monitor the situation carefully.

The Brazilian Government regards our research project on Maraca Island as a shining example of the positive international co-operation that Brazil would welcome for saving the rain forests. To date Brazil has been wary of foreign assistance, but in recent discussions the Brazilian Government asked for further technical co-operation, possibly to assist in understanding the genetic potential of the Amazon. We are considering that request urgently. Of course our technical assistance would be only one small part of an international effort. No one has the resources to take on the Amazon single-handed.

The other dimension of any aid programme must be a concern with poverty. I have recently approved new project commitments totalling £50 million as a poverty alleviation programme in India—the Andhra Pradesh primary education project, the Orissa family welfare project and a number of agricultural projects across several states directed at the poorest groups. We are also financing a number of urban projects to deal with slum improvements in Hyderabad, Indor and Visag at a cost of some £65 million. They combine physical infrastructure improvements with work in community development, health and education. Our experience of those projects so far is encouraging and we are planning to do more.

As part of our concern with poverty we have been increasing our support for the voluntary agencies working overseas through the joint funding scheme. The voluntary agencies are particularly effective in working at the grass roots and helping local communities to help themselves. In the next financial year I am proposing to allocate £16 million for the joint funding scheme—an increase of 43 per cent. on the allocation for this year. In 1986-87 we spent less than £6 million under the joint funding scheme on non-governmental organisations. Next year we will spend at least £16 million. Those figures speak for themselves.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): When the all-party parliamentary group on population and development went to India we heard that the Indian Government were grateful, as was the Family Planning Association, for all that the Government and my hon. Friend the Minister are doing. However, one of the points raised was that the money given went to the Indian Government and not all of it—in fact not much at all—was seen by the voluntary bodies, particularly the Family Planning Association, which does such important work with population control. Has the Minister thought of giving money direct to organisations such as that so that it misses out the Government conduit?

Mr. Patten: In a number of cases we give funds directly to family planning associations such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation. We also give money directly to United Nations family planning projects and to other organisations involved in family planning such as Marie Stopes International. Circumstances vary from one country to another but I shall look into that important point.

I should like to pay tribute to the work done by not only our non-governmental organisations but by our volunteer organisations. They do a superb job which justifies the increasing financial support that we have provided for them. Last year we increased our grants to the volunteer organisations by over 16 per cent. This year we have increased our grants to those organisations by over 20 per cent. and, next year, we intend once again to increase our grants to them by over 20 per cent., bringing the grants to £13 million. That is money well spent. All attempts to use the non-governmental organisations more and to put more through the volunteer organisations help to enhance the quality of our total aid programme.

Finally —not because there is not plenty more I could say but because I want to allow other hon. Members to participate in the debate—I want to deal with volume. I shall deal initially with the facts. We inherited from the previous Labour Administration—a distant and not especially sweet memory—an economy that was somewhat less than robust. Anyone who disbelieves that should consult the memoirs of those Labour politicians who have subsequently spilled the beans in order to add a little well-deserved comfort to their retirements.

From 1979 to 1982, in order to help restore our economic health, we cut public expenditure, including our spending on aid. The aid programme was held at that level until last year. During that period we saw the economy steadily expand again. The percentage of our GNP spent on aid therefore fell. In the autumn of 1987 we secured, for the first time since 1979, an increase in the aid programme.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Tell us the percentage.

Mr. Patten: I will do so in a moment.

We secured an increase in the aid programme in real terms for the following expenditure period. We turned a corner and we went on motoring in the last public spending round. The aid programme will increase by 5 per cent. in real terms in the coming year over the figure

originally planned for this year. The aid programme is starting to reflect the increased strength of the British economy and I hope that it will continue to do so.

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): Will my hon. Friend say whether the 5 per cent. figure is based on the inflation forecast in the Autumn Statement or on the new inflation figures given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget Statement?

Mr. Patten: We have attempted to make the figure as up to date as possible. It is based on the latest GDP inflator.

In the autumn of 1987 we secured an increase and that has continued. As I have said, we look forward, after the Budget, to a 5 per cent. increase in real terms next year.

I appreciate that that is not sufficient for the Labour party—a party which when in office took us cap in hand to the IMF. It now grumbles at us—a Government who have been able to make the major contribution to the interest subsidy account of the IMF's enhanced structural adjustment facility to help today's debtors. That list of debtors, naturally, does not include the United Kingdom. It does not take a financial genius to work out that we are of more long-term assistance to developing countries as a growing economy, a major private investor in developing countries and one of the largest contributors to international debt initiatives, than as a Carey street layabout—all mouth and no pocket.

The House may be interested to learn that in the period 1984-87 total United Kingdom direct investment in developing countries exceeded that from the rest of the European Community put together. That is the mark of a strong and open economy. I shall be fair—as fair as I always am to the Labour party. The Labour party has a clear policy on aid. The Leader of the Opposition tells us that a Labour Government would increase the aid programme. In fact I should not be so reticent he said that they would double the aid programme. That is extremely generous. The rabbit comes out of the hat and £1·5 billion appears just like that.

Far be it from me to inject a note of mild partisanship into otherwise amiable proceedings. However, we are obliged by the recent spectacular political progress of the Labour party, manifested for example so explicitly in the by-election results in Glasgow, Govan, Epping Forest and Richmond, Yorks, to address its arguments with due seriousness. I shall establish three appropriately serious facts. First, not only have the Opposition promised at least £1·5 billion more on aid, they have promised, as Harry Enfield would say, "loadsamoney" on everything else. As I recall, in their previous manifesto the cost worked out at something in excess of £30 billion. I am sure that it is more than that now. I suspect that deep in the dank cellars of the Treasury under-secretaries are still counting. That promised openhandedness will come as no surprise to Lord Barnett who had to try to deal with the spectacular consequences last time round.

The second fact is that the Labour party has to answer a question that is as old as time. Where will all the money come from? The answer to that remains one of the great secrets of modern history, more unfathomable than the cracking of Enigma or the unlocking of Linear B.

The third fact is that we are pressed to give a timetable —I am delighted to satisfy the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke)—for achieving the 0·7 per cent. United Nations target. I note that there is no pressure for us to give a timetable for the 1 per cent. target for unofficial and official flows. Perhaps that is because we usually attain it. No British Governments have given such a target. I suspect that a Labour Government would make an early move towards the target. They would do so by pursuing economic policies which would rapidly bring our economy to a grinding halt. No economic growth would mean that our percentage of GNP spent on aid would increase in the short term before reality caught up with the unsustainable public expenditure plans, which is what has happened in the past.

I do not wish to be ungracious to the hon. Member for Eccles but I can make a promise to the Labour party which is based upon an argument that I believe the House largely accepts. If—it is a spartan "if"—the hon. Member for Eccles were to be given my job next month or next year, she would find herself responsible for an aid programme of as high a quality as any in the world. That is a tribute not least to the women and men who manage the programme in my Department; the women and men working in the field from Nepal to Zimbabwe, from foresters planting the Himalayas, to young and not so young volunteers spreading literacy in Tanzania or food in the war-torn Horn of Africa. It should be beyond party argument that we have a good aid programme. If we cannot agree on volume and other matters, we should at least be able to agree on that.

10.50 am

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The Minister and the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) have talked much about debt. The House is in the debt of the hon. Member for Eccles for introducing the motion and giving us a chance to have this important debate. The House is also in the debt of the Minister, who discharges his duties with his customary relish. No one can doubt his commitment to his portfolio. Although some of us disagree with the arguments he advanced, especially about volume, his compassion and commitment are not in doubt, and all hon. Members are grateful to him for that.

We are especially grateful for the Minister's announcement this morning of additional aid for Ghana and Kenya and for his promise that evironmental issues will achieve much prominence in the future. Further, his announcement of additional help for the non-governmental organisations was welcome.

The debate, which is being held in Budget week and the aftermath of the successful conference held in London on the need for more international action to protect the ozone layer, is as topical as it is welcome. At the heart of the debate are two principal issues—the scale of our contribution, and our effectiveness, together with other nations, in co-ordinating the responses that we make to the developing world.

The hon. Member for Eccles rightly concentrated her fire on the issue of debt. Three days ago, the Chancellor of the Exchequer also made a speech about debt. In his Budget address, the Chancellor told us that in 1989-90 he had budgeted for repayment of our national debt to the tune of £14 billion—3 per cent. of gross domestic product. He said that as a proportion of GDP, Government debt was now lower than at any time since world war one, and that net debt interest costs would be lower by £1·5 billion this year because of reduced repayments on loan charges.

[Mr. David Alton]

The scale of those repayments is bigger than our aid programme this year. In justification of this financial policy, with which many hon. Members agree, the Chancellor said that the savings could be put to good use. Many hon. Members waited to hear by how much our overseas aid programme would increase, but we waited in vain. What a cruel contrast there is between our attitude to domestic debt and the usurous levels of debt and interest charges that cripple many underdeveloped countries.

The accelerated growth of international debt provides a graphic illustration of the parable of the unforgiving debtor. Many of the debts were amassed in the 1960s and 1970s, when conventional wisdom held that countries could not go bankrupt. Commercial banks in the developed world gave out money with the alacrity of a three-armed man. The sequel is well known—countries went bankrupt; they defaulted on debts; the banks rescheduled debts and interest rates soared. Third world countries have subsequently been forced to generate exports by selling raw materials and plundering their natural assets to pay Shylock and service interest on their debts.

As the Minister said, Third world debt has been estimated at more than $1,000 billion. Despite the lead of some of our banks and the Government in writing off past debts, too few countries have followed.

Last October, the Minister said:

"An effective aid programme is one that stops babies dying."

He must know that the conditions that the International Monetary Fund imposes on debtors tend to place burdens disproportionately on the poor. Financial austerity leads to cuts in already minimal health and welfare services and in food subsidies, which leads to hunger and babies dying.

Julius Nyerere complained bitterly of the IMF. He said:

"They asked me to make a choice between paying the debts of Tanzania and feeding the people of Tanzania. For me, that is no moral choice; it is not even a practical choice."

The debt crisis is a time bomb waiting to explode. Unless we insist on the rescheduling and cancellation of debt, it will cause immense suffering for the poor of the Third world. If, as the Chancellor argued on Tuesday, the repayment of debt, at a time of inflation and high interest rates, is prudent for Great Britain, it would seem reasonable to urge the Government to favour an identical approach to the developing world.

It is worth comparing our budgeted £14 billion debt repayment with our total allocated aid programme of £1·4 billion for 1988-89, which will increase to £1·5 billion next year. It would be churlish not to welcome this modest increase, but the House must put it in perspective. Over the past decade, until 1987, the value of Britain's aid fell by over 36 per cent. Even in ravaged, hungry Africa—for which the Minister said there would be additional help, and where babies have been dying in their thousands—there was a decrease in real terms in Britain's aid from £386 million in 1979 to £284 million in 1987. Yet the contrast between the northern and southern regions of our planet has never been more marked, and, for many of us, more intolerable.

In 1970, by United Nations resolution 2626, we committed ourselves to meeting the target figure of 0·7 per cent. of gross national product in overseas aid. When the Government took office in 1979, we gave 0·5 per cent. and were sixth in the league table of the 18 western aid givers. Today, we are 14th. In 1983, the Prime Minister promised that we would move to the 0·7 per cent. target "when economic circumstances permit". Last month, she boasted:

"We now have a higher standard of living than we have ever known. We have a great budget surplus."—[*Official Report*, 28 February 1989; Vol. 148, c. 154-155.]

On Tuesday, the Chancellor said that over the past 10 years our economy had been transformed by a dramatic and sustained improvement. He said:

"For the economy as a whole, our productivity growth has been second only to that of Japan . . . We have seen a dramatic and long overdue improvement in company profits".—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c.294.]

However, there has not been a corresponding increase in overseas aid. Why are we lagging behind Japan, Italy, Germany, Canada and France? When will "economic circumstances" permit an improvement in our giving?

By contrast with our aid programme, we will find 10 times as much this year to pay off domestic debt, and almost 18 times as much for armaments. Even as far back as 1985, worldwide military expenditure topped £500 billion—almost £1 million a minute. Five hours of world military spending on that scale is equivalent to UNICEF's total annual budget.

The Minister talked about the success of our multilateral aid programme. However, our bilateral aid programme bears scrutiny and tells a different story. According to the public expenditure White Paper published in January, in 1987 the United Kingdom provided £594 million to over 120 countries in bilateral aid. Some 50 per cent. of that went to 10 countries, so India, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Kenya, Ghana, Pakistan, Sudan, Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique received an average of just under £50 million each. The remaining 110 countries divided £247 million among them, which is an average of £2·2 million each. The department that supervises parks, gardens and other community facilities in Liverpool will this year spend £24·5 million, which is 12 times as much as we shall give to any one of those 110 countries.

A couple of years ago, I visited Nepal, which is the fourth poorest country in the world and where the average annual income is £120. Adult illiteracy is about 78 per cent. In that context, our aid programme is pitiful. We in the affluent countries should call to mind the story of Lazarus and Dives. So often we are like Dives, refusing to give even the crumbs off our table. If we are to avoid the fate of Dives, we should, first, increase our aid budget by 20 per cent. in real terms each year until it reaches 0·7 per cent. of gross national product. Secondly, there should be a greatly increased programme of long-term aid. Thirdly, there should be a substantial reserve sum to provide prompt and generous aid in emergencies. Fourthly, there should be a detailed plan for adequate food aid in times of famine. Fifthly, there should be a detailed plan for the remission of the official and commercial debts of the poorest countries. Sixthly, there should be a comprehensive plan for improvement in terms and conditions of trade for the poorest countries.

Perhaps in line with Government thinking, we should also encourage the Minister in what he called last year: "a pretty fundamental review of the working relationship between government and charities."

If the Government want to cut taxes, let them give more substantial tax breaks and incentives to those who are

happy to donate and let them give more support to voluntary organisations. For in that respect also, the Government are currently falling behind other countries. Last year, the United Kingdom gave 0·7 per cent.—ironically—of official aid to voluntary organisations, compared with 1·6 per cent. in Japan, 11·1 per cent. in the United States and an average of 5·3 per cent. among all the 18 OECD countries. Clearly, the work of voluntary organisations and individuals must be encouraged and must be dovetailed with Government action.

I said that our aid programme would be judged by its generosity and effectiveness. It will become more effective only when it is better co-ordinated with the programmes of other donor countries. It must be targeted to meet the global challenge of a broken and environmentally degraded world. The story is the same, whether it be the floods in Bangladesh caused by deforestation of the Himalayas or threats to the survival of Amazonian Indians through the reckless consumption of the rain forests, ozone or acid rain.

In 1980, the World Wildlife Fund, the United Nations environment programme and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, published their world conservation strategy. They argued that man was just a part of the ecological order, not its master, and that we lacked a sense of responsibility in caring for creation. In the developing countries, the situation is disastrous. The deserts of the world are now expanding by 60,000 sq km annually—almost the size of Ireland. Poor land management and deforestation lead to the annual loss of 6,000 million tonnes of top soil in India alone. Fuel wood is so scarce in the poorer parts of the Andean sierra and the African Sahel that the cost of clothing and heating can constitute one quarter of a family's budget. Every minute, 20 hectares of tropical rain forest are destroyed, although the rain forests are the most important ecosystem on the globe. The area of productive forest will be halved during the 1980s and 1990s. Twentyfive thousand plant species and 1,000 species and sub-species of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish face extinction. The bulldozers and chainsaws hack down the forests, the aircraft spray their defoliants, the factory ships ruthlessly deplete fish stocks and the prospectors extract minerals while destroying flora, fauna and anything else that stands in the way. Yet we have the neck to call that progress. It is the selfish plunder of creation and instead of unsustainable growth we need good stewardship and the responsible husbandry of irreplaceable gifts. The Government should ensure that our aid goes into environmentally desirable projects and that the pressures that lead to wanton destruction are removed.

In biblical times, people favoured the proclamation of a year of jubilee when captives would be freed, fields would lie fallow so that they could regain their goodness, and unjust debts would be removed from those who could not pay them. Perhaps the Minister should persuade his colleagues to proclaim a contemporary year of jubilee.

I want to commend to the Minister the story of two pre-Raphaelite painters, Rossetti and Morris. Whenever Rossetti saw a beggar, he would empty out his pockets and give the beggar everything in them. He would walk away and never think about the beggar again. Morris would never give a penny, but he went off to work for a world in which there would be no more beggars. Rossetti was all heart and Morris was all head. The Government need to be a combination of heart and head. I commend the motion to the House.

11.4 am

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): I want to join my hon. Friend the Minister in congratulating the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) on her private enterprise—if she is prepared to be associated with that phrase—in securing this debate and giving us the opportunity of nearly a full day on this important subject. I want to start where my hon. Friend the Minister finished—with the issue of expenditure. Having been privileged to sit on the Government Front Bench for over nine of the past 10 years, I fully accept my share of the collective responsibility for what happened to the aid programme over that period. However, whatever comments may be made about the economy and the state of the gross national product when we came to office in May 1979, I am unhappy that the aid programme in volume is so much lower in real terms than it was in 1979. I also find it regrettable that even at the end of the current three-year public expenditure period, the end of the financial year 1991-92, the aid programme, on present figures, will still be significantly lower than it was when we came into office in May 1979. The uncomfortable reality is that over that decade, we have chosen as a matter of policy not to increase expenditure on overseas aid as our economy has expanded. In the process, we have a sharply declining share in overseas aid expressed as a proportion of GNP.

My hon. Friend is perfectly right to point out that the economy was in bad shape when we came to office in May 1979, but I hope that we can look less at the position of the Labour Government and more at what is done by other comparable countries. I appreciate my hon. Friend's difficulty in saying so at the Dispatch Box, but he cannot be especially happy that when one looks at other comparable countries, not least in western Europe, the amount spent on official aid, as a proportion of GNP, is so much lower in this country than it is in almost all comparable countries. We now spend a significantly lower proportion of GNP on aid than France, Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands. The proportion is lower than it is in Norway, Sweden and Finland, the major Scandinavian countries. It is even lower than it is in Japan, notwithstanding the enormous size of Japan's GNP and the fact that Japan is a latecomer in overseas aid. I hope that when my hon. Friend comes to the next public expenditure round, he will do what I am certain he has been doing in successive public expenditure rounds and seek to obtain a somewhat larger increase in real terms in the growth of our overseas aid programme, so that we can at least reverse the decline in our aid programme as a proportion of GNP.

My hon. Friend reasonably refers to the quality of our aid programme and I endorse that. Like every other hon. Member, I have travelled in various parts of the world and I have no doubt that the quality of staff in my hon. Friend's Department, both those at home and those serving overseas, is extremely good. The quality of the members of staff in governmental organisations at some arm's length from Government, such as the Commonwealth Development Corporation and the British Council, is high. I fully endorse what my hon. Friend said about the quality of our non-governmental

[Sir John Stanley]

organisations and our volunteer organisations, by which we are better served than any other country. They are probably the best in the world. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister would be the first to agree, however, that quality is no substitute for quantum, especially when the needs are so evident and so clearly demand urgent attention. One cannot ignore the quantum element, no matter how good the quality may be.

My hon. Friend referred to the welcome increase in real terms in our overseas aid programme. Even more recently than in the Autumn Statement, in which an 18 per cent. increase in cash terms was announced, to be spread over the next three years, my hon. Friend has announced additional elements in the aid programme. I was delighted to hear him talk of a 5 per cent. increase in real terms in the next financial year, 1989-90, although I, for one, will certainly want to press him further to find out exactly what GDP deflator assumption has been used in arriving at that figure. I hope that it approximates closely to the figure that the Treasury is now using as the updated rate of inflation for the next financial year. In other words, I hope that there will be a genuine increase of 5 per cent. in the forthcoming year. I hope, too, that my hon. Friend will be able to achieve similar increases over the next two years as part of the public expenditure planning process, although I appreciate that we shall have to await the appropriate public expenditure rounds.

Unless we can achieve real terms increases of 5 per cent. or more in the aid programme, there is no way that we shall reverse the trend in the size of our aid programme as a proportion of GNP in the next three years. There is a danger that it could decline still further. I hope that the Minister and the Government will be anxious to increase the 0·28 per cent. of GNP to which our aid programme has now fallen.

Human needs are as critical and acute in the Sudan as they are in any other country. As the House knows, over the past few years the people of Sudan—particularly the people of southern Sudan—have had to contend with the appalling vagaries of a climate that oscillates between drought and flood, superimposed on a horrendous and brutally cruel civil war. One of the most graphic and moving television programmes that I have seen in recent years was that produced by the BBC "Everyman" team about a month ago, which was devoted to bring home to us the extent of the suffering of ordinary people in the southern Sudan as a result of the ravages of civil war and climatic horrors. The House will want to congratulate the "Everyman" team, who were no doubt exposed to not insignificant personal danger.

In that programme we saw the appalling way in which displaced rural communities in some parts of the country have been driven by civil war into the more sheltered urban areas but reduced to living in appalling shanty towns and to trying to eke out an existence for themselves by clawing their way over municipal rubbish tips on the outskirts of Khartoum. Having visited Mekele hospital during the Ethiopian famine, I was struck vividly by the footage of the Juba hospital in the southern Sudan. Food had almost run out, the one X-ray machine had broken down beyond repair and general anaesthetic was no longer available. We saw film of a man who was fully conscious during major abdominal surgery for a hernia. In the absence of general anaesthetic, he was being operated on under local anaesthetic. What is the Minister's Department doing to provide emergency relief and development aid to meet the urgent needs of the Sudan?

Can my hon. Friend also bring us up to date with what is happening in Afghanistan? I welcome his prompt initiative in announcing £500,000 of emergency aid to Afghanistan to be administered through the Red Cross and UNICEF. Can he tell us whether that aid is reaching Kabul successfully and whether the Red Cross and UNICEF could use a greater sum than has been made available so far?

Trade policy relates closely to overseas aid. As the Minister has said on many occasions, a liberal trade policy is every bit as important to Third world countries as the quantum and quality of our aid programme. But the trend in trade policy seems to be tending away from liberalism, with potentially serious consequences for developing countries. I was particularly struck by a short piece in a very good speech made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor on 6 December at the all-party overseas aid group conference on debt. He said:

> "Although many developing countries still protect their trade heavily, a recent IMF study showed that, among the developing countries, liberalising changes outnumbered restrictive changes by nearly 2 to 1 last year. Unfortunately, in the industrialised world, protectionist moves, of one kind or another, including voluntary restraint arrangements and unjustified anti-dumping duties, were in the majority.
>
> World Bank figures suggest that protection by industrialised countries costs the developing countries more than twice the amount of official development aid they receive."

It makes a mockery of our aid programme, and the aid programmes of industrialised countries generally, if we are taking more away from the developing countries through protectionist trade policies than we are giving them in aid. It is vital that all those concerned with aid policy should focus their attention closely on the details of trade relations round the world. I have two questions for my hon. Friend on that. First, how major a role does his Department play in the detail of trade policy? I am talking not about the general policy of trying to liberalise trade but about the specifics. For example, does his Department go into detail on the United Kingdom's position on EEC directives such as the directive against the dumping of tropical fruit, which can be critical to some Third world countries? I hope that my hon. Friend can assure us that these matters are not being left to the Department of Trade and Industry, still less the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, whose interests and reflexes in this matter are likely to be protectionist.

Mr. Chris Patten: As my right hon. Friend will know, we are currently in the middle of the renegotiation of the Lomé convention. We are at least at the end of the beginning, if not at the beginning of the end. We are one of the few countries represented by an aid Minister in negotiating an agreement which is about trade just as much as it is about aid. That is an indication of our fairly central role in trade matters as they affect developing countries. We also represent the United Kingdom in the Food and Agriculture Organisation. Across the board, we are pretty well plugged into the issues which my right hon. Friend quite properly says are of fundamental importance.

Sir John Stanley: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's encouraging response. I hope that he will mark the European Community with extreme closeness. Of the

regular lists of draft EEC directives that are sent to hon. Members, a considerable volume appear to have a protectionist slant against Third world countries' interests.

What should be the key focus of priorities for the aid programme? My hon. Friend has done a great deal to ensure that the aid programme is properly given an order of priority. I welcome what he has done to focus the aid programme on the poorest countries, and I particularly welcome what he has done to assist countries in sub-Saharan Africa. We cannot look only at the poorest countries. We must go beyond them and look equally closely at the poorest people in the poorest countries.

I fully understand the attractions, from a national economic and industrial standpoint, of major programme aid projects and major infrastructure projects which, according to the policy that we have followed for a long time, will be tied to the purchase of British goods and services and, therefore, will be good for British exports. However, we must be careful that we do not allow the aid programme to become unbalanced and unduly unfocused as a means of providing what is tantamount to an export subsidy for British providers of goods and services. First and foremost, we must focus on the poorest people in the poorest countries.

I was struck by my hon. Friend's answer on 23 February in reply to a question that I had put to him on the rate of calorie consumption in the poorest countries. His answer showed that, in African countries south of the Sahara, there are now 27 countries in which the average —I stress that it is an average; there are plenty of people below the average—daily calorie intake is below the minimum level necessary to maintain health.

We must focus on those people in such a desperate plight—people whose health, day by day, month by month, and year by year is degenerating through an inadequate supply of calories. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to say whether he is able to do any more to focus the aid programme on the key elements of food and water provision and of dealing with disease. Ultimately, that is the biggest and most compelling justification for the whole aid programme.

In his ministerial role, my hon. Friend has done an outstanding job in the effective, able and caring way in which he has discharged his responsibilities with the resources that he has been given. Many hon. Members wish him well in trying to secure some more resources to deal with the urgent human needs in Third world countries.

11.24 am

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), to the Minister and to the House, as I will soon have to leave to catch a plane to Glasgow. I shall read the winding-up speeches with great interest.

Like other hon. Members, I was delighted that my hon. Friend was successful in the ballot and that she chose this subject for her excellent motion. The House has rightly given much time to the crucial issue of debt. My hon. Friend clearly analysed the problem and offered certain prescriptions. To be fair, the Minister applied himself to some of the points that were raised, but he did not find much time to deal with an issue which is of great concern to many hon. Members and to people elsewhere. Although the Minister said that the Government have been and will remain prominent in debt initiatives, I was a little disappointed that he did not find an opportunity to talk about the Brady debt plan which was launched in the United States last Friday. He may have something to say about that when he replies.

Mr. Chris Patten: I do not blame the hon. Gentleman. I am sure that I was being spectacularly boring. The hon. Gentleman's attention must have flagged when I referred to the American proposals and the Brady initiative. As the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) said, I said that we expect those American proposals to be discussed in greater detail at interim meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank next month.

Mr. Clarke: I shall read the Minister's speech with great interest. I do not recall that he used the word "Brady" or specifically referred to the Brady proposals. Opposition members would welcome his saying a little more about the proposals and about what was said last Friday, in particular what Mr. Brady himself said about the role of developing countries, and especially Japan, in trying to get a solution to the problem. The Minister said that we had conferred closely with Japan and other industrial countries in order to begin to lay the basis for a common approach to the debt problem by creditor countries. He was also fair enough to add that, in recent years, we had seen positive growth occur in many debtor nations and that last year six major debtor nations realised more than 4 per cent. positive growth. He said that that was primarily due to the debtors' own efforts.

It is not a particularly radical start, any more than the Baker plan was, but it is a recognition that the new Administration regards the problem as difficult. We look forward to hearing the Government's response.

We are told that the Brady initiative has been dramatised by the riots that left more than 250 people dead in Venezuela. Much of that arose because of the wealth imbalance in Latin America. There is an uneven distribution of income. In Brazil, the richest fifth of the population takes 86 per cent. of the total income. That is clearly a recipe for chaos and frustration. The Minister talked about the moral hazard, but it can also apply in this context. When there is inequality and an uneven spread of wealth, and poverty and malnutrition exist in the circumstances which hon. Members have debated, frustrations will arise.

I refer to the crucial issue that was raised during the debate and to which the Minister promised to address himself—the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. I was extremely sorry that, despite the flagging in the earlier parts of the Minister's speech, he did not actually make any commitment. I was particularly disappointed in view of the exchangesin the House over the past month—indeed, year—because they gave us every reason to believe that, after the Budget, some commitment would be made.

The Government have had 10 years in which to tell us their strategy, but we are none the wiser. The Minister said that the former Labour Government did not make such a commitment but it is only fair that I should remind him that when Dame Judith Hart left office, the figure for overseas aid had reached 0·59 per cent. of GNP. Now, despite promptings from the Opposition, the figure is a disgraceful 0·28 per cent. This is at a time when the Minister—we also heard this from the Chancellor and other Ministers during the week—admittedthat the GNP

[Mr. Clarke]

had grown. In those circumstances, it is quite indefensible for Ministers to crow that the national cake has grown and at the same time to say that this will not be reflected in the money that they are prepared to give to the poorest of the poor in the rest of the world.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): My hon. Friend must be aware of the words used by the Chancellor on Tuesday, when he said that, this year, the Government expect to make a surplus of £14 billion—part of which will be used to pay off the national debt. In those circumstances, would it not be more appropriate and beneficial to the rest of the world if more money were given for overseas aid and to assist the very poor countries in the usary levels of debt repayments that they are forced into at present?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. Time after time, we are told from the Dispatch Box that the Government are dealing with taxpayers' money. If that is the case, we would expect the Government to bear in mind the overwhelming view of taxpayers on overseas aid. Every test has shown that taxpayers feel that the Government should be more generous. The last opinion poll showed that 76 per cent. of people in this country thought that we should be giving as much as we do now, or more.

When the Minister talks about inflation and what happened—as he saw it—10 years ago, he seems to forget that overseas aid is not inflationary. By definition, it goes overseas. In spite of his very complacent speech this morning, I hope that if he met the Chancellor or the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, he would argue that we should do something that will be seen internationally to be decent, responsible and right, without adding to the problems of inflation.

It is not good enough that the United Kingdom is now placed 14th out of the 17 countries in the OECD league table. In 1979, when we were seventh and our contribution was increasing, Dame Judith Hart said that we were set to do better still. Of the 17 members of the OECD's development assistance committee, the Government's fall in contribution is by far the largest and should be contrasted with the 300 per cent. increase in the proportion of GNP that is given by Italy, the 138 per cent. increase given by Finland and the 43 per cent. given by Sweden. There have been other increases from countries such as Denmark, Norway, Japan, Holland and even the United States. Most of those countries find no difficulty in accepting that, apart from aiming at the United Nations target, if GNP increases, it is not unreasonable to make an improved contribution to the Third world.

The Minister and other hon. Members referred to Comic Relief, which showed that the British people are, by nature, generous and not mean, parsimonious or selfish. I do not believe that their aspirations are reflected in the policies pursued by the Government. The television programme gave some of the views of the British people and some of the consequences of lethargy. For example, Billy Connolly's contribution dealing with Mozambique is worthy of consideration.

I hope that the Minister will recall that Billy Connolly talked not just about overseas aid or targeting—about which we hear from the Government in another context—but about how our objective of trying to remove poverty overseas is undermined, particularly in Mozambique, by South African aggression. We were shown examples of that and the British people were appalled. We saw some of the activities of the South African guerrillas, which undermine the beneficial effects of British aid. In Mozambique, we want to address the problems of poverty, malnutrition and environmental imperfections faced by the desperately poor people. It is not enough simply to contribute—we should contribute more—if the Government do not even have the courage to tell the South Africans that this element of destabilisation in Mozambique is wholly unacceptable.

The Minister spoke about moral hazards. There is no greater moral hazard than to do what he did this morning when he wrapped up a poor policy in terms of complacency—which is being spread about the House like confetti, although happily it is not shared by the British people or the 10,000 who supported the Brandt report and lobbied Parliament. Therefore, despite the fact that this is a Friday debate and overseas aid, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles said, is not allocated much time, the Minister can be assured that many of us will return to the subject until we are sure that the British contribution to the United Nations figure is something of which we can be proud. Today, we are far from proud.

11.38 am

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): In following the hon. Gentleman for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) I shall make the brief point that I was at the United Nations when the figure of 0·7 per cent. was plucked out of thin air. I would have thought that the volume of aid rather than the proportion should be emphasised.

It is nine years since I had the good fortune—as the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) has had today—of winning the private Members' ballot. I was then able to introduce a debate on the Brandt Commission report. It is unfortunate that we have to depend on the luck of the private Members' ballot to be able to discuss such important matters.

I was deeply impressed by the speeches by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) and of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton)—not least because they both emphasised the remarkable contribution of my hon. Friend the Minister since he has been at the Overseas Development Administration. As a former very junior member of the ODA, that gave me particular pleasure.

Another matter which gives me pleasure and which it is important to emphasise is the United Nations revival after its ten lost Waldheim years. The performance of my friend and former colleague Perez de Cuellar, in bringing that organisation back into the forefront—where it should always have been—was a remarkable personal achievement.

One of the greatest achievements of the United Nations was the world wide elimination of smallpox, which was not just a technical matter but one of political will by every single country in the world. Speaking as a former chairman of the "Stop Polio Campaign" of the Save the Children Fund, I know that we can do the same with other diseases. We do not have the answer for all of them—malaria is the most conspicuous example and, obviously, AIDS. However, we know all about immunising people

against other diseases—and we have the technique and the facilities to do so. What we require, is the global political will because, for all its faults, the United Nations is the only such global organisation.

Recently I was reflecting on the new interest in and excitement about environmental matters. At one time I was a senior adviser to the United Nations on such matters. I was part author of the 1972 Stockholm conference report. We were years ahead of our time, but we underestimated national selfishness in almost every country. We also underestimated greed and the willingness to destroy the environment.

On a slightly peripheral point, I have at times been a lone voice in the Conservative party urging the need for basic non-commercial research. A classic example of its value was the British Antarctic survey, the headquarters of which are in my constituency and which discovered the gap in the ozone layer. That major development would not have happened if all research were—as we are often told it must be—commercial, market oriented and so on.

I want to refer to southern Africa and the frontline states, which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will shortly be visiting. The record of the British Government in this area in recent years has been excellent, and their help is far more appreciated than is generally realised. When I was in Harare last March and held a long discussion with President Mugabe, it was clear to me that the Zimbabwe Government were highly appreciative of what we are doing. We have spent more than £1 billion on the south African development co-ordination conference countries since 1980—a formidable sum. Now, for the first time, there are hopeful signs that at long last Namibia will gain its independence. The House knows of my deep personal interest and involvement in that.

My delight at recent developments has been overshadowed by the tragic death of Bernt Carlsson in the Lockerbie air disaster. He was the high commissioner for Namibia and was flying to New York to sign the final document in the long saga with Pik Botha.

Three things are essential for Namibia even before independence and certainly after it. The first is the need for good advice and assistance with agriculture. Namibia is a vast country with a very small population. I am not an agronomist, but it seems to me that a country with that many trees must have water and therefore possibilities. I should have thought that some of my Israeli friends, with their experience, could be of real assistance in this respect.

Secondly, there is the problem of health. I was one of the last people allowed to go to the war zone in Namibia —a fraught experience. I went with the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). One of the Catholic hospitals that we visited did not even have bandages, let alone drugs and medicines. Faced with poverty like that —it was as bad as any I had experienced in my childhood in India—one recognises what must and can be done at no vast expense.

The third aspect is education. Generations of a deliberate policy of depriving black children of education must be reversed. That will be a long-term project to which this country can make a positive contribution, given the good will that we have. Our reputation stands high in Namibia because our Governments of both parties have consistently supported resolution 435 and the Namibian people.

11.43 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I commend the speech made by the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James).

It is true that on Tuesday morning beginning at column 157 I occupied 38 minutes of the House's time, and I am sure that there will be considered replies on the rain forest point from the Government to my speech.

I want to make one emotional point. I have never forgotten going to the Amerindians in Altamira and being asked by Pa-akan what people living on top of high buildings and skyscrapers know about them and their forests—a difficult question to answer. It is central to much of the problem that Brazil faces.

The Minister said that forests are not global property, which is true, and we must be careful about interfering in the preserves that the Brazilian Government understandably think are theirs. As I said in my speech on the Consolidated Fund, they are people of the highest quality. However, policy towards the forests has global consequences, and I am glad to see the Minister nodding agreement to that.

Never in my public or private life have I been so concerned or frightened as I was by the information that became clearer to me during my visit to Amazonia at the invitation of Friends of the Earth. In case of misunderstanding, let me make it clear that in no way am I financially beholden to Friends of the Earth or anyone else.

I am concerned about my constituents. We live on the European equivalent of the north coast of Labrador and if we are not careful we shall have the climate of the north coast of Labrador. I hope the House will acquit me of the charge of being an eco-nut. For more than 22 years successive editors of the *New Scientist* have had confidence in my work as a weekly columnist. Had my scientific judgments been in any way far-fetched I would not have lasted a couple of weeks in that postion. What I say, I say with considerable care and after considerable thought.

If we are not extremely careful about climatological flip, we face the prospect and dangers of another ice age. The Minister knows the argument: I know that he takes it seriously, as did the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs who answered my nocturnal debate on Monday. I am more concerned about the seriousness with which some Department of Trade and Industry Ministers approached the subject yesterday—although I may be doing the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) an injustice.

My concern is this: for tens of thousands of years the rains have come in from the Atlantic brought by winds from the east. They have come into north-east Brazil to the Amazon delta and the state of Para. In the past five years —minuscule in real time, still less in geological time— things have changed.

The one thing I suspect this Minister and hon. Members may not fully understand—I did not until I went there —is the sheer stark scale of the destruction. For kilometre after kilometre, going up the Xingu river—I have photographs of this, although this is not the place for a slide lecture—one sees the stumps of charred mahogany and brazil nut trees which are useless, deprived of their ecosystems. By Brazilian law they cannot be cut down. They are gaunt, stark, sad lacework figures, about to die.

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

The Kayapo indians believe that trees have spirits and those spirits are being killed and that insults their forefathers. I am no animist, but I understand and respect the feelings behind that view. There are swamps in places where there were no swamps before and those swamps are good only for mosquitoes. I do not want to be personal, but when I went to get my injections at the tropical diseases hospital, the person doing the injections said to me, "Do you realise that you are going to the most unhealthy place on the face of the planet?" That was the opinion of the hospital.

The reason for such a belief is obvious. With all the swamps and mosquitoes the changes in the forests' ecosystems are obvious. Perhaps the change is no more strongly exemplified than in the presence of blue skies when there should normally have been clouds. I went out into what should have been the rainy season when there should have been heavy afternoon rainfalls. There were but a few drops at most and only a few clouds. I was told that in the past there would have been heavy clouds and rain.

That change has taken place in a very short space of time. The problem is cut-off of the moisture line. If the forests in eastern Amazonia continue to be cut down and burned at the present rate, cloud formations will not occur. If that happens because of tree removal, the vapours and moisture will simply not form. I do not want to give the House a lesson in physics, but that is classic desertification. Moisture will not form and if moisture does not form over that crucial area of land on the eastern coast of South America, the hop-scotch effect, the transfer of moisture up and down and the process of evapotransporation will not take place across central Amazonia.

There are three consequences if that happens. First, the dry season will be longer and there will be more felling. Cattle ranchers will find that the land on which they have their miserable cattle will last only one or two years and they will want more as a result. They will be ever greedier to fell more virgin forest and burn it.

Secondly, inevitably, there will be larger, more extensive and more uncontrollable forest fires. The extent of the fire destruction can only really be revealed by NASA's satellite pictures. I hope that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will receive NASA's information about the extent of the burning. People talk about the destruction involving areas the size of France, although it may be greater than that. That destruction will inevitably take place if there is no rainfall.

Thirdly, botanists have told me that if the ancient eco-system of the central Amazon is deprived of rain for three or four weeks, many plants in that botanical diversity would wither. Those plants need rain. The Minister must know about that and I hope that he will get expert advice from Dr. Phrance at Kew and from others about that, and tell me if I exaggerate.

May we consider now the selfish, north-European British point of view. If everything that I have described happens, Jose Lutzenberger and others who claim to understand these matters have told me that the air currents and the hop-scotch moisture process across central Amazonia and across provinces like Acre and western Amazonia, will no longer, to use a very lose term, "bang" against the high Andes, and the air currents we take for granted will not be formed. If they are not formed, they will not move easterly, eventually paralleling the Gulf stream. If they do not parallel the Gulf stream, we shall be in the greatest difficulty because the Gulf stream and those air currents from a generally south westerly direction give northern Europeans a different climate from those who dwell on the north coast of Labrador.

Our excellent physicist-ambassador in Brasilia, Michael Newington, told me very gently, "You don't know about all this." I am very pleased that one of our ambassadors is a physicist. However, as Michael Newington conceded, no one else knows for certain about it either. We had better find out because it is incontrovertible that the stakes are simply stupendous.

If anyone asks why we should be so concerned about the Amazonian forest, the answer is that we must consider the possible prospect of a climatalogical flip. We must consider the possibility of London, Hamburg and other great cities experiencing a complete change of weather. That would absolutely change life on our continent as we have known it.

It is a matter of the greatest priority that research should be directed to discover what would happen if there is any more destruction of the Brazilian forests and I emphasise the term "Brazilian" because they understand that I recognise their sovereignty over the forest. None of us can be sure of the viability of a great forest. Does there come a point when the whole eco-system is no longer viable?

Mr. Holland: Yes.

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) agrees with me. I do not want to be alarmist or sensational. I am not searching for a headline. This is the speech of a desperately worried individual who has had this experience and who thinks that life as we have known it, the whole life support system of the planet, could be in danger.

I want to reflect on a creepy subject. How did the mammoth ever become encapsulated in ice? The mammoth was not a tundra-eating animal. An examination of a mammoth's stomach contents showed that it had eaten ferns and plants, if not of a tropical type, of at least a temperate type. No tundra was found in its stomach. If the ice age had occurred over a long perod of time, would not the mammoths have drifted south? Why should they suddenly have become caught in the ice? Every indication —geological and otherwise—is that the ice age came very quickly and very unexpectedly on the animal kingdom. I do not want to be alarmist or to exaggerate, but I ask for a comment by the Minister on the proposition that there is the very greatest danger in destroying the Brazilian rain forest and rain forests in general. We have seen what happened to sub-Saharan Africa, mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), to whom we are indebted for this debate.

Will there be some kind of urgent Government consideration given to this topic, about which many serious people are desperately anxious? I speak with the greatest anxiety and concern that I have ever done in my public life.

12 noon

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): It is essential to alert more and more people to environmental threats. It strikes me that the United Kingdom is awakening, but that much of the world is still unaware of them. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) once again does a service by drawing our attention to the consequences of the destruction of the Brazilian rain forest. I shall make some remarks implicitly about the cause of that destruction—rather more in Asia than in Latin America, but the consequences are the same. I congratulate the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) on her good fortune in the ballot and on selecting overseas aid and development as the subject of the debate. Not unnaturally, most of the emphasis has been on debt, debt repayment and aid targets. Although United Nations targets are of importance, I personally, regard them more as guidelines than as immediate objectives. I am more concerned about the quality and type of aid than I am about the amount —though as my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) pointed out, however much emphasis one places on quality, one must take account also of quantum.

I am more concerned about quality for a variety of reasons. One technical adviser may be worth 20 or 30 times his cost simply on the basis of the old argument: "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for one day; teach him to fish, and you feed him for life." But whatever may be the targets, and whatever money may be available, aid is only a drop in the ocean compared with need.

That said, the Government's record is fairly respectable. We have been reminded that this year and for the next four years there will be a real increase in aid amounting to about 5 per cent. in real terms. That is a considerable achievement after the regrettable, albeit necessary, cutbacks in the early 1980s. Furthermore, to exceed the United Nations' target for official and private aid combined in all but two years since 1979 is also a considerable achievement. It is particularly noteworthy that 80 per cent. of our aid goes to the very poorest countries compared with only 60 per cent. from the west as a whole. That is not bad, but I shall concentrate most of my remarks on an area where much more aid, education and advice is needed.

Aid should be provided not just to enable developing countries to enlarge their gross domestic product, important though that is, but to enable individuals to enjoy a better standard of living. In that respect, the donor and developing countries have signally failed. It is easy to see the reason. I was glad to hear my hon. Friend the Minister expressing optimism about a turning point being reached in Africa. None the less, while food production has expanded and economies have grown, the benefits have been negated by the vast proliferation of the population.

Population statistics are becoming almost hackneyed, and certainly they are mind-boggling. In my lifetime the world population has grown from about 2 billion to 5 billion, and in another 11 years it will be 6 billion. Because of famine, most of the emphasis of work on controlling the population in recent years has been concentrated on Africa. However, three fifths of the world's population live in Asia, and 17 per cent. live in India on 2·4 per cent. of the world's area. Each year, India's population grows by about 16 million, which is equivalent to the entire population of Australia.

Millions may not mean much to most of us, but thousands are more comprehensible. Each day, 1,500 people move into the city of Bombay. That means 10,500 per week or 536,000 per annum. Those figures take no account of indigenous population growth. People move there because of high birth rates and lack of jobs in the rural areas. Unfortunately, Bombay is not unique. Every major city of Asia, Africa and Latin America is suffering the same experience. The consequence is squalor beyond belief. In Bombay, there is virtually no traffic island that has not become a hutted slum—and to use the word "hut" is to exaggerate the conditions that exist. Instead of standards and conditions improving, they are deteriorating.

What is to be done? At the strategic level—and I return to a point I made to the hon Member for Linlithgow—it is necessary in the world interest to reduce population growth and ultimately to stabilise the world's population. At grass roots level, there is even more urgency if a better life is to be created. There must be more aid for population programmes, so that the world's finite capacity for people is not overtaken and so that economic growth may have a chance of getting ahead of population growth. I refer not to aid for family planning alone, because the need is much more sophisticated. I was reminded of that when I paid a visit to India and Nepal in January, in the company of five hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). We were generously sponsored by the International Planned Parenthood Federation. I hope the federation thinks that it got its money's worth, because we all learned a great deal from that experience. We have already shared that experience with others and shall continue to do so.

I do not want to quote too many statistics, but they are a way of drawing attention to the scale of the problem. In 1961, Nepal had a population of 9 million people. It is now 17 million, and will be 21 million by the year 2000. The population growth rate is between 2·7 per cent. and 2·8 per cent. Nepal used to export rice to India, Burma and Bangladesh, but now it must import rice. Land hunger is intense and destructive. Arable land amounts to only 14 per cent. of Nepal's land area, so steep hillsides are deforested and tiny terrace fields constructed in their place. When the rains come, top soil is washed from treeless slopes by floods that inundate Bangladesh, as they did in the last monsoon.

We were told that it had been calculated that while, in the widest interest, 42 per cent. of Nepal should be afforested, today the figure was down to 29 per cent. If there are not to be economic, social and environmental disasters in what must now be one of the most magnificently beautiful countries in the world, drastic action is needed. Fortunately the King of Nepal, the Government, Parliament and the NGOs agree on that. They have ambitious targets to reduce population growth from today's 2·7 or 2·8 per cent. to 1·2 per cent. by the year 2000. If they manage to reach that target it will be an incredible achievement.

India's population will grow by 500 million in the next 30 years. There may be the food to feed them, for there is a degree of optimism about the country's ability to produce the required extra amount, but what that figure will mean for the environment, national and international,

[Sir Charles Morrison]

is a horrific thought. There is the same desire to slow population growth among many people in India, especially the voluntary organisations, but, sad to relate, there is a clear lack of political will and leadership. We were told that that was because it was election year. The memory of Sanjay Gandhi and alleged compulsory sterilisation makes politicians sensitive, although at present all parties agree about the problem.

Meanwhile, in this election year, the momentum for population control programmes comes from the excellent Family Planning Association of India. That association and its equally excellent fellow association in Nepal are undertaking, with and without Government help, a variety of projects that can go under the heading of community development and whose ultimate objective is to limit the size of families. They include skills training, literacy, child and maternal health care, parasite control and help for small farmers. The basic aim is to make people confident that they have the ability to change for the better their lives and the living habits that they inherited from their forebears, above all by removing the need for a huge family—many of whom in any case died before adolescence in past times, as too many still do. That is why it is so important to improve child health.

Mr. Steen: My hon. Friend has mentioned the problem of the size of India's population, 70 per cent. of whom are illiterate. Does he agree that the Family Planning Association's most important task is to educate people —especially women—in India and Nepal, and to help them to understand how to control the size of their population? Does he not think that the Government could help enormously, not only by funding national and international bodies but by ensuring that the money that they give to India and Nepal is earmarked for such community development work?

Sir Charles Morrison: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. In fact, he has anticipated what I was going to say in a few moments, so I shall probably say it all over again.

There is a vast problem to be tackled in India, Nepal and many other countries, and, like my hon. Friend, I should like the Government to do much more in the sphere of population-related aid. I do not for a moment wish to imply that the Government have been idle in that regard; far from it. In November or thereabouts, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister demonstrated her understanding of the population threat when speaking at the Margaret Pyke centre, and in a letter written in January reminded me that support for population-related work within the aid programme had more than doubled, to £16 million, since 1981. My hon. Friend the Minister also mentioned that earlier today, and a good deal of the credit for that increase must go to him. None the less, much more needs to be done.

I was glad to hear that last year a health and population adviser had been appointed to the ODA development mission in Malawi. Does that set a precedent for such appointments in other ODA missions? To what extent does the ODA ask developing countries how they can best be assisted to overcome population problems? Of course I know that the ODA has its own excellent project in Orissa in East India.

Demand on the resources of British charities such as Population Concern and Marie Stopes International and on other NGOs, both British and from other countries, far outstrips supply. They need more support to meet requests from NGOs in developing countries for project funding. Indian politicians themselves emphasise how much more cost-effective and less bureaucratic than the Government NGOs are. I should also like to know whether the Government are holding any talks with the new American Administration about the need for a restoration of USAID funding for IPPF and the United Nations fund for population activities, so regrettably withdrawn in 1984. Will the British Government please do their best to persuade the United States of the importance of such funding?

I imagine that the ODA is responsible for drafting the sections on overseas aid in the public expenditure White Paper. This year's White Paper, Cmnd. 602, states, under the heading "Aims and Objectives",

> "The purpose of the overseas aid programme . . . is to promote sustainable economic and social development and to alleviate poverty in developing countries, particularly the poorest."

That purpose will not be achieved unless population growth is controlled, yet the rest of the section makes no mention of population. Rightly or wrongly, I detect a certain prissy sensitivity about mentioning population control. I trust that the Government will be a little more robust in future, as it lies at the root of sustainable economic and social development.

Finally, let me express a pious hope. We heard from the Chancellor on Tuesday that we now have a Budget surplus of £14·5 billion. For fear of adding to inflation that money cannot be used for capital investment or other constructive purposes—much to my regret—and so it is to be used for the, in my view, rather pointless exercise of reducing an already low and continually decreasing level of national debt.

Is this not the moment above all to provide more money for overseas aid? It would be an excellent way of getting rid of money without creating more inflation—even better, I suggest, than repaying debt, which means that someone has more money to spend domestically and thus, ultimately, perhaps to add to inflation.

Behind every world problem—economic, social, environmental, the Brazilian rain forest or Nepal forests —there is an excess of population growth. It is the most fundamental issue that we have to face in the sphere of overseas aid—and much more widely than that. I trust that the Government will continue to pay increasing attention to it.

12.19 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On 23 February I and my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) hosted a development forum in my constituency, called the Islington aid development forum. Its slogan was "Think globally, act locally."

A number of people came along from local organisations that had been lobbying for increased overseas aid and for help with the environmental problems of the world and the community. It is significant and interesting that those people were passionately concerned about poverty all over the world and about the environment and that they were equally passionately concerned that something should be done politically.

The people who came together in that forum were not necessarily wealthy people. They do not live in a particularly wealthy area. However, they feel that there is something morally wrong in a world where two thirds of the population are fairly poor, where a large number of people are very poor, and where a very large number of people live in the most appalling poverty. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) for ensuring that we can address that problem today. It is an indictment of the House that we so seldom debate matters that affect the whole world. It is to the credit of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that he was prepared to stay up half the night to raise the crucial matter of the environmental problems that are associated with the Brazilian rain forest.

The House cannot continue to ignore the fact that large numbers of people in the world do not enjoy a decent standard of living. Many people in this country do not enjoy a decent standard of living but, globally, the lot of many people is a life expectancy of less than 50 years, of infant mortality rates that would be a disgrace to Victorian England, never mind now, and of an incidence of preventable disease that is a shame and a scandal. All that could be changed if there were a real international will for change.

It is not just a question of moral outrage, which is right and fair enough, that has to be addressed. It is also a question of the survival of the planet as a whole. We cannot continue to promote the redistribution of the wealth from the poorest to the richest countries of the world and to destroy the world's atmosphere and use up its natural resources at the present rate. If we do, there will not necessarily be a cataclysmic end to the world, although that is possible. There is more likely to be a growth of environmentally-related illnesses, major climatic changes and serious consequential problems.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow was right to refer to the Amazon rain forest. He spoke about it very well and showed a proper understanding and concern for the problem. I first visited the Amazon rain forest 20 years ago. I had been working in Jamaica as a voluntary service overseas volunteer. From Jamaica I was able to travel throughout the West Indies and the whole of South America. I have had a great interest in the region and the continent ever since. At that time, 20 years ago, we drove on buses and trucks through the rain forests of Guyana, Surinam, French Guyana and Brazil. Even then, the chain saws and the diggers were tearing the forests apart. I went on a logging expedition in Guyana. At that time, the wood that they were after was Demerara green heart, a very valuable timber. The timber was so valuable that a scouting party was sent out to locate the Demerara green heart, to mark the tree and to clear a small area round it. Then a bulldozer went in and destroyed everything in its path in order to get at that one tree, cut off the major part of the trunk and take it awy. They left a clearing that was a potential desert. As the clearing went on and on, large areas of the rain forest were destroyed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow referred to the fact that the soil construction is weak. It cannot sustain growth when the forest cover has gone. The initial wealth of the soil comes from ash where there has been burning of the scrub. That creates temporarily very fertile land. However, the fertility of the land is leached out within a very short period and a desert develops. That has been happening at an ever increasing rate for 20 or 30 years.

The Minister said, quite correctly, that we cannot interfere in the internal affairs of other countries and tell them what to do. The problem, however, is that environmental matters and the world climate cannot be dealt with on a national basis. It is no good complaining about pollution from another country if we, too, are polluters. We must accept that it is perfectly reasonable for people in Scandinavia to complain about the acid rain from this country that is damaging their forests. Likewise, it is right and proper that we should protest strongly about the destruction of the Amazon rain forest because of the effect that it is having.

The destruction of the Amazon rain forest means that large areas of that forest are becoming deserts. It is leading to the loss, day by day, of whole species of plant and animal life. It is also leading to the death of the people who live in the rain forest. The prospectors, the loggers, the mining companies and all the others who go into the rain forest are carrying out a pogrom against the Indians. The number of deaths that have resulted from that pogrom is frightening.

We, too, are responsible for what is going on in the Amazon rain forest. These things are not happening in Brazil necessarily because either the Brazilian people or the Brazilian Government want it to happen. That is true, too, in Sarawak and in west Africa. The people in Sarawak and in west Africa do not want it to happen. We must examine the economic situation that has driven the world into destroying its natural resources at this rate, including the destruction of the world's rain forests.

Two years ago, during the Christmas Adjournment debate, I raised the subject of the Amazon rain forest. I complained in that debate—and I still complain—about the way that the British Government—through the World Bank, the IMF and the EEC—have subsidised the destruction of the Amazon rain forest. They have given money towards the development of the Grande Carajas iron ore mining project. They have also given aid for other mining projects that have promoted the destruction of the rain forest. The Government are responsible for financing some of that destruction.

Brazil is a large and wealthy country, with a fairly small population for its size. It is also a deeply indebted country. Every time that the question of the Brazilian debt is raised the solution that is offered by the world's financial powers —the IMF, the World Bank and the private banking system—is that Brazil must buy its way out of its debt; therefore is must promote exports and the sale of whatever natural resources it has. We are, therefore, bankrolling environmental disasters. The Sierra club has produced a booklet called "Bankrolling Disasters." The booklet deals with the international development banks and the global environment. Page by page and issue by issue, it lists places where the use of World Bank finance to sort out debt problems has led to the most appalling environmental destruction. As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow said, the destruction of the Amazon rain forest has cataclysmic effects for the rest of the planet. We have to examine our responsibility for that through the debt system.

I hope that the wise words of the people who live in the Amazon rain forest to the directors of the World Bank and the IMF will be listened to. Those people understand that we cannot continue destroying the forest without

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

developing major problems. They live in that forest, they understand it and they give sound advice. We should listen to them and accept their advice.

The understanding of the problem is widespread and there have been some changes in attitude. The World Bank now accepts that it has a role in preserving the environment and cannot continue funding such disasters.

We have to ask what we can do? Other climatic changes are occurring. Global warming is caused partly by the destruction of the rain forest but is also a result of industrialisation. We should also take into account the destruction of the ozone layer and other related factors.

Like many hon. Members, I receive a great deal of free post, most of it unwelcome and much of it heavy commercial lobbying. But I recently received an American business magazine dealing with the greenhouse effect. I am quite interested in that so I hurriedly opened it and turned to the relevant page to discover how it proposes to deal with the greenhouse effect. The article contained a series of lurid maps showing the level to which the sea would rise, which countries and which parts of the United States would be flooded and what the climatic changes would be. It had some rather clever graphics showing oranges growing in the Arctic. But it did not conclude that we could not continue burning rain forests at such a rate. It advised that if one were investing in real estate in the United States, one should not invest in anything less than 50ft above sea level because eventually it will be flooded. It saw the problem simply as a commercial matter that had to be faced. I hope that we take a far more serious attitude.

Today we are debating world interdependence. Hon. Members have pointed out the environmental problems that are developing. We are debating what Britain and the British Government should be doing about them. The aid Budget is very important as it has to be relevant to environmental needs, environmental causes and the poverty that exists in many poorer countries. Although the Minister gave a pretty robust performance in defending the level of the aid budget it is nowhere near 0·7 per cent. of GNP—the figure recommended by the United Nations. There is no reason why it could not be much higher. The British Government have set a surplus of £14 billion next year on Government spending and have decided not to increase the aid budget and other elements of social spending. Clearly the British Government could spend much more money on overseas aid, if they wanted to do that. There is also the matter of the quality and monitoring of that aid and the projects funded from it. The Minister described many laudable projects that we support and that are extremely beneficial to people in the countries concerned. However, there is no point in the British Government promoting their overseas aid policies as effective and helpful if they are doing nothing to promote world economic policies that benefit the poorest people in the poorest countries of the world.

I have some figures which show the level of official development finance to less developed countries. In 1987 the figure was $59·3 billion. However, the figures showing the burden of debt service payment faced by those countries was $70·9 billion in principle repayments and $54·0 billion in interest repayments, totalling $124·9 billion. In other words, the aid from the developed countries to the poorest countries in the world has been more than repaid twofold. It has been repaid through the servicing of debt, interest payments and the repatriation of profit by multinational corporations.

In country after country facing serious debt problems, what solution is offered by the world's financial institutions? A team of experts fly in on the handiest Pan Am flight, they put up at the biggest hotel they can find and they start to examine the books of the country concerned. After examining the books they say, "You are in far too much debt and you must get yourself out of it. The way to do that is to cut public spending, reduce Government public sector debt within your country and promote export industries and export crops." In other words, they recommend selling-off a large number of public sector assets.

If one wants to see where such action leads, one can look at some west African countries where state-owned industries have been sold off to foreign investors, leading to a loss of some political control and where there has been a development of monoculture crops for export, which has often done serious environmental damage. In some cases, poor countries are exporting high protein food crops while children in the country are malnourished. They are doing that because they have to pay back their debts and they are told that that must always be the priority. Therefore, we need to look at the treatment of the commodity prices of poor countries.

I have an example taken from *South* magazine, which is an excellent monthly magazine which I recommend to everybody. It details every month what commodities one can buy. It shows that the real prices of jute, tea, cotton and other crops have decreased over the past 15 years compared with the cost of oil or of importing wheat. Many countries are losing out as a result of increased prices and increased interest payments. The debt crisis is serious, and I hope that when he replies the Minister will tell us what plans he has to do something about it.

I want to mention the British Government's attitude to poorer countries in relation to 1992 and the EEC. There was a delegation here recently led by Mr. Julian Hunte from St. Lucia concerning the implications of the Single European Act for the survival of the Windward Islands. There is a problem because of the likelihood of the closure of markets for bananas and some of the smaller eastern Caribbean countries and the low price that the producers receive for them. It is necessary for the British Government to do something to protect the markets that those islands have traditionally enjoyed. If not, they will become seriously impoverished and further indebted. They will lose out because of Britain's obsession with moving deeper into the Common Market and accepting the Common Market's single economy rather than protecting those who have traditionally supplied goods to this country.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): I had an interesting exchange with Mr. Julian Hunte and the Prime Minister of St. Lucia. Did they not make it clear that they were aware of our full support and determination to convince the other countries of the European Community that the Windward Islands would continue to have access for their bananas to the United Kingdom market?

Mr. Corbyn: Yes. I also had an interesting discussion with Mr. Hunte and I thought that he was a man to be admired. The point is, the British Government have to

convince the EEC of the need to protect the economies of the Windward Islands. I am glad to hear that the Minister intends to try to do that but he cannot give an absolute guarantee. My concern, and the concern of Mr. Hunte and many others within the Caribbean is that they will lose out because of pressure that will be applied by other EEC member states, perhaps against the wishes of the British Government. As I said, I am glad to have the Minister's assurance but a guarantee can be given only by the EEC.

I want to deal with the way in which the debt crisis affects so many poor countries. I have pointed out, as have others, the environmental consequences of the debt burden on those countries and the poverty that develops because of that debt burden, the usury rates of interest and the redistribution of wealth to the richest countries in the world. Yesterday, the Prime Minister in a written answer said:

> "The United Kingdom and others will reduce interest rates to prevent debt from compounding. The United Kingdom has also written off £1 billion of old aid loans, of which nearly £300 million were for sub-Saharan Africa. We have also agreed to subsidise loans to the poorest countries of up to about £750 million through a special IMF facility, the enhanced structural adjustment facility, of £4·5 billion."—[*Official Report*, 16 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. *275*.]

That sounds all very well until one looks behind it to see what that enhanced structural adjustment facility will be. Say that to people in poor countries who are losing hospitals, schools and social facilities. Say that to people who are forced to move into slums and shanty towns in South America, Africa and the Indian sub-continent. Those countries need their debt burden removed and a trade arrangement and policy with the richer countries that recognises the need to eliminate poverty by giving their people self-respect through proper prices for the products that they produce, protection of the environment in their countries and the rest of the world and rather less of giving power to the IMF, the World Bank and multinational companies to make much money out of them.

I am glad that we have been able to have this debate, but the House should return to the subject more often because it is being ignored too much. We cannot continue to live in a world that is so bitterly divided between rich and poor and so dangerously on the edge of an ecological abyss without at least discussing it and ensuring that we do all that we can rather than ignoring the problem and hoping that it will go away.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask the House to bear with me while I seek your advice. It is obvious that the motion in my name will not be reached because of the excellent debate on overseas development. I had intended to highlight, through the motion and in my speech addressed to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, a series of violent and intimidating incidents involving Mike Lyons, who is a managing director of MYL Security. He is inflicting physical violence upon, and instilling fear in, an increasing number of my constituents and of those of my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott). Given that we shall be unable to deal with this matter today and given the seriousness of the situation in my constituency, will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, assure me that the usual channels will be used to ensure that the substance of the motion and my speech, which would have outlined a catalogue of terror, will be brought to the attention of the Secretary of State so that he can deal with it.? It has been on his desk since 20 January, but I should like to ensure——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I have the drift of the hon. Gentleman's point of order. Nothing is obvious in this place; it may be possible to deal with the hon. Gentleman's motion, which is the second Order of the Day. He has put his points on the record.

12.42 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Until the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) switched the debate to an environmental one, the discussion was largely about the macroeconomics of the Third world and developing countries. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for swinging the debate away from macroeconomics and discussing, most movingly, the problems of the Amazon rain forests and related difficulties.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow was followed by an excellent contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison), with whom I had the privilege of visiting India and Nepal to see at first hand the problems of the Third World.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) continued the discussion about the environment, and I should like to continue in this vein. We have considered the problems of manufactured gases—chlorofluorocarbons—but only 14 per cent. of manufactured gases contribute to the greenhouse effect and the warming of the atmosphere, whereas 50 per cent. of carbon dioxide—CO_2—gases are responsible for the greenhouse effect and the warming-up process. Population and the growth of it is far more significant and produces three times more CO_2 gases thereby than manufactured CFCs. While the world has been debating the greenhouse effect and the way we must eliminate CFCs from our atmosphere, it has singularly failed to consider the problem caused by the continued growth of population. As I have said, 50 per cent. of the greenhouse effect is a result of the burning of fuels by people on this planet.

I want to talk about the problem of population and how it affects the environment. Let us consider India, where 800 million people live now and where there will be 1·3 billion people by 2050, whereas only 400 million people existed there at partition in 1947. Seventy per cent. of Indians are illiterate—about 470 million people—and 50 per cent. of the population are under 25. The improved health care is lowering the mortality rate for young and old. About 30 per cent. of couples of child-bearing age practise some sort of birth control, but the remaining 100 million do not.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes touched on the problem of the campaign led by Sanjay Gandhi, which has resulted in people refusing to have their children inoculated because they fear that it is a sterility injection. There has been an equally rapid growth of population in Nepal, where literacy among women is only 12 per cent. and infant mortality is 128 per 1,000 live births. Life expectancy is under 50 years and there are 6·1 live births per family.

The environmental implications of that enormous population growth and its effect on the greenhouse effect are greater than any amount of CFC gas. The environmental implications of unrestricted population growth are immense. The impact is not being grasp either

[Mr. Anthony Steen]

by the British Government or other Governments of the developed world. Although it is true that India has sufficient food to support its 800 million population, it does not have sufficient food for 1·3 billion. As my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes said, Nepal is already having to import rice.

Bombay is another problem. The population of Bombay is 10 million and growing at the rate of 1,500 a day. That is important, not only because people have to sleep on traffic islands or pavements, but because the people are clearing land all around Bombay to build shanty towns, roads and more factories. The major cities in India, and the world generally, are expanding as population floods from rural areas into the towns.

The satellite pictures, which other hon. Members have mentioned, not only confirm that the forests of the Amazon are being destroyed, but that the cities of India and Nepal are causing the loss of forests in the sub-continent. A further point, on which other hon. Members have not touched, is that India and Nepal are so cold for three to four months of the year that trees are cut down, not by "wicked capitalists" but by the people in Nepal and India who are cold. They warm themselves at wood fires and cook over them. The trees have disappeared largely because of that and that is the reason why we have such a great problem with carbon dioxide.

A further problem is that a series of poor monsoons was succeeded by a good one last year. As many trees in India and Nepal had been cut down, the water cascaded down not only in Bangladesh, but in Nepal, and blocked up the rivers which were supposed to be feeding into the new hydro-electric plants. Many spin-on effects result from those environmental problems.

further difficulty is that the poor villagers want water. They have to sink deep wells, perhaps 300-400 ft, and to pull up that water they need greater energy supplies. As more irrigation is required to feed the ever-increasing population, the water table continues to drop and wells have to be dug ever deeper, with the result that the power needed to bring up the water is even greater. There are increasing difficulties and environmental problems as the top slice of the population in the sub-continent want more air conditioning, fans and refrigerators which demand more and more power, while those at the bottom end of the scale want ordinary things to keep them alive; they need more water for irrigation and more power to get the water out of the ground. There is a vicious circle in the Third world, the sub-continent.

The description "poor, powerless and pregnant"—a description of women that appears in all the Family Planning Association periodicals—rings very true in India. The key to the future of the Indian sub-continent lies with its women. In the past, the mortality rate for children under five was such, and the economic necessity for large families so pressing, that women would have more children to ensure a sufficient number of boys to provide security for their old age. There were also religious reasons: only boys are permitted to perform funeral rites for the 80 per cent. of the population of the sub-continent who are Hindus. Poverty militates against small families. Today in the Tamil Nadu province, firework and matchbox factories still employ about 45,000 children between the ages of five and 13 because of their deft fingers. Although child labour is illegal in India, the Indian Government take no action, as they are aware of the impact that such action would have on the poorest families.

But changes are taking place. One university is insisting that every girl takes a compulsory paper on family planning. The Godrej corporation, which employs 20,000 people in Bombay alone offers a purpose-built home to those with fewer than three children. If employees have a large family, they cannot continue in their home. The Civil Service in India is experimenting with increment incentives for those with no more than two children. There is growing awareness of what needs to be done.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes mentioned the community development work of the Family Planning Association—similar to the work done in this country by the task force and the young volunteer force, which I had the privilege to direct 20 years ago. Folk songs are being adapted to popularise the message, with the refrain "Keep it two, keep it two." A small group of family planning bodies is waging war against seemingly impossible odds to tackle a population growth which is out of control and which is destroying the environment as fast as any aerosol.

Our Government could do more, but not by increasing their aid budget, of which something has been made this morning. The answer is not more money, but better targeting. The money must go to help people to control the size of their families. That must be our number one priority. Everything else that we do is secondary. I was slightly surprised that that was the sole thrust of this morning's debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devizes is chairman of the Game Conservancy Council. While we were in India, he talked to me about the red grouse population cycle. I do not know whether the House knows about the red grouse population cycle. If the population is left unchecked, every seven years a large number of its members will be killed off by starvation, disease or parasites, or sociologically—the birds will commit suicide, rather like lemmings because they cannot stand each other any longer. Would the House have the people of the Third world do the same? Surely, it is time for the developed world to realise that population control is the key to the future of life on this planet.

12.53 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I apologise to the House, to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) and to the Minister for Overseas Development. I shall have to leave after I have spoken because I have promised to be with my children this afternoon on an important occasion. I thank the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) for allowing me to make my speech and then to leave.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Eccles on obtaining this debate. She and I are accustomed to debating these matters after midnight. It is a welcome change to be in the Chamber at this more felicitous time of the day.

I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) made an excellent speech, and I support his eloquent call for an increase in the overseas development budget. He ended his speech by paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister, but I begin by doing so. Senior economic development academics who are not our political friends recently volunteered to me that they

consider that my hon. Friend the Minister is probably the most effective and articulate Minister for Overseas Development whom they have known. Protected by the opinion of others from the accusation of being a creep, I add my own admiration for and envy of the skilled, elegant and deeply intelligent way in which my hon. Friend carries out his duties and leads his Department. In the past 10 years, I have not seen the morale of the Department higher than it is at present, which means that its excellent work is carried on with a spirit of enthusiasm that serves our country and overseas countries extremely well.

My hon. Friend complains that his speeches are largely unreported, but those of us who read and listen to them cannot but admire the accurate analyses, the understanding of the issues, and the compassionate solutions proposed.

I start from the same statistic from which my hon. Friend and Sir Shridath Ramphal started in their recent speeches in Cambridge. It is also the starting point of the Bruntland report. I refer to the United Nations figure which suggests that the world's population will stabilise between 8 billion and 14 billion by the year 2020. In other terms, it will rise by between 60 per cent. and nearly 200 per cent. above today's level. That gives point to the matters raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) and for South Hams (Mr. Steen). Although, like them, I believe that the control of population is absolutely vital to bring about a higher standard of living for wretchedly poor people in overseas countries, it must be combined with a programme of economic and social development to enable poor people to plan their families so that they do not have to go on having children, many of whom die, but can look forward with confidence to their children growing to maturity, as we can in our country. That is the most potent means by which we can control population, so we must constantly examine the surrounding factors of economic and social development.

The global implication of the figures in environmental, political and social terms are enormous. As the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said, they are possibly apocalyptic. It must banish from anyone's mind the idea that overseas development is not our concern in the House of Commons and in northern countries, because if we ignore it the consequences will soon become apparent in changes in our climate, rises in sea level, falling trade and the lowering of our standard of living. Failure to do anything about it could even lead to global warfare, as desperate people with nothing to lose confront countries and people more fortunate than themselves. Unfortunately, I do not have time to develop all those themes, so I shall confine my remarks to five headings. Other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, so I shall write to my hon. Friend the Minister to bring the other points to his attention.

Like the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), I shall concentrate on the debt issue, which overhangs the whole subject of aid. If we cannot solve the debt problem, we shall be unable to make it up even by a fraction, through the volume of aid that we give, although I hope that we shall continue to give that aid. My hon. Friend the Minister has made the point time and again—it was also made earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley)—that the trading circumstances of Third-world countries are vitally important. They cannot trade if we do not resolve the debt problem.

Like the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), I do not apologise for concentrating on this aspect. The three principles for dealing with sub-Saharan African debt pioneered by my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer were, first, that loans should be converted to grants or written off if they could not be recovered, those being public debts; secondly, the interest rates charge should be reduced to a sustainable level; thirdly, loan maturities should be extended to reduce annual payments to manageable levels while investment in the domestic economy of the debtor country can continue.

Those simple and well known remedies were to be applied to countries willing to agree to economic programmes which, in the judgment of the World Bank and the IMF, were likely to enable their economies to grow and thus make it possible for those countries to service their restructured debts. The remedy is simple to pronounce, but it has proved difficult to gain acceptability for it in the United States, Japan and Germany, although not in this country, which has a proud record to maintain. In Japan, America and Germany, the Government and the private sector must accept that losses have been incurred. Mr. Baker's plan did not succeed because the concept of loss was not conceded. The new American Treasury Secretary, Mr. Brady, appears to accept that debt reduction must be accomplished, and I am glad to see that my friend Senator Bradley, in welcoming Mr. Brady's initiative, has been foremost in the United States in advocating that those losses must be faced. Clearly, the question of how this is to be accomplished in the United States by the private banks, without bringing into question their own financial stability, still has to be worked out. The United States authorities cannot continue much longer to ignore the fact that they have incurred losses on loans to South America, which must in United States law be reflected in the balance sheets of the banks.

Mr. Carrington: My hon. Friend would be advised to recognise that the problem for the banking system is much smaller than it was. In the United States and in this country banks have already made adequate provisions for losses which they are likely to incur on such debt. The real problem with that debt—this is why it has not been written off—is that the countries involved will need to borrow in the future and if their debt were written off now their access to credit markets would be severely restrained for the next 20 years.

Mr. Wells: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I was about to make the latter point. He is right to say that the banks are in a stronger position than they were. There are some major banks in the United States which, if the Third world debt were written off quickly, would find credibility and confidence in them undermined, although that problem has receded. We should look to a new initiative now, while we do not face that imminent threat. That is why I have urged action on the matter in this debate and in other forums. During the painful discussions with the private banks, we should not lose sight of the fact that new wealth-creating investments must be made—the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington). If there is no new investment in those countries they will not overcome their debt difficulties. If the debt write-off means that the private banks and the

[Mr. Wells]

private sector will not invest, those countries will continue to become poorer, their populations will grow and environmental degradation will accelerate.

It is perfectly possible to achieve our goals by a combination of private and public sectors acting in consort to support each other through the IMF and the World Bank. My hon. Friend the Minister has said that he is turning his face against any idea of removing the burden of debt from the private banks and placing it on the taxpayer, and I support that, but he must bear in mind that to get out of the present situation public and private sectors must work in concert and through international institutions. This will involve a combination of Government guarantees to the private sector in return for innovation and imaginative reinvestment in those countries by the banks and by private companies; and it will involve strengthening the international lending institutions.

On the part of developing countries, this must involve a restructuring of their economies which will release the energies of their peoples to work effectively in productive enterprise. That will generate wealth at home and exports abroad, to provide the necessary hard currency to purchase spare parts and other goods to enable their economies to begin to work again.

The developed world, for its part, must reduce barriers to Third-world production and be prepared to pay modestly increased prices for that production. That meets the point about commodities made by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). This will require Europe to stop producing subsidised products such as sugar and rape seed oil, which is to the detriment of Third-world countries. We must make a start, but the proposals to reduce the sugar price by 5 per cent. in the present agricultural round go in the opposite direction. I hope that my hon. Friend will make certain that his right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will ensure that those proposals are not agreed to by the Council of Ministers in Brussels.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the EEC should adopt a more generous and liberal attitude to the import of semi-manufactured foodstuffs from producer countries? For example, a fruit-growing country which decides to can the fruit and to manufacture jam should be encouraged to do so. It will then receive a greater proportion of the total wealth created by the fruit than if it exports the raw fruit.

Mr. Wells: The hon. Gentleman enables me to mention one of the points that I was going to leave for a letter to my hon. Friend the Minister. The hon. Gentleman is right. The rules of origin under the Lomé agreement must be modified to facilitate added value production and further manufacture in developing countries so that they can begin to earn their living—particularly in smaller and island states which have vulnerable and undiversified products to export.

American agricultural over-production and subsidising must also be reduced, as must Japanese protection of its rice and vegetable production. Few people realise that the price of rice in Japan is kept at well over 50 per cent. above the world price. Japan has fierce tariff and other barriers against the importing of rice from the impoverished rice-producing countries around it. We must advocate changing such provisions to the Japanese and other countries.

Turning to the international institutions Mr. Močen Quereshi, senior vice-president of the World Bank, made it clear at the all-party committee debt conference on growing out of debt that the World Bank was prepared to be given a more pro-active role in resolving debt provided that it was given the money and tools to carry that out. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling mentioned the conference on 6 December. This must include the institutions being willing to reschedule their debts, particularly in Africa, the smaller Caribbean states, central America and the Philippines. That in turn will depend on the executive board, on which my hon. Friend the Minister has a representative. We must ensure that the board permits this policy to grow in the World Bank, because those institutions are essential instruments for the resolution of the problem.

Much work remains to be done and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will ensure that these matters are discussed and resolved at the meeting of the IMF and the World Bank in three weeks' time. I wish to refer to many of the excellent contributions which have been made today about the environment. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was asked by an Amer-Indian chief from the Amazon basin what people living at the top of London tower blocks knew about his people's lives. The hon. Member for Islington, North certainly knows something about the subject, as he has shown today.

I had the good fortune to work in the tropical forests for many years—taking out the green heart, to which the hon. Member for Islington, North referred. I also had the good fortune to be conducted by a group of Amer-Indians on two expeditions up the river Essequibo and beyond to the highest mountain in Guyana, Mount Roraima. Just as they would be out of place in a block of flats in London, so I was a child in the forest with them. The Indians understand how ecology works and how to live with it, but we do not. I also had the good fortune to walk with those Indians for three months from the south of Guyana in the Rupununi to Manaus. It was an absolute revelation of the sensitivity with which, generally speaking, those people treat their environment, the intrusions into which, as the hon. Member for Linlithgow emphasised, are so abhorrent and dangerous.

We can cut down and use forests sympathetically. We can use them for the economic benefit of the world if we conduct forestry exercises to regenerate the forest. Forests regenerate very quickly provided that they are not burnt off and that the canopy is not cut away. There are sympathetic methods which are known to my hon. Friend the Minister and his researchers. I hope that we can make that advice and experience available to allow the forests to be exploited economically for the benefit of everyone with particular sensitivity towards the Amer-Indians and their way of life.

We must also remember that we deplore the 10 per cent. to 20 per cent. increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere caused by deforestation. However, we must also learn lessons in this country and in the developing world. Some 80 per cent. of carbon dioxide emissions come from the developed world and from power stations, the burning of fossil fuels and from motor cars and diesel engines. We should accelerate the introduction of catalytic

converters into this country on all our motor cars before the date that has been set. That would be a major contribution towards the reduction of carbon dioxide.

We should also begin to replant the forests which were cut down in the 19th century due to increasing population. By cutting down the forests, we created more land for agriculture. That enabled towns to form, which eventually led to the industrial revolution which is the basis for our present privileged economic position. We must make an ecological contribution now by replanting our forests. We cannot expect the impoverished people of the world in their overpopulated countries to bear an unfair burden.

I wish to advocate certain ways in which the ODA can assist the development of private sectors in Third-world countries which must be the true source of growth. The ODA and the Commonwealth Development Corporation, are already embarking on many important projects to bring the private sector in this country together with private sectors in Third-world countries. That work must be expanded and the amount of money which we hope will increase the aid programme should go exceptionally to the CDC to increase its programmes particularly in India and Pakistan and Bangladesh, to which it has just been introduced. Those programmes could encourage the development of private sector involvement.

The hon. Member for Islington, North mentioned the problem of the banana regime in the Caribbean, but that problem also exists among all the other traditional suppliers to the European Community, which have enjoyed not only access to that market but a privileged price for their products, enabling them in turn to pay a reasonable price to the banana producer in the country concerned. That programme has been highly successful, giving St. Lucia in the Windward Islands the highest income in real terms that it has enjoyed since sugar was king on those islands. We must find means by which that beneficial trading system can continue.

I, too, met Mr. Julian Hunte, but also Mary Eugenia Charles, Prime Minister of Dominica and Mr. John Compton, Prime Minister of St. Lucia. They visited the capitals of Europe, and intend returning in May, together with the Prime Minister of St. Vincent, to convince the Community's 12 other members that they should join the British Government to ensure that the present regime continues not only within the Lomé convention, because it is essential that it be rolled over into Lomé 4, but after 1992. The Government and the Opposition in the Windward Islands, Jamaica, Surinam, Belize and elsewhere are working in combination to bring that about. We must pay tribute to them for doing that. They can make the arguments with so much greater emotional impact than we can, and we should all support their efforts in whatever way we can.

I make no apology for making a constructive approach to the debt problem the centrepiece of my speech. No matter how much aid we give, if business cannot be developed and trade resumed—due to debt and the refusal of developed nations to invest—environmental, social and political problems will fester and multiply. They will affect our environment our climate and our standards of living. I call on my hon. Friend the Minister, in whom I have expressed so much confidence, to redouble his efforts to persuade his international counterparts to pursue the policies that I have sketched today and in which I believe.

1.17 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) managed to give the House the opportunity to debate this subject, and add my thanks to those of other hon. Members who have spoken. I am glad also that the environment has been such a strong theme in the debate. I shall seek to touch on that subject as well as to deal with population control, the role of the market, and structural adjustment programmes pursued by the World Bank and the IMF.

In his opening remarks the Minister claimed vigour for market forces and referred to south-east Asia. The reality in south-east Asia, as stressed and hyped by the World Bank, is that four of its economies have done extremely well. However, two of those economies are minuscule, being island city states that were formerly United Kingdom colonies. The other two are Taiwan and South Korea, which have a special relationship with the United States. This has very much benefited their own development programmes. They also have benefited to a considerable degree by foreign direct investment by Japan.

The most successful of the four—South Korea—is not a classic example of the market economy. South Korea operates rigorous import licences. It has penalised importing firms when they have gone over their target on imports, and suspended their licences. It has also employed price control policies, with penal taxation of profits over the price control ceiling. It has undertaken detailed negotiations with individual foreign firms investing in its economy, to the point at which it renews several hundred contracts with such firms on the basis of the role that they play specifically in relation to South Korea's own development objectives.

This is very close to the planning agreement approach that I, along with others, proposed for the last Labour Government, which I regret was not implemented with the same rigour as in South Korea.

Mr. Carrington: The hon. Gentleman should also mention that for many years Korea has pursued a policy of enforced labour overseas for a large proportion of its work force, and has largely rebuilt the middle east as a result.

Mr. Holland: That is a significant factor in terms of the scale of remittances from abroad, and it is one way of disposing of surplus population.

South Korea's development model, however, has been pursued with scant regard for democracy, and the same applies to Taiwan and Singapore.

Mr. Chris Patten: Does the hon. Gentleman intend to deal with south-east Asian countries such as Thailand and Malaysia?

Mr. Holland: If the Minister had read *The Daily Telegraph* yesterday he would have learnt that one of the new low-priced automobiles imported to this country, the Proton—constructed with Japanese technology and basically a Japanese car—is coming from Malaysia, which pays lower wage rates. One of the reasons why a company such as Matsushita does so well on the world market is that, as a Japanese firm, it has been investing in Malaysia, where the cost of labour is a tenth of that in Japan. Although Matsushita may not be a household name in this country, Technics, Panasonic and Quasar are. They are brand names of Matsushita, which is a world electronics

[Mr. Holland]

giant. There are special reasons why those countries have been able to do well, many of which involve foreign direct investment and a special relationship with the United States.

Several hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, have mentioned population control. It is important to be aware, as hon. Members on both sides of the House appear to be, that families in developing countries are so large not simply because women have not heard of birth control or are unaware of its advantages, but because unless they have sons to support them in their older age they may become destitute. That relates to another point that I want to explore: the role of social programmes, and whether developing countries can ever have a basic form of social security.

It is no accident that, with higher levels of income, so that people can put resources aside for their own retirement income, birth rates drop. It is also no accident that the more developed the society and its social security system, the lower the birth rate. We should be especially concerned to support such programmes, funded on a long-term basis, in developing countries whose Governments are concerned to provide an elementary subsistence for those in retirement.

Social, housing, health, education and urban renewal programmes are undermined by the imperatives of debt repayment. Net transfers of resources from South to North reduce trade income and jobs in the world as a whole. The first two Brandt reports concentrate on mutuality and on the fact that we live in an interlinked world.

Economic and environmental factors are also interlinked in terms of the global economy and the environment. It is in part because it is under pressure to repay its debts that Brazil is destroying the tropical rain forest and contributing to the global greenhouse effect. Brazil is faced with other internal pressures. During the 1960s and 1970s Brazil achieved phenomenal rates of investment. The modernisation of her industrial structure—as in South Korea—was through extensive public sector intervention. However, Brazil has suffered the consequences of imbalanced growth.

There has been hyper-growth in the major urban areas, especially around Sao Paulo. The increased efficiency and productivity of agriculture, which Argentina has been unable to parallel, has led to a reduction in the number of people working in agriculture during the post-war period. That has led to people moving away from the land and into the towns. That movement has been used as a staging post—a classic feature of migration of this kind—because those people later moved to the cities.

The Brazilian Government offered land in the north-east to try to offset the drift of the population towards Sao Paulo or Rio de Janeiro. They tried consciously to develop what was then an under-populated region that had considerable natural resources. The climatic and environmental factors were not seriously considered.

Many tropical trees have relatively shallow roots that extend, none the less, over a wide area. The nutritional content of the soil that sustains the Amazonian rain forest is relatively limited. When the land has been cleared it is possible to get only two or three years' produce out of it before more land has to be cleared.

What are we to say to the Brazilian Government and to other Governments who are in a similar position? The destruction of the Amazon rain forest, and the consequent greenhouse effect, affects us all. We, who have polluted the world for decades, cannot say to them that it is time that they stopped destroying the rain forests. We cannot expect the South alone to pay to prevent pollution or the greenhouse effect. The North has been the world's main polluter for decades. It would be unjust to demand full repayment by the new democracies in Latin America. The debts incurred in Latin America have often been caused by dictatorships. They have used aid to finance arms purchases. In Brazil, speculative developments in the north-east can be attributed to the armed forces.

Both North and South need to work together to control pollution and to use resources in such a way that the environment can be sustained. However, that has major implications. Economists used to say that air and water are free, but the Government are putting a price on water. It is a depressing breakfast-time experience to see in the newspapers a typist sitting up to her waist in the wet and to turn over the page and see that we shall have to pay for the water that produces her clothes. When I see how much water it takes to produce a car, I am even more encouraged to support policies for public urban transport instead of private transport. A price is being put on water which is to be marketed by the Government. Therefore, why should the British Government object to the Brazilians charging the rest of the world for maintaining its oxygen and the stability of its climate? If that principle is not accepted, nonetheless it is important that we try to relieve the pressure on Brazil in terms of debt repayment in such a way that shows that we are serious about making some contribution to offset the short-term costs which Brazil might face through bringing pressures to bear on those very powerful vested interests which are reducing the tropical rain forests.

Brazil has done her part and has reduced her imports to repay debt from $24 billion in 1981 to $13 billion in 1986. In other words Brazil reduced her imports by half. It is time for the world to address the environmental issues and the readjustment of debt under the same heading.

The global debt of the developing countries is $1·2 trillion. Brazil's debt accounts for just under 10 per cent. of that, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said, the costs of affecting the climate by reducing the Amazonian rain forest cannot be projected in a linear way just as, although the population crisis is serious, population can be projected in a linear way. If the flip effect affecting the northern hemisphere occurs in the way that my hon. Friend described, we know of no expenditure that could reverse it. The measures which may have to be taken to adapt northern hemisphere urban conglomerations to a change in the environment would cost trillions of dollars and still not succeed in returning the world's climate to the equilibrium which it has enjoyed for so long. In that context are the Government prepared to make a contribution to the reduction of the $10 or $20 billion of Brazilian debt? If the Minister were to reply that we cannot reduce debt in relation to one single issue, I would argue, and trust that he would argue with others

that we should link debt write-off to programmes which meet other objectives, especially the needs of particular social groups.

The priority for development should be social programmes which should aim for social welfare, especially that which betters the situation of women and children. The problem with the IMF and World Bank programmes is that social needs are residuals which are met only if the country concerned manages to generate sufficient of an export surplus to enable it to afford social expenditure. We should be achieving a combination of grant and low-cost loan programmes concerning food and nutrition, sanitation and health, and housing and urban development linked to regional development. Many Conservative Members referred to what is happening in Bombay and other major Indian cities. That involves the need for regional development programmes to reduce the drift of population to the towns.

In that context we should also be taking extensive measures to support the UNICEF proposals for adjustment with a human face, which are designed to link debt write-off to programmes that benefit children. We should be seeking to introduce a concept of trade-off. That is a term often used by economists in situations which are far less apocalyptic than the possibility of sudden world climate changes. Why should we not trade-off the preservation of the world's environment against writing off debt? Why should we not be trading off, also against the writing off of debt, the investment in the future of social groups at risk and the reduction of world population by increasing social living standards in the developing world?

I want to say a word about the role of the IMF and the World Bank since some key meetings are about to take place on the question of structural adjustment policies. We used to know what the IMF and the World Bank were doing. Basically, the IMF was concerned with short-term balance of payments adjustments and the support of those adjustments rather than the imposition of devaluation and deflation on the countries concerned. That was the original objective held by Keynes and argued at Bretton Woods. It was accepted by White and others at the time. In other words, the main role of the IMF was to avoid deflation or devaluation by sustaining a country through a temporary balance of payments adjustment. Now, the main role of the IMF is different. It is imposing a uniform package of deflation, devaluation and deregulation on the economies concerned, together with ideological elements of privatisation and liberalisation which may have been appropriate to the type of economy for which the Bretton Woods system was devised, but which are not appropriate for developing countries themselves.

Further, we used to know the role of the World Bank. The fund was concerned with assisting short-term balance of payments adjustments, but the World Bank was supposed to be concerned with longer term development. That gave rise to a certain demonology for some time in which it was reckoned that the IMF was not the goody, but the World Bank was because it was struggling for the longer term development interests of the countries concerned.

That is no longer the case. From the early 1970s there were increased demands on the IMF to provide for longer periods of adjustment. That is perhaps understandable. Inversely, from the late 1970s the World Bank became increasingly involved with assisting members with overall balance of payments difficulties in the short term. The fund responded with the extended fund facility in 1974 and in 1980 the World Bank formalised its changing role with the creation of the structural adjustment lending programme.

In other words, the different roles of the fund and the Bank became telescoped into one. That has had extremely negative effects in the borrowing undertaken by a range of developing countries because it has given rise to a new type of conditionality. The conditions—to cut public spending, deny oneself social and welfare programmes in order to reduce money supply, domestic demand and import demand—are deflationary and are counter-productive at a global level because they give rise to a beggar-my-neighbour syndrome of reduced imports and thus a reduction of global trade. In addition, the World Bank and the fund are working together in bargaining with individual developing countries. In other words, cross conditionality has emerged. The acceptance of the conditions of one financial agency is made the condition of support by others. Thus, a bilateral aid package, such as the aid given by the United Kingdom to some of the front-line states, may be made conditional on the acceptance of an IMF stabilisation package. In turn, the World Bank's structural lending programmes and its sectoral adjustment lending have increasingly become a precondition of other flows or debt-rescheduling packages.

As recently as 18 months ago, an UNCTAD report highlighted that, for 30 of 35 structural adjustment loans approved until early 1987 by the World Bank, countries had or were waiting for imminent approval of an IMF standby or extended IMF arrangements. The IMF-World Bank seal of approval has increasingly become a precondition for a further package of private-sector lending. The Government's lending record to front-line states shows that they would lend on the bilateral programme only if the IMF approved. The World Bank would not lend unless the IMF approved. Private-sector lending is not made available unless there is a seal of approval.

The result has been a closing of options for developing countries. Fund-Bank conditionality has become far too close to that of a multilateral godfather making the same offer to Governments of a structural adjustment deal that they cannot afford to refuse.

Technical advice or conditions for the funding of programmes that governments have determined as part of their internal political process are valid and appropriate. Structural adjustment has increasingly become a policy diktat that denies not only alternative paths of development but, in many cases, the credibility of the democratic process.

I urge the Minister to consider that. He has been lavishly praised by Conservative Members, and we regret that we cannot join in that lavish praise. When we consider the overall achievement of the aid programme as a share of GNP, despite the Minister's strictures or claims against the Labour Government and their aid record, the fact remains that in 1979 the Labour Government left overseas development assistance at 0·52 per cent. of GNP, whereas it is now down to 0·28 per cent. Quality as well as quantity is important.

We know that the Minister is arguing the case for overseas aid. Rather than join him in a knockabout on a party basis, we give him credit for that. We know that he is arguing the corner for development, but the bottom line is, where is the result? If he cannot sufficiently persuade the

[Mr. Holland]

Government to increase the bilateral aid programme, that does not prevent him arguing the wider issues in the IMF or the World Bank. If he were to do so, he would find some friends abroad in the Governments of Italy, Spain, France, the coalition Government of Belgium, Norway, Sweden and elsewhere in Scandinavia. The fact that those friends might range from the centre to the Left rather than centre to the Right should not deter him from trying to make progress on such programmes.

If he can argue the case for debt write-off as a negotiated result of commitments made by developing countries to preserve the tropical rain forests, and if he can get negotiated results for the writing off of debt to sustain social expenditure programmes, Labour Members and a considerable share of the public will support him.

I want to elaborate my point about the social programmes and social expenditure in housing, health, education, social services, food and nutrition, sanitation, literacy and basic social services. The terms imposed by the IMF and the World Bank, contrary to the interests of the countries for which they were designed or the way in which they originally worked, amount to a negative kind of conditionality. It denies not only the possibility of social expenditure, but the possibility of autonomous development paths for many less developed countries. Of course, lending or debt write-off should be and could be carried out against certain conditions. It would be wrong to write a blank cheque to a developing country and to say, "Here's an X per cent. write-off of your debt burden whether or not you undertake programmes in food and nutrition, sanitation, literacy or social services." There would need to be conditions, but at least there could be positive conditionality and the chance could be open to countries to gain a release of debt or a loosening of the debt straitjacket if they were to undertake such programmes.

Furthermore, such programmes should not be viewed simply as an economic cost for the world's economy. For developing countries, there are productivity gains from achieving a healthy, educated and skilled labour force. That is also a key element in the productivity and efficiency gains which South Korea and Singapore have achieved. They have not achieved those results through low cost, low wage, unskilled economies, but by high cost investment in high skills and high education, and that is a crucial element in their success. Why should we deny that to other developing countries?

Developed countries would also gain from such an extension of debt release for social or environmental problems because increased spending in the south would generate increased exports from the north. It has been estimated by Gabriel Palme of Cambridge university, for example, that up to 250,000 jobs have been lost in the United Kingdom economy since 1981 precisely because of the reduction in imports by Latin America alone. Those are the ways in which the mutuality and inter-relatedness between the north and south of the global economy are costing not only the south but the north.

The development deficits that could arise as a result of new social needs programmes, along the lines that I have argued, could be and should be sustained on an accountable basis by the IMF and the World Bank over the medium to long term and funded in part through new special drawing rights issues in the IMF. I am sensitive to the fact that other hon. Members want to speak and I shall be glad to ensure that they can do so, but I want briefly to refer to SDRs in relation to the debt reform proposals put forward by Mr. Nicholas Brady.

We have been told, outside the House, about the Brady proposals, that there is a recognition that, as opposed to the Baker plan, instead of developing countries being able to grow their way out of debt with more private finance, there will have to be debt reduction. We welcome that useful measure. But if we are to approach the issues of population control and the environment and to meet the social needs programmes, the development deficits that many of the less developed countries would have to run in the medium term would be sizeable. For that we need not a revamped Baker plan, but at least a Baker plan each year for five years. That would mean increasing SDRs by about $30 billion a year for five years. If $150 billion sounds a lot, I must remind the Minister that it would only restore the ratio of IMF lending to quotas which obtained at the time of Bretton Woods because IMF quotas, as a share of world trade, have diminished greatly since then.

Arguably, the role of the IMF and the World Bank should have been reformed 25 years ago, following the 1971 dollar devaluation, and it is imperative that their roles should be transformed now. Recent events suggest that that is possible. The United States Administration are taking a more realistic approach to debt relief, as evidenced by the Brady plan. Japan is taking more interest in putting more resources into the world economy. There is also the possibility of widening the membership of the Bretton Woods institutions, with an application by the Soviet Union to join. There is also increased coherence within the European Community.

It is especially important that Governments in the Group of Seven should make it plain to the United States that support for the dollar and an easing of the adjustment costs of the twin trade and budget deficits must imply a wider sharing of responsibility for management of such institutions as the IMF and the World Bank, even if that falls short of a new Bretton Woods conference.

In fighting the corner for development, I urge the Minister not to let go of the fact that there is a £14·5 billion budget surplus. Removing that sum from the public sector borrowing requirement or adding it to a public sector debt repayment figure is equivalent to putting it in a tin under the bed. The Minister should encourage the Treasury team to get the money out from under the bed and invest it in development.

1.51 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): This has been an interesting and symbolic week. On Monday I had the good fortune to present a debate on the arts, which had to do with the quality of life in this country. Now, on Friday, thanks to the good fortune of the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), we are discussing the quality of life for the world as a whole. In the middle of the week, the Budget highlighted the economic health of the nation, which might perhaps enable us to look for solutions to some of the problems referred to in both those debates. I join hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development on his work. I say that not merely because he deserves congratulation but because I

should like to add to the burden of political debt that he carries on his shoulders as he rises in the political firmament.

The hon. Member for Eccles and the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) referred to debt, which is central to this problem. The hon. Member for Vauxhall made some interesting suggestions about how we might deal with debt, particularly in Brazil. We should be careful not to tie ourselves down to dealing with debt in one country at the expense of others, although perhaps other countries do not have ecological problems as serious as those in Brazil. I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman in his desire to find solutions.

I shall not dwell on the debt problem, on structural and macro-economic problems or, indeed, on agriculture or education, important though they may be. Instead, I shall consider the more visible and tangible forms of aid and how we might encourage our nation to pay attention to the needs of the world. The world has shrunk in our lifetime. It used to end at the Channel, and southern Europe was a long way away. Now, the rest of the world is much closer. I grew up with David Attenborough's "Zoo Quest", which showed funny little lizards scurrying around far-away places such as Java and Sumatra. Now, in my children's time, the world is much closer. We have had televisual tragedy but we also have many more natural history programmes of great interest. The children of this country have been leading public opinion in bringing our attention to the needs of other countries. One thinks of the impact of the "Blue Peter" campaigns and the "Blue Peter" Cambodia appeals. That country is now called Kampuchea, but it was called Cambodia when "Blue Peter" launched its appeal. The change of name highlights some of the quandaries which face us and our Government when we look at aid.

When one considers the regimes running the countries in which aid is needed, one thinks, "If only it were not that regime, we could achieve so much more." The regime in question may be oppressive, incompetent or dishonest, or it may hijack aid. There are often problems in the worst areas of need. When problems exist because of a country's own regime, the people suffering from need and hunger suffer doubly. The public are saying that, despite political problems, hon. Members must find ways of getting around the obstacles and achieving our policy of getting aid to those in need. They are saying that we must also be sensitive to ecological and environmental implications of some policies, particularly some development policies. Above all, they are saying that we must find solutions. Hon. Members sometimes consider parts of the world and say, "Yes, we should like to help them, but we will not touch that regime." When they consider Nicaragua, hon. Members on one side of the House might say that if it were Costa Rica, where we support and approve the Government, it would be much easier to persuade the House to look at the ravages caused by hurricanes and so on. Other hon. Members might say that South Africa is a no-go area for aid and we must not touch it. We must get around those attitudes and look to the needs of those countries.

I shall go beyond the subject of starvation and other issues that hit the headlines. The problems in Ethiopia, the Sudan and so on are rehearsed, known, understood, and all too real, but we need to look beyond them to hunger and deprivation world wide. We must produce a policy which captures the public imagination, as it is captured by a red nose day, Sports Aid, Band Aid, and the many Oxfam-type events. If we can capture public imagination in regard to starvation, we should be able to do it with other issues as well. The hon. Member for Eccles will then get her Supply days and we shall have debates of this kind not just on Fridays but mid-week because there will be pressure from the public. Hon. Members will be here in force, populating the empty green Benches and discussing aid issues.

I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to consider one course which could capture the public imagination because it would capture children's imagination. That is to follow UNICEF's report on children and examine children's health. It could be put into manageable terms. Medical advances are such that, within a comparatively short period, we could conquer many of the diseases which at present ravage the people, and particularly the children, of developing countries. The problem of iodine deficiency, for example, is manageable in terms of cost and understanding. In expectant mothers, it results in hundreds of thousands of children being born with brain damage and other physical damage. Yet for a small sum —tuppence-ha'penny—per head, we could issue iodine tablets and implement immunisation programmes, and tens of thousands of children would no longer suffer.

If we could promote oral rehydration therapy around the world, for scarcely more than the present cost we could prevent the deaths of 150 million people, mainly children, who die from diarrhoea and dehydration problems. That is more than the total number of civil and military deaths in the two world wars combined and the solution is there for us to take.

If we could introduce an immunisation policy and make a dramatic effort to take it to the rest of the world, we could overcome many killer diseases. The records show that the DPT—diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus—programme which, with the measles programme, is crucial, is an effective one, but at present we protect only half the world's children. Immunisation is provided for 98 per cent. of children in Singapore, 94 per cent. in Kuwait, 93 per cent. in countries such as Chile, but only 16 per cent. in Guatemala, 9 per cent. in Bangladesh and 5 per cent. in Niger.

A programme of health cure and care is understandable to the people and children of this country. We could transform the world's health and play a real part in overcoming health problems in other countries if we, as a nation, took up that challenge. My hon. Friend the Minister should state that we are going to solve the world's health problems along those lines, and invite the private sector, individuals, companies, agencies and Parliament to join us. That challenge is surely worth taking up? It is a task worthy of the House and of the nation. If we can achieve that aim, we shall not be merely individuals adopting a child but a nation adopting the world's children.

2.3 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): I too wish to add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) for selecting this subject for debate. World development and world aid are two of the most important challeges facing the world community in the next few years.

[Mr. Matthew Carrington]

I was interested to hear that we do not receive enough days to discuss aid in this House. I cannot miss the opportunity to say that, perhaps, in the days when this used to be the imperial Parliament, international matters —particularly the problems of development in India and Africa—were debated more extensively. So perhaps we are moving backwards rather than forwards by having days on which to debate aid.

We should address two types of aid, particularly for the least developed countries. First, the type needed in emergencies, such as droughts, famines and wars, where the money to provide aid can be raised relatively easily. Pictures in newspapers of starving babies bring money flooding in, and the problem is one of distribution. Development aid is more important to this debate because it is a more difficult problem to address. How can countries be brought up to a level at which they can sustain and progress their own development through their own efforts? That is the key to the problem.

I shall make some remarks, largely from my own experience, about the practical ways in which to provide aid and finance to the developing countries. One of the great problems when providing aid is political constraint. As my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) has said, aid cannot be provided to a country if its political powers reject the aid. Another difficulty arises if the powers accept the aid but the population reject it and do not use it in the right way for development. I am thinking particularly of Moslem countries, of which I have most experience. Aid can be provided by western countries in such a way as to go against the cultural, social and religious sensibilities of the population, and the aid is thus rejected.

This raises the problem of the role of women in developing countries. We all know that women in Third world countries are all too often oppressed, and the progress of those countries depends largely on the progress of the women in them. But that progress is restrained by the social and religious atmosphere of those societies. It is difficult to change that from the outside. When providing aid we must encourage such change but accept that we cannot impose it. We must ensure that the aid is given in a way that is sensitive to the needs of these countries and not withheld because they do not accept our cultural, religious and social mores.

If a country is brought to a position in which it can sustain its own development, its major need is to export. The Lomé agreements have done much to provide access to European markets for the manufactured goods of developing countries. More progress is needed, but it will be painful. The sort of products that can be exported from the developing countries tend to come from industries that are labour intensive. If we accept them in volume in our markets we must recognise what we are doing: we shall be condemning some of the south European countries in the EEC to changes in their industries that will entail large scale unemployment.

It is not enough merely to provide access to these markets. It is vital that we provide guaranteed prices, too. There is no point in providing access on a free market basis if we are trying to provide development aid. The producing country must be given a guaranteed return along with access. That does not amount to a protected market; it is a function of the aid budget, which subsidises the price at which we buy, although not perhaps the price at which we sell.

I want to say a word or two about debt, and I am conscious that my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) wants to speak as well. When we restructure debt there has been talk of imposing conditions on countries that have borrowed money or want to borrow it in the future. I warn the House that the lesson to emerge from the debt crisis has been that conditions attached to debt are unenforceable. If ever we restructure debt on the assumption that a country will do something in return, we shall find as likely as not that that assumption is misplaced.

2.7 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) for curtailing his remarks in order to give me a couple of minutes in which to make two points.

First, I hope that as much as possible of the aid that Britain provides will be given in the form of bilateral aid, not through international agencies. The average British householder is compulsorily taxed about £75 a year for overseas aid. Some people think that far too little: others think there should be no development aid at all. It is particularly difficult to please everyone on this issue, unlike other forms of provision by the Exchequer, such as road building, on which it is possible to get a broad consensus about roughly the amount that should be spent. Our development aid seems to fall in the middle of the two views held about it, so perhaps the amount being spent is not far wrong.

Apart from the primary and basic aim of helping to assuage poverty in the Third world—that must be in the forefront of our minds throughout—I want Britain to obtain the maximum possible credit and goodwill abroad for what we are doing. I want the recipient countries to know that the aid is coming from Britain. I am not particularly interested in their knowing that it comes from the EEC, the Commonwealth, part of the United Nations or any other sort of international agency. All that should be played down and the aid from Britain should be directed bilaterally and increased correspondingly.

I also want to ask my hon. Friend the Minister about the balance in aid between Asia and Africa. For historical and psychological reasons, those predisposed to support the provision of aid have a greater interest in Africa, by and large, than in Asia although the poverty is just as great in some Asiatic countries such as Bangladesh. The reasons for that may be mixed. Perhaps Africa is physically nearer to us than Asia. Perhaps there is something about the African people which invokes a more paternalistic instinct among those who want to help the poorer people of the world. It may have something to do with the history of Christian missions, which found it easier to achieve conversions in Africa than in Asia where the Hindu, Buddhist and Moslem religions were perhaps more resistant.

Aid from the European Community in particular and from Britain through bilateral aid tends to focus more on Africa. I am not very impressed by the argument that India is the single biggest recipient of aid from Britain because the population of India is nearly twice that of Africa. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider my

comments. I have not given him proper notice that I intended to raise these issues, but I hope that he will write to me fully if he cannot deal with them today.

2.11 pm

Mr. Chris Patten: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply briefly to some of the points which have been made today.

I begin with an omnibus "Thank you" for the kind comments from some hon. Members. Adlai Stevenson once said that flattery is all right provided that one does not inhale. I do not think that anyone should underestimate the amount of flattery which most Ministers are prepared to endure in the national interest.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley), in a particularly interesting speech raised several points which I would particularly like to comment upon. I will not today refer to what he said about priorities, but I hope that I shall have an opportunity to comment on that on another occasion.

With regard to the GDP deflator, which I referred to earlier, I can assure my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling that the GDP deflator that I have used is the one contained in my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget report. That deflator is hot off the presses. For the next financial year, the deflator forecast is 5·5 per cent. The aid programme next year, including additional funds for Nigeria, will be 10·5 per cent. higher than the originally planned aid budget for this year.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling referred to Sudan and the human tragedy which has been enacted there over the past year. Disasters in the Horn of Africa are in a special category reflecting the numbers at risk, the distances, inaccessibility and above all the fact that whatever difficulties nature may have wrought, man has contrived to make the situation far worse. I saw just how much worse when I visited some of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees camps just before Christmas at Itang and Fugnido on the Sudan-Ethiopia border.

The problems for Sudan do not, alas, come singly. Sudan must repair the damage caused by the devastating floods last year and put the economy on a sustainable basis. There is little point in trying to resolve those issues until the war in the south is settled equitably, to give confidence of a lasting peace and therefore the base for restoring economic and social life.

We were pleased to see a positive outcome to the United Nations conference in Khartoum last week. We played a full part in its proceedings and we welcome the plan of action, which must be implemented. We shall stress to all sides that what is needed now is not so much a month of tranquillity—welcome although that small respite would be—but a lasting peace.

Our connections with Sudan are close at historic, cultural and personal levels. That is all the more reason for our concern at the tragedy which has unfolded. In 1988 we committed more than £14 million for relief work in Sudan. I can assure my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling that we are ready to do more. We are in close touch with the non-governmental organisations, which have been doing such a magnificent job in difficult circumstances, about how we can perhaps do more.

My hon. Friend referred also to Afghanistan. Since 1979 we have provided more than £60 million to help the victims of war and civil conflict in that country. Last year, we doubled to £10 million our annual humanitarian assistance to agencies such as the UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNICEF, and British organisations such as Afghan Aid. Only last month I announced a further £500,000 for UNICEF and for the ICRC, particularly for their mother and child care programmes in Kabul and elsewhere. The international community is considering future relief operations for Afghanistan. I assure the House that we shall continue playing our full part in such humanitarian programmes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) made interesting remarks based on his profound experience of Namibia. I discussed some of his points with the leaders of SWAPO during my recent visit to Angola, and was able to assure them that the United Kingdom wishes to help them through technical co-operation, training and education in a free and independent Namibia. We have been giving Namibia some help, but have pledged a further £500,000 for the repatriation of refugees to that country in due course.

I would like to have time to follow up my hon. Friend's remarks concerning the revival of the United Nations. A number of the issues we discussed today will be dependent for a satisfactory solution on better co-ordination between, and effective delivery by, UN agencies. I am sure that my hon. Friend will play a significant role in our future discussions on that issue, because his knowledge of those matters is as great as anyone in the House.

I do not have much time either to follow up the extremely important points made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) concerning the environment, climate changes, and the global threats that confront us —which will be much of the stuff of international affairs and negotiations for decades. The United Kingdom is heading the scientific assessment sub-group of the intergovernmental panel of climate change. We are also playing a major role in the work of the panel's other sub-groups. The panel will report to the world climate conference in the autumn of 1990, which will provide the international community with an opportunity to consider its findings.

Mr. Dalyell: Could not Dr. John Houghton, director general of the Meteorological Office, be asked for an interim report?

Mr. Patten: I shall certainly consider the hon. Gentleman's point and respond to it in due course. As he knows, we have the benefit of expert advice on climate change within the Overseas Development natural resources institute, partly because my former permanent secretary is an international expert on the subject and, as in so many other matters, I follow in his footsteps—as well as in those of my present permanent secretary.

My hon. Friends the Members for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) and for South Hams (Mr. Steen) referred in interesting terms to poverty and population. I welcome the support and interest from right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House in respect of our efforts to alleviate poverty, including our work on the health and family planning front. Direct poverty alleviation is an important element of any aid programme, and helping countries to make the transition to a lower population growth is a vital

[Mr. Patten]

part of assisting them achieve sustainable development. This year, we have provided more than £14 million to international bodies such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations fund for population activities. We have a number of bilateral aid projects in Africa and Asia concerned with health and family planning. I mention the Orissa project, and my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes spoke of placing a health and population adviser in our development division in southern Africa. We shall shortly place another adviser in our development division in east Africa. I wholly accept the importance that my hon. Friend attaches to that aspect, and I acknowledge also the importance of developing basic literacy projects and primary health care as a whole, if we are to accomplish our objectives in respect of population.

I should have liked to deal with what was said by my hon. Friends the Members for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) and for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) in their interesting speeches; I should also have liked to follow the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) through his arguments about debt and the environment, but I dare say that he and I will have future opportunities to lock horns on those issues.

I recognise that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) has responsibilities elsewhere which have made it impossible for him to stay for the winding-up speeches—the same is true of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton). My hon. Friend knows that on a number of issues, not least debt, we have found ourselves following the trail that he has blazed. I assure him in his absence that we shall be considering his comments on debt and on the Brady proposals very carefully as we take part in discussions on those matters over the next few weeks, notably at the interim meetings of the IMF and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development next month.

We have given proper priority today to the importance of the environment in its relationship with development aid. We are grateful to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) for giving us this opportunity. I hope that we shall have more extensive opportunities to discuss these matters in the future, and I do not doubt that—not least thanks to the political agility of the hon. Member for Linlithgow—we shall have them.

2.21 pm

Miss Lestor: I thank all hon. Members on both sides of the House who stayed to take part in this Friday debate. I do not know whether I am mellowing—I doubt it—but I found that I agreed at least in part with almost everything that was said. I like to think that that is because the quality of those who stayed for the debate is so high, and because of the knowledge that they have displayed. Much of our disagreement has been on matters of emphasis and of quality, not on the desire to alleviate world poverty and hunger and to do something about the environment.

The Minister rather scoffed at the promise of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition that we would double aid as a proportion of GNP. When we were last in office the figure reached 0·52 per cent., so I see no reason why we should not be able to achieve that aim when we are a Government in a few years time. I may say that we achieved that result without the help of North sea oil revenues. The Minister mentioned disclosures in some of the diaries that are published from time to time, about the difficulties of the last Labour Government. I have no time to read such diaries when I want to find out about history, although I do occasionally go to the pictures—but perhaps we can pursue that another time.

I shall not have time to deal with all hon. Members' speeches, as I am sure that they will understand. Of course the quality of aid is important, but quality is not a substitute for quantity. The two should go together, as was pointed out by Conservative as well as Opposition Members. The tragedy of the past 10 years has been the lack of any development: in many parts of the Third world we have been marking time to stand still.

I said at the beginning that I did not think that the programme had been an unmitigated disaster. I should not dream of saying such a thing, and I join the Minister in pointing to the assistance that has gone to, for instance, Mozambique, Ghana and Kenya—three countries that I am beginning to know extremely well. At no time, either, did I say that we should treat all countries identically. In his reply the Minister said that we could not treat Mozambique and Korea in the same way. I mentioned Korea specifically in connection with a discussion that we had the other week about the International Development Association. I pointed out that Korea, which was now improving and industrialising itself, should be treated entirely differently in debt relief terms from other countries which were very much in need of assistance.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), who sent me a note in which he apologised for having to leave the debate early, referred to the environmental disasters that are likely to engulf us. He reminded us of the situation in many parts of Asia and in many other countries that rank among the poorest in the world. The right hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) said that he is not happy about the percentage of GNP that we, compared with other countries, spend on aid. I agree with him. I join him in congratulating the "Everyman" team on its recent presentation of events in Sudan. It was frightening and horrifying, but it will have alerted many people to the problems and the needs of many poor countries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) sent me a note saying that, because of his many responsibilities, he would have to leave early. I am glad that he was able to participate in the debate—as he always does in debates of this kind.

The hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) has much experience of these matters. He referred to the selfishness and the ignorance that many countries, including our own, have displayed over the years towards the destruction of the environment. He referred also to the special kind of research that alerted us to the hole in the ozone layer. I am particularly pleased that he referred to Namibia, because I did not have time to do so. As it moves towards independence, Namibia will need a great deal of help. The Minister referred to Namibia. It is a subject to which we shall return on another occasion.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will return with the usual persistence for which we all admire him to global conservation problems and to the consequences for the whole world if we do not tackle them. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) referred movingly to the fact that we

are talking about the survival of the planet, not about the survival of one country or another. I join my hon. Friend and many other hon. Members who have said that it is time that the House of Commons devoted more time to these matters and accorded to them the priority that they deserve.

The hon. Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison) referred to the quality of aid and to the importance of improving standards. Both he and the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) referred to the role of women. Women's access to education will determine population growth. The history of population control shows that that is the way forward. It is only when women recognise that they have some rights that population control will become part of the agenda.

We said during the last election campaign—and I am confident that it will feature in any future election campaign—that there should be a women's unit within the Overseas Development Administration. Women's problems and needs are special. Population control is only one of them. Women's views are left out of account in many development programmes. Cultural restrictions mean that they are unable to participate fully in some of the programmes and to benefit from them. That is why it is important that there should be a special unit within the ODA that specialises in matters that concern women.

I welcome the fact that the Minister said that consideration is being given to that suggestion. Many voluntary organisations and those whom I meet during my travels round the world are conscious of that need and also of the need to concentrate on improving literacy among young people. That matter was raised by the hon. Member for South Hams and by several other hon. Members.

I often meet the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) at debates on a variety of subjects. I agree with him about many of the issues which he raised today, so I shall not spend time simply expressing agreement.

Mr. Carrington: Before the hon. Lady leaves the role of women in developing countries, I would appreciate it if she took on board the problems of women in the Islamic faith which affects their position socially. Women inside Islam have considerable freedoms and considerable rights as well as considerable subjection. We cannot impose on other cultures——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Private Members' Bills

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for consideration read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Committee deferred till Friday 14 April.

EMPLOYMENT AGE DISCRIMINATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

BRITISH RACING COMMISSION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 24 March.

COALMINING SUBSIDENCE (DAMAGE, ARBITRATION, PREVENTION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 24 March.

CERVICAL CANCER (TESTING AND TREATMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 24 March.

MISUSE OF DRUGS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 April.

CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS (CONTROL) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 14 April.

RESALE OF TICKETS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 28 April.

ABOLITION OF DOMESTIC RATES ETC. (SCOTLAND) ACT (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 14 April.

RIDERS OF EQUINE ANIMALS (WEARING OF PROTECTIVE HEADGEAR) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 24 March.

HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No day named.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 20th March, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)), the Motion in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock relating to Education may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after it has been entered upon, and if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of at the end of that period Mr. Speaker shall then put the Question.

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 22nd March, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1)(b) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), Motions in the name of Mr. Attorney General relating to Legal Aid and Advice may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall, at the expiration of that period, put any Questions necessary to dispose of them—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Local Government Superannuation Schemes

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

2.32 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I wish to raise the issue of the county council pension fund operated by Derbyshire county council on behalf of people who work for the county council and for other local authorities in Derbyshire. The operation of the county council pension fund has been the source of some concern to my constituents, some of whom are Labour voters, over the past couple of years. The concern certainly goes well beyond supporters of the Conservative party and is widespread in Derbyshire among supporters of all parties and extends even to Opposition Members of Parliament representing Derbyshire constituencies. First, I should make it clear that Derbyshire county council is one of the very few county councils in which, in effect, councillors run their own pension fund. Most county council pension funds, although technically run by the councils, are operated and executed by independent investment bodies and advisers. In Derbyshire, however, the leader of the county council and certain councillors take a very close operating interest in the running of the pension fund.

Concern about the running of the pension fund began in the summer of 1986 when the county council initially announced its intention through its pension fund, to invest £260,000 in a newspaper called *News on Sunday*, which advertised itself as Left-wing and non-sexist. In deference to my hon. Friend the Minister, I shall not say what the slogan was, but some hon. Members will be aware of it. At the time of the investment, many people warned the county council that it was wrong to invest in such an overtly political publication and that the newspaper was not viable, but the county council failed to heed those warnings or to take any proper independent advice as to whether it was a sound investment.

The warning voices proved to be correct and in June 1987 the newspaper ran into severe financial difficulties and had to be bailed out by a self-styled Left-wing entrepreneur by the name of Owen Oyston, who made a great deal of money operating an estate agency in Manchester and the north-east. Mr. Oyston refinanced the newspaper and took a large chunk of the equity, diluting the equity holdings of the original investors, including Derbyshire county council. In the process, it is reported that he paid himself £4,000 a week in consultancy fees. I understand that Mr Oyston has never denied that figure, but it puts an interesting light on the supposed altruism of his gesture in rescuing the newspaper.

Despite the apparently well-paid efforts of Mr. Oyston, the newspaper finally packed up in November 1987. At that time, Derbyshire county council came under severe criticism and confusion seemed to reign at its headquarters in Matlock. Councillor Bookbinder, the leader of the county council, claimed publicly that the pension fund investment in *News on Sunday* was safe. Subsequently, in an article in the *Derby Evening Telegraph* on 20 November 1987, the leader of the council was quoted as saying that the investment was in Growfar Limited and not the *News on Sunday* and that Growfar would continue in business. In a subsequent letter to me, the leader of the council told

me that the county council pension fund did not have any holding in Growfar. He has subsequently refused to elaborate on the subject.

On 16 December 1987 the *Derby Evening Telegraph* reported that the county council pension fund's share in Growfar had been sold to Mr. Oyston for £400,000. Councillor Bookbinder waved a cheque claiming that, far from making a loss on the *News on Sunday* deal, he had made a substantial profit of £95,000. He also announced that Derbyshire county council was planning to set up a new joint company with Mr. Oyston called Telemags. However, that is not the whole story. Confidential investment panel minutes later showed that as part of the negotiation whereby Mr. Oyston paid £400,000 for the council's share in Growfar the council agreed to invest the same sum in Telemags. It was grossly misleading for Councillor Bookbinder to claim that he had made a profit on the deal. In fact, he had secured a face-saving deal whereby Mr. Oyston initially bought out his share for £400,000 and then subsequently the county council pensioners were forced to invest the same amount in another of Mr. Oyston's ventures. Furthermore, apart from the £400,000 investment in Telemags, it was contemplated that a further £2 million over a two-year period would be invested in yet another of Mr. Oyston's companies.

In January 1988 Councillor Bookbinder announced in the *Derby Evening Telegraph* that the £400,000 was to be invested in Telemags. However, when I wrote to the leader of the county council asking whether there was any link between the buy-out of the shares and the agreement to invest in Telemags, he replied on 11 January refusing to answer any of my questions. In an article on 8 January in the *Ilkeston Advertiser* Councillor Bookbinder denied that there were any strings attached to the sale of the *News on Sunday* shares. That was shown to be completely untrue by the confidential investment panel minutes which came into my possession.

Apart from the somewhat dubious deals involving *News On Sunday*, which were motivated more by political than by commercial objectives, there is the vexed subject of the county council's dealings in a Russian leisure centre, which were first mentioned with a blaze of publicity in March 1988. Despite the media spotlight which Councillor Bookbinder ensured was put on his dealings in Russia, little concrete information was released about what the deal involved. Initially, Councillor Bookbinder said that no ratepayers' or pension fund money would be involved, but subsequently it became apparent that not only were his trips to Russia financed by ratepayers but that ratepayers were to pay £20,000 for a feasibility study on the deal.

The dealings in the Russian leisure centre are extremely dubious, especially in view of some of the comments made by the county council's leader. It has been said that the deal is a millionaire's playground without the millionaires and that it would involve a recoupment of the investment by a factor of four. It may be all well and good for a commercial company to risk capital investment in a leisure centre, millionaires' playground, marina or hotel in the Soviet Union, but it is quite another thing for a leader of a county council to use ratepayers' money, pension fund money or whoever's money it is for such a deal. I sincerely hope that the deal will be profitable, however, as it will otherwise be a serious matter for pension fund holders and ratepayers in Derbyshire. We must ask whether it is right and proper for a county council leader to involve himself, ratepayers and possibly pension fund holders in such a deal, which is more rightly the preserve of commercial companies.

A further matter which is much concerning the people of Derbyshire about the pension fund dealings relates to a company called Jebwill. On 16 May 1988, confidential minutes of the delegation's sub-committee of the policy committee reported Jebwill's decision to acquire up to £2 million worth of shares in Red Rose radio—a radio station effectively controlled by none other than Mr. Oyston, while Jebwill is effectively controlled by the county council pension fund. The county council pension fund also announced that it would subscribe to 2 million Jebwill seed shares. Later, Red Rose merged with the Miss World group in which Mr. Oyston had a 30 per cent. stake and Jebwill now has a 7·9 per cent. stake in Mr. Oyston's expansion into the Miss World group.

It is deeply suspicious that the county council is involving yet more pension fund money in Mr. Oyston's ventures. The ventures may be profitable, but I question whether the investment decisions are being made primarily on commercial and economic grounds, rather than being motivated by a desire to achieve publicity or to posture publicly on the part of the leader of the county council, Councillor Bookbinder. Those deals are highly suspicious. Furthermore, the cloak of confidentiality that the council leader has put around the deals further arouses my suspicion and that of many other people.

It is ironic that a council and a council leader, who continually miss no opportunity to profess their belief in the freedom of information, have fought an expensive legal battle——

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Oppenheim: I will give way in a minute.

It is suspicious that a council which took expensive legal action to ensure that its libraries could stock the "Spycatcher" book, and which has been bitterly critical not only of the Official Secrets Bill but of the Official Secrets Act 1920 and the Government's involvement in the Spycatcher case, could none the less release so little information about the commercial dealings of its own pension fund.

I have asked a series of questions directly to Councillor Bookbinder relating to the pension fund dealings, but I have consistently been stonewalled and have never received proper replies. On 21 November 1988, for example, I sent a detailed list of 20 questions to Councillor Bookbinder. All that I received was a letter saying that Councillor Bookbinder felt that those issues were matters of commercial confidentiality and that although he would be happy to debate the issue he was not prepared to release the answers to my questions before the debate.

I am the first to accept that there are occasions when it is right to declare commercial confidentiality. When a council is putting out tender documents for a contract, for example, it is right that there should be commercial confidentiality while the tendering process goes forward.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Oppenheim: I said that I would give way in due course. The hon. Gentleman should hold himself in check. I will give way in a minute.

[Mr. Oppenheim]

It is legitimate during the negotiating stage of certain deals for a county council pension fund to involve itself in deals which it initially cloaks in commercial confidentiality. What is wholly wrong is that, when engaging in the controversial and politically motivated deals in which Derbyshire county council has involved itself, it should use the excuse of commercial confidentiality when clearly there is no legitimacy for it. It is not fair to say that every aspect of every deal in which a county council pension fund is involved should be commercially confidential. The ratepayers of Derbyshire and the pension fund holders have an absolute right to the full details of the dealings involving Mr. Oyston, Councillor Bookbinder, Jebwill, the proposed millionnaires' playground without the millionnaires at Yalta in the Crimea in the Soviet Union, and all the other companies, such as Growfar, *News on Sunday* and Telemags, in which the county council has invested large sums of pension fund money but about which little is known.

It is customary, when hon. Members wish to intervene in or to contribute to an Adjournment debate, that they write to ask consent for that. I have received no such missive from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), but as an act of wholly gratuitous goodwill to a fellow Derbyshire Member of Parliament who shares my deep concern about the operations of the county council pension fund—if he does not, he certainly should —I will give way and allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene.

Mr. Harry Barnes: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, despite his preamble. I am rather disappointed with his contribution because I stayed especially for this debate. I intervened because it seemed appropriate. One cannot plan an intervention before one comes to the House. Had I done so, it would have been to say that the hon. Gentleman should come outside to make his remarks because legal action might need to be taken against him, but I do not need to say that because he has said nothing of significance.

The hon. Gentleman has told us that the county council uses venture capital which is about 3 per cent. of total expenditure—the specific money to which he referred is about 0·5 per cent.—and I would have thought that he would have supported the fact that the council is in the market to make money, like any good capitalist. The hon. Gentleman also complained about councillors travelling the world, although he and the Prime Minister do so. The councillors travelled to raise capital and it is said to be a worthwhile reason.

The hon. Gentleman said that Derbyshire Members of Parliament, meaning all of us, were worried about what was happening. Neither my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and myself, nor the other two Labour Members for Derbyshire constituencies, are worried. I notice that no other Conservative Members are here to back up the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Oppenheim: I thank the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) for his comments. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has done a good job of winding the hon. Gentleman up and setting him off in the right direction—I could almost see him pulling the strings. Having said that, I think that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East did a pretty good job trying to defend the county council, although I should point out that Ministers go abroad to try to promote British industry because they have a responsibility to boost our exports. County councillors, on the other hand, should accept that their main role is to promote and boost efficiency and value for money in the provision of local services. They are not international statesmen and they do not have a role posing and posturing on the world stage as Councillor Bookbinder seems to think. It is a great shame because Councillor Bookbinder is clearly a man of great energy and some intelligence and it would be to the benefit of everyone in Derbyshire if he concentrated his efforts on trying to achieve value for money for ratepayers and users of services.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East said that I should say outside the House what I have said here. I do not think that I have said anything today that I have not already put into print on numerous occasions or that I have not already said in Derbyshire, so the hon. Gentleman need have no worry that I am trying to hide behind the cloak of privilege as I most certainly am not. The hon. Gentleman also said that other Derbyshire Members were not here to support me. My hon. Friends discussed the matter with me and they fully agree with what I have said but, needless to say, they are confident in my ability to handle the debate alone and saw no reason to be present. They preferred to be in their constituencies, where many hon. Members spend their Fridays.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East said that he was not in the least worried about the county council's pension fund dealings and claimed that the same was true of his hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover. If they are not concerned, they certainly should be. One of their colleagues on the Opposition Benches who does not come from Derbyshire has apparently made a special trip to Matlock to express his deep disquiet to the leader of the county council, Mr. Bookbinder. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East should open his eyes because while he may not be concerned, his constituents most certainly are.

2.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I am pleased to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), whose constituents are fortunate to have as their representative someone who is so vigorous and diligent in pursuing their interests.

I should, perhaps, begin by explaining the factual position. The local government superannuation scheme is contained in detailed regulations made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The regulations require 88 authorities—mainly county councils in England and Wales and London boroughs—to maintain superannuation funds for the purpose of paying benefits under the scheme as they fall due. The current total value of the fund is estimated to be about £25 billion.

The regulations require the funds to be invested, and lay down certain rules that are to apply to such investment. No more than 5 per cent. of a fund may be invested with any one company, and no more than 10 per cent. may be invested in unlisted securities. Authorities are also required to have regard to the need to diversify their

investments, to the suitability of any proposed investment, and to expert financial advice, which they must obtain at reasonable intervals.

The regulations stipulate that each fund is to be valued by an actuary at five-yearly intervals. In the light of his valuation the actuary is required to fix the contributions which local authorities and other employers in the area must pay into the fund over the next five years. These contributions come direct from the rates, and it follows that the investment performance of a pension fund can have a substantial effect on the amounts which authorities need to find from the rates. That is one of the reasons why my hon. Friend is so concerned in this case.

In recent years, this effect has often been disguised by the fact that, because returns on investments have been high, most of the funds are in considerable surplus. But that does not alter the fact that, if a particular investment fails, the call on the rates will be greater than would otherwise have been the case.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I will not give way, because I have little time in which to speak. The hon. Gentleman has recently had two Adjournment debates in which he could have raised matters relating to Derbyshire.

In 1986-87, it was reported that some Labour-controlled local authorities, including Derbyshire county council, had invested money belonging to their superannuation funds in the Left-wing newspaper the *News on Sunday*, as my hon. Friend has explained. When the company went into liquidation after a few weeks, most of the authorities lost their entire investments, although, as my hon. Friend explained, Derbyshire managed to recoup its initial outlay. Since that time, there have been further reports about alleged investments by the Derbyshire fund, some of which my hon. Friend has explained this afternoon.

I understand that the Derbyshire superannuation fund is valued in excess of £300 million. It seems unlikely, therefore, that any of the investments has offended against the limits laid down in the regulations to which I have referred, requiring no more than 5 per cent. of the fund to be invested with any one company, or 10 per cent. in unlisted securities, which is what the *News on Sunday* shares were. Any other question about the legality of the investments, such as whether the council had had sufficient regard to the suitability of any proposed investment or the overall requirement to diversify those investments and act in the light of expert financial advice, would be a matter for the district auditor, rather than my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

It may well be that some of the investments were imprudent, in the sense that councillors must have been aware of the risks involved. It is open to any ratepayer in the county to take appropriate action if he or she considers that such imprudence might have put up the rate bill.

What I know for certain is that it will not be the employees of Derbyshire county council, or its constituent districts, or the pensioners who suffer as a result of any losses sustained by the fund. The future benefits of the 20,700 employees who are current members of the fund are absolutely protected by statute. So are the pensions and pensions increases of the 9,000 pensioners currently drawing pensions from the fund, and the 3,000 or so other former employees who have deferred pension rights from the fund. The rights of those 30,000 or so people are very adequately protected by statute.

However, once again, the 420,000 ratepayers of Derbyshire, about whom hon. Members often hear, will stand to lose, by rash or poorly thought through investment decisions by those controlling the pension fund. They might wish that they had a similar absolute assurance that the finances of their county council would always be handled with the kind of prudence that they might expect.

This year, Derbyshire has succeeded in achieving a reduction of about 2 per cent. in the level of its precept. That measure of relief must be welcomed by the hard-pressed ratepayers who, for years, have had the highest rate poundage of any county council. This year, they are beaten only by similarly Labour-controlled Cleveland. Although I understand that, if the council had made prudent and cautious decisions, such as those made by the council in the district represented by my hon. Friend, it could have done much better. The rate could have been cut by 8 per cent. The fact remains that Derbyshire still has the second highest rate precept of all the shire counties and the highest rate of spending, in relation to estimated need, of all those councils. I imagine that the ratepayers would be much happier if their councillors concentrated rather more of their efforts on bringing rates down to a more acceptable level and spent less money on investing in enterprises such as short-lived newspapers, in which the attraction seems to lie in their political purity rather than the soundness of their finances.

More generally, Ministers must clearly be concerned by reports such as those brought to us by my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley, that investments are being made on other than commercial considerations, and we are considering whether the regulations need to be strengthened to deter such activities. That is difficult, because the rules apply to all 88 fund authorities and we have no wish to shackle those who are blameless in order to catch those who may be tempted to act improperly. However, I can assure my hon. Friend that we are considering the position to see what can be done, and I am grateful to him for drawing this to the attention of the House.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government is today in Derbyshire meeting council leaders and visiting some of the districts.

It is understandable that my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley should be particularly outraged as a result of the behaviour of Derbyshire county council when, by contrast, Amber Valley district council has only recently, saved £2·5 million by moving swiftly to put all its services out to tender.

Our model is that local government should fairly, effectively and efficiently represent the interests of the ratepayers, provide services in an efficient, cost effective, manner and give value for money.

I was interested that my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley and the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes)—with whom I debated earlier this week—referred to libraries because they are a sore point in Derbyshire. As my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) well knows, the council spends more distributing fewer books than neighbouring Staffordshire. Once again, that is an example of a county council which is more concerned with political

[Mrs. Bottomley]

gestures than with considering its hard-pressed ratepayers. We are confident that, as we move towards the community charge system, such behaviour will be exposed to local charge payers for what it is.

The Motion having been made after half past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at two minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 20 March 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Roads Strategy

1. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with local authorities in Wales on the implementation of his roads strategy, "Roads for Wales: The 1990s and beyond"; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): There were 160 written responses to the "Roads for Wales: The 1990s and beyond" consultation document, including responses from county, district, town and community councils. Those have been considered in drawing up the new edition of "Roads in Wales" which will be published shortly after Easter.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister recall that shortly before Christmas a deputation from Gwynedd visited him to talk about the need for the construction of a bypass on the A487 for the villages of Llanllyfni and Penygroes? Does he recall that at that time he said that he hoped to have further information early this year and that the bypass might then be included in any strategy for roads in the 1990s? Will he confirm that he has had further representations from Gwynedd county council on the matter and that further priority will be given to the construction of the bypass?

Mr. Roberts: I well recall the meeting to which the hon. Gentleman refers. There is no doubt that the A487 in Gwynedd is an important route for north-south traffic. As the hon. Gentleman knows, improvements for the section between Caernarfon and Bangor are programmed. The case for improving the route at Porthmadog and northwards through Penygroes and Llanllyfni to Caernarfon is under consideration.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that highway authorities, especially Clwyd county council, are taking full advantage of the magnificent achievements of the Welsh Office in building trunk roads by providing proper connections from those trunk roads to coastal areas such as Rhyl?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is right that that is a matter for Clwyd county council. There is no doubt that the investment of some £500 million in the A55 will be of great benefit to towns along the north Wales coast, but the matter of linking those towns with the A55 will be examined in the context of the initiative that my right hon. Friend has asked me to consider in connection with the development of the A55.

Mr. Murphy: Has the Minister of State any plans to improve the heads of the valleys road? Does he not agree that an upgrading of that road would be a great shot in the arm for our valley communities and a major factor in attracting jobs to the part of Wales where they are most needed?

Mr. Roberts: The heads of the valleys road is indeed a fine road, although I am aware that a number of accidents along that road recently have caused concern to right hon. and hon. Members. We are looking at all the roads in Wales which are the responsibility of the Welsh Office, and also at county roads. Where improvement is justified, we shall, of course, seek to progress that improvement.

Training Grant Scheme

2. **Mr. Coleman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the local education authority training grant scheme in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have recently received a number of representations on behalf of voluntary youth organisations expressing concern that unpaid voluntary sector youth workers do not come within the scope of the local education authority training grant scheme. Similar representations have been made in the past in respect of careers officers, nursery nurses, and other groups whose training costs are not supported under the scheme. Representations have also been received from school governors about the disruption caused by teachers' absences from the classroom to attend training courses.

Mr. Coleman: Will the hon. Gentleman clarify the Welsh Office's position in respect of whether LEA training grants can be applied to voluntary organisations, such as the Boys Brigade, the Scout Association and the Girl Guides Association for the valuable training of their voluntary workers? If the answer is no, will he undertake to revise the Welsh Office circular on that matter so as to permit the necessary financing to be made available to those important organisations?

Mr. Roberts: Those training grants are paid under the Education (Training Grants) Regulations 1987, which define eligible youth and community workers as:

"Youth and community workers employed by a Local Education Authority or a voluntary organisation."

Both we and the Department of Education and Science have always interpreted that as meaning that only paid workers are eligible and that volunteers are not. We have, however, encouraged LEAs to make their own provision from their own resources.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister agree that that is part of the pattern of general retreat from the provision of training in Wales and goes along with the decision of the engineering industry training board to close its Cardiff office? We need to be assured that the Minister was consulted about that, as well as about the privatisation of the skill centres. Does he agree that with the prospect of Bosch and Toyota coming to south Wales serious damage will be caused if the Government do not adopt the attitude that real training for real skills can lead to real jobs?

Mr. Roberts: I was astonished to see the hon. Gentleman's remarks in the *Western Mail* this morning and I am even more appalled to hear him repeat them in the Chamber. There is no such thing as a retreat from training under this Government. At this very moment, we are seeking to expand training facilities for people in Wales.

Mr. Morgan: Tell that to the Germans.

Mr. Roberts: We do indeed tell it to the Germans, as well as to all other inward investors in Wales.

The hon. Gentleman does not seem to realise that the change in the training board means no more than the removal of administrative jobs from Cardiff to Bristol and that all the training field workers will remain in place as they now are.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my hon. Friend clarify the situation regarding grant because many Scout associations in Wales and the rest of Britain are concerned about the apparent change in the grants system for the training of adult leaders? For a number of years an excellent scheme has operated which has been virtually the only support that voluntary organisations have had in obtaining grants to train leaders. Those leaders give up their time voluntarily, but they have expenses to meet as a result of the courses. Can my hon. Friend clarify whether in the past the Government have given the money or whether it has come from local resources?

Mr. Roberts: I can indeed clarify the position. Either we can increase the resources earmarked for the grants, which local authorities would not like us to do or we can reduce, the support for those already within the scope of the scheme, which hon. Members would not like. I repeat that local authorities are free to fund training courses from their own resources for those outside the scheme.

Housing

3. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy regarding the provision of housing by Welsh local authorities.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): Local authorities assess housing needs and forecast that they will spend £236 million on housing this year. I hope that they will also assess the many advantages to Wales of the new housing provisions, including 100 per cent. mandatory grants for home improvements which will be available to those on low incomes.

Mr. Anderson: The Secretary of State will be aware that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has referred to a time when local authorities, or what he calls "facilitators", will cease to build homes. Will the Minister given an undertaking that Welsh local authorities will still be able to build for general need? Given the enhanced and welcome role of housing associations, does the right hon. Gentleman see a need for the Welsh Office to provide a framework for continuing consultation between Welsh local authorities and the housing associations operating in the Principality?

Mr. Walker: First, I believe that a great deal of consultation will take place. I can only reflect on the figures for the total public sector housing programme, including the housing associations and the new towns, which shows that the forecast spend for this year is £286 million compared with £131 million for the last year of the Labour Government.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the groups of council tenants in Cardiff who are considering breaking away from their landlord, the city council? Will he assure me that every facility will be provided to tenants' organisations and Welsh housing associations to ensure that, if they so wish, they can take full advantage of the new freedoms under the Housing Act 1988?

Mr. Walker: Obviously any such move would have to be considered carefully by all those involved. The provisions of the Housing Act 1988 are clear and available to all concerned.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: I am sure that the Secretary of State will recall being reported in the *Western Mail* recently as saying that he would be announcing more help for people to become owner-occupiers, presumably through incentives for people buying council houses. He will be aware that many long-standing tenants are not proceeding with their purchases and are awaiting details of his announcement. Will the Secretary of State tell the people of Wales what is the status of his announcement and when he will make a statement?

Mr. Walker: I have made it clear that anyone wishing to proceed under the present scheme will not be disadvantaged. When the present scheme was introduced, it was bitterly opposed by the Labour party, and possibly by Plaid Cymru as well, but I am glad to say that many people in Wales in local authorities under the control of different political parties have been able to enjoy owner-occupation as they could not have done if the Opposition's views had prevailed.

Second Homes

4. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received seeking the launch of a campaign regarding arson against second homes and English-owned property in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Over the past year I have received eight letters from the public and outside organisations.

Mr. Williams: Did the Secretary of State notice that during January and February there were no arson attacks even though those are normally the peak months for the arson campaign? There were no attacks until after the Pontypridd by-election, but the arson campaign was resumed within hours of the declaration of the result. Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that Meibion Glyndwr has an acute sensitivity to the political diary of the Welsh nationalist party? I remind him that at the outset of the winter, in September 1988, 40 estate agents' properties were daubed with slogans and the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) backed those incidents. Will the Secretary of State therefore treat any requests from the nationalist party for talks about the arsonists' campaign with extreme scepticism in view of the nationalists' duplicitous behaviour?

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. An allegation has been made against a colleague

of mine. Those were totally scurrilous comments. Will you ask the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) to withdraw them?

Mr. Speaker: No. Every hon. Member must take responsibility for what he says in this Chamber.

Mr. Walker: In so far as such arson campaigns exist, I would not want to accuse any person or organisation of being involved unless I had evidence of that. I welcome the proclamation from all party leaders in Wales condemning such acts of violence.

I hope that we shall all place what is happening in perspective. The incidents over the weekend received a great deal of publicity in certain newspapers. Six devices were involved, none of which caused any serious damage, but they resulted in serious publicity. A person or persons telephoned the media to say that devices would be placed in certain estate agents. Such calls focus media attention on the acts and the people involved have gained considerable media coverage. All of that is against the wishes of the people of Wales. It is a great disadvantage being an English Secretary of State for Wales when it was rumoured in a newspaper today that the person who called the media had an English voice. Only someone hostile to Wales would do such a thing.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will my right hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to the bomb squad officers who successfully defused a bomb in my constituency on Saturday, which had been placed in the main high street where it could have killed and maimed people? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the vicious and nasty terrorist campaign is damaging the image of Wales in the United Kingdom and throughout the world? Does he also agree that we must do all that we can to catch the perpetrators as soon as possible?

Mr. Walker: Yes, but the incidents must be put into perspective. The devices used at the weekend basically comprised a quartz battery operating ignition by a flash bulb connected to a bottle of petrol. The main motive of the person or persons responsible is publicity. I hope that those responsible will be quickly apprehended by the police.

Mr. Wigley: Will the House accept that, as a Member representing a constituency in which a napalm bomb was placed only a couple of weeks ago, in the village of Llanberis, I repudiate the small-minded remarks of the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) and his poisoned chalice? I re-emphasise that all parties in Wales condemn without reservation the arson campaign which took place before, during and after the Pontypridd by-election, and which is worsening now. Will the Secretary of State confirm his support for all-party unity on an issue which should not be used for party political purposes? Will he also clarify his remarks in Llandudno on 7 March, when he suggested that only two people might be active in the campaign and that they might not even live in Wales?

Mr. Walker: Obviously, as the persons concerned have not been apprehended, I do not know the number involved or their identity. However, I know that the devices are similar, as are the voices of those concerned, and that the main motive is always publicity. The hon. Member speaks of napalm bombs and a worsening situation, but I do not agree that the planting of five devices of the kind that I have described in order to secure a great deal of publicity should be interpreted as a great national campaign. That is the reality of the scene.

Immunopathology Consultants

5. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give *(a)* the number and *(b)* the locations of consultants in immunopathology in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There are no consultants in Wales whose main specialty is immunopathology. There are a number of consultant pathologists who have an interest in immunopathology but information on them is not held centrally.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister acknowledge that there are people in Wales suffering from immuno-deficiencies but that they are not well served? What plans does he have to improve the service?

Mr. Roberts: Perhaps I should confirm to the hon. Gentleman that while there is no consultant in Wales whose main specialty is immunopathology, none has been asked for by any of the authorities. I believe that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the AIDS problem, and I can tell him that about £2·5 million has been spent on AIDS-related programmes in Wales since 1985-86. We plan to spend about £1·7 million supporting such activities in the coming year.

Secondary Pupils (Costs)

7. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent per pupil in secondary schools in Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure for 1978-79, at constant prices.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In 1986-87, expenditure per pupil in secondary schools in Wales was £1,320. The equivalent constant price figure for 1978-79 was £1,053.

Mr. Knox: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the 1986-87 figure represents an increase of 25 per cent. in real terms? Does he agree that even more could be spent in real terms if surplus school places could be eliminated?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is right to say that the figure represents an increase of, to be precise, 25·3 per cent in real terms. That is a substantial increase by any standard. There has been a fall in pupil numbers of 14·3 per cent., and that fall is due to continue until 1991. Currently there are about 63,000 surplus places in secondary schools in Wales. If they could be removed, the money could be spent on improving education still further.

Mr. Alan Williams: Does the Minister realise that the figures that he has given the House for increased expenditure per pupil are fraudulently deceptive because of the very reduction in pupil numbers of which he spoke? The capital cost of the whole education system is spread over a smaller number of pupils, which accounts for most of the increase. On the basis of the figures that the Minister has just given, the increase over 10 years is 11 per cent. or just over 1 per cent. per year. Does he regard that as something to be proud of?

Mr. Roberts: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's analysis. There has been a substantial increase in spending on education. In the middle of his supplementary, the hon. Gentleman suddenly switched to capital expenditure. In the coming year we shall be providing some £53 million in capital spending on education. That is 11 per cent. above this year's level, and comes on top of a 10 per cent. increase the previous year and an increase of 19 per cent. the year before.

Severn Crossing

8. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the potential benefits to the Welsh economy of the southern link to the second Severn crossing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Enhanced road communications across the Severn estuary will reinforce the current improvement in economic performance in south Wales, which is resulting in reduced unemployment, a rising trend in investment, record levels of factory letting by the Welsh Development Agency and accelerating industrial and commercial development.

Mr. Stern: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, which will be welcomed throughout the country. Does he agree that the same benefits are liklely to accrue to the southern end of the southern link, which will be in my constituency? Does he also agree that the increased development that will take place at both ends of the southern link removes the last shred of potential justification for any major road across a possible Severn barrage?

Mr. Roberts: I tend to agree with my hon. Friend that any barrage proposal would be for the far distant future, and I understand that the costs have in any event increased substantially. As for economic benefits deriving from the second crossing, I am sure that the shortened road communications will bring those benefits to both sides of the Severn.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that proposals are well firmed up to knock off no less than £200 million of debt from the Humber bridge? In the case of the Erskine bridge in Scotland, the debt has simply been forgotten. Why do the Government propose to double the tolls on our Severn bridge? [HON. MEMBERS: "Because England lost yesterday."] Is that not a case of racial discrimination? When will Welsh Office Ministers stand up for Wales?

Mr. Roberts: We are implementing the Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965. I believe that Labour was in power at that time, so it was a Labour Government who imposed tolls on the Severn bridge for a 40-year period. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we have been criticised by the Comptroller and Auditor-General, and that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has therefore proposed to increase the tolls. An inquiry is currently taking place.

Labour Statistics

9. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; and if he will give the equivalent figures for 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Peter Walker: On 9 February 1989 the numbers of unemployed claimants in Newport district, in Gwent, and in Wales, were 5,953, 18,099 and 112,044 respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a basis which enables a valid comparison to be made.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that Newport, with all its advantages, has 12 per cent. male unemployment? The figure in the county of Gwent is 13·8 per cent. Are not those figures horrific? There is much hidden unemployment besides. Does the Secretary of State accept that such great problems cannot be concealed by figures relating to part-time, low-paid jobs for women?

Mr. Walker: First, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for putting that question down for every Welsh Question Time. I hope that he will continue to do so for the rest of this Parliament.

Unemployment in Wales has fallen by well over 50,000 in the past two years. Regional assistance offers in 1988, most of which are still to be put into operation, will provide 32,000 new jobs. Inward investment in 1988 reached all-time records of more than £1 billion, with 13,700 jobs. The Welsh Development Agency's factory-building programme also reached an all-time record level. I am delighted at the Government's record in bringing down unemployment.

Mr. Raffan: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the fact that unemployment in Delyn has been halved during the last two years and that, with the most recent job announcements, it is set to be halved again, thanks in large part to the Government's designation of the Delyn enterprise zone, which the Opposition opposed?

Mr. Walker: Yes. The position is exactly the same in north Wales, mid-Wales and south Wales. I am glad to say that in recent months the decline in unemployment in the valleys has been faster than anywhere else.

Mrs. Clywd: Can the Minister explain why the profit-making utility services department of the Welsh Development Agency at Hirwaun is to be shut and why its functions are expensively to be transferred to statutory authorities, making 70 people redundant in one of the worst unemployment black spots in Britain?

Mr. Walker: Yes—because, in the interests of the hon. Lady's constituents, it is right that all the substantial resources of the WDA, which is spending £130 million this year, should be efficiently and well administered. I much prefer money to go into new factories and new factory building rather than that an inefficient administrative set-up should be allowed to continue.

Sir Anthony Meyer: What is the position on unfilled vacancies?

Mr. Walker: Surveys have shown that the number of unfilled vacancies is three times the number registered at jobcentres. At the moment there are 38,000 unfilled vacancies in Wales. I hope that urgent action will be taken to fill those vacancies.

Mr. Rowlands: Despite what the Secretary of State has said, are there not some worrying signs? For example,

Rover has laid off people and Hotpoint employees are on a shorter working week. Both are attributed to the rise in interest rates. Does it not mean that for the Chancellor's policy to work, workers in Wales will have to be put out of work again?

Mr. Walker: During the last month there has been a drop of 2,600 in the unemployment figures, despite problems of the type described by the hon. Gentleman. If those problems had not existed, the fall in unemployment would have been very much greater. The fall is substantial. The hon. Gentleman's remarks about training were designed to put off the Japanese and the Germans. Four administrative jobs were to go to Bristol. I am glad to say, however, that inward investment will continue to come to Wales on a considerable scale.

Mr. Barry Jones: On the issue of interest rates, the right hon. Gentleman again is wriggling. I commend to him the excellent report by the 15 boroughs and district councils of the valleys in south Wales on unemployment and economic development. It is a superb document. I urge the right hon. Gentleman to meet the valley councils. He will find that his initiative will be subjected to informed and reasonable criticism. I challenge him to meet the valley councils. Does he recollect that, according to his valleys initiative document, during the three years that it may be in operation 25,000 to 30,000 jobs will be created in the valley communities? Will he give me the basis for that large figure?

Mr. Walker: I shall send the hon. Gentleman the details of that analysis. It is a minor factor when compared with the whole range of valley initiatives. As for meeting the valley councils, they have seen more of me as Secretary of State for Wales on a whole range of individual negotiations than they saw of most other Secretaries of State for Wales when there was a Labour Government. I have arranged for the Welsh Office and each valley local authority to have discussions at regular intervals on the valleys initiative.

Housing for Wales

10. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends to meet the chairman of Housing for Wales; and what he expects to discuss.

Mr. Peter Walker: I expect to meet the chairman at the official launch of Housing for Wales on 3 April. I expect to discuss the undoubted success that will attend this new body.

Mr. Murphy: Why is the chairman of Housing for Wales also the vice-chairman of the Land Authority for Wales, and why is the chairman of the Land Authority for Wales also the chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation? Can we expect to see even more failed Conservative parliamentary candidates running our public affairs in Wales and introducing unpopular Thatcherism into our country by the back door?

Mr. Walker; I know of no political views of any description which are held by the chairman of the housing development corporation. I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman's remark. The chief executive is a former Welsh Office civil servant. The chairman of the Cardiff Bay development corporation was appointed before I was appointed to my present job. The one thing that I cannot be accused of is making party-political appointments as Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Coleman: Does the Secretary of State recall the answer that his ministerial colleague gave during the previous Welsh Question Time about homelessness in Wales? Will he discuss homelessness with the chairman? Will he discuss the possibility of using council house sales receipts to deal with the growing problem of homelessness?

Mr. Walker: Quite a few council house sales receipts have been used to that end. Under a Labour Government, there were hardly any such receipts.

Mr. Livsey: When the Secretary of State meets the chairman of Housing for Wales, will he tell him of the housing crisis in rural Wales? What will he do about forming a housing strategy for rural Wales involving affordable houses for rent and affordable starter homes?

Mr. Walker: I am glad to say that, before I have met the chairman, the Housing Corporation has decided to spend quite a lot of important resources on that problem.

Deeside Waterfront Project

11. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the involvement of the Welsh Development Agency in the proposed Deeside waterfront project.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh Development Agency is assisting the local authorities concerned in the area to evaluate the impact of the project.

Mr. Raffan: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the serious concern in north Wales that Tarmac and Clwyd county council have persistently misrepresented the Welsh Development Agency as being in support of the Deeside waterfront project when the agency's stance is one of neutrality? As the area can support only one large out-of-town retail centre and, currently, three such schemes are being proposed locally, will my right hon. Friend ensure that there is a public inquiry on the Deeside project, especially now that the Secretary of State for the Environment is insisting on a public inquiry on the Chester scheme?

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend will understand that I have to wait to see what decisions are made and then decide what actions to take. It would be wrong of me to comment on any potential planning applications. I can confirm that, as with all local authorities, the Welsh Development Agency's role is to assist in the evaluation of a project. That is the task that it is carrying out.

Mr. Barry Jones: May I emphasise that Alyn and Deeside district council, Clwyd county council and Cheshire county council support the scheme? They are supported wholeheartedly by Connah's Quay, Shotton, Queensferry, Sealand, Saltney, Buckley and Hawarden town councils, and others, myself included. Does the right hon. Gentleman remember that, in 1980, 8,000 steel jobs were lost at Shotton? The travel-to-work area still has 9,000 or more people out of work. The project is earmarked to be developed on derelict land which is the

site of our old blast furnaces at Shotton steelworks. I urge the right hon. Gentleman to hear every side of this important matter.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is quite correct—I must hear every side on this important matter. The hon. Gentleman realises that I cannot comment on this potential application, but I promise that I shall consider all points of view very carefully.

Tinplate Plants

12. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he is taking to replace the manufacturing jobs to be lost in the tinplate plants at Velindre, Trostre and Ebbw Vale.

Mr. Peter Walker: At two of the sites mentiond in the question there will be a number of off-setting jobs provided by British Steel. The total number of net job losses is expected to be 700, concentrated at Velindre.

The company has assured me that it is making every effort to see that workers are redeployed and it is confident that it will be able to redeploy many workers to other plants and is hopeful that, subject to the closure agreement, early retirement and favourable terms can be offered to a substantial number of those affected by this rationalisation.

Tomorrow announcements will be made by the Swansea Bay partnership whose co-ordination of efforts will be of considerable importance. A meeting took place with the local district council and the Welsh Development Agency last Friday. British Steel has made it clear to me that it will assist in seeing that the site is used for new purposes; that it will be involved in job counselling schemes; and that it will be making every effort to assist in encouraging job opportunities in the locality.

Mr. Wardell: Does the Secretary of State agree that it is sad that the only centre of the tinplate industry in the United Kingdom is being decimated in that way? Is it not a sign of Britain's continuing long-term decline in manufacturing employment? Does he accept that at Velindre, where the most job losses will take place, the missing link of the M4, which is an important factor in attracting investment to that site, will not be completed until the end of 1994, according to his plans? Will he look again at the matter and make sure that the link is completed earlier?

Mr. Walker: On the latter question, we shall be publishing the programme for roads with the appropriate priorities after Easter. However, the hon. Gentleman knows that it is not a matter of getting rid of the tinplate industry, it is a matter of rationalisation which will direct a considerable amount of additional investment to other locations in Wales and ensure their effectiveness. The steel industry in Wales is currently in a very strong and powerful position.

THE ARTS

London International Opera Festival

24. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to attend the London international opera festival.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I welcome the aims of the London international opera festival. I will be giving a reception for Pavilion Opera at Lancaster house on Thursday 18 May, which is to be followed by a performance.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the London international opera festival does an excellent job in encouraging young composers, singers and audiences to participate in opera? Could not that example be emulated in other parts of the country? Will my right hon. Friend give his Oscar to that body which would be a much worthier recipient than some other recipients of Oscars yesterday?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend that the opera festival which takes place in May and June places particular emphasis on young people, young composers, singers and audiences. It is very valuable because it is a good investment for the future.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am glad to hear the Minister welcoming the opera festival. Precisely what funding is being provided for the festival by the Office of Arts and Libraries? May I have an invitation to the reception?

Mr. Luce: I take careful note of the hon. Gentleman's last request. In regard to money, the hon. Gentleman knows that direct funding for the performing arts is not provided by the Office of Arts and Libraries, but by the Arts Council. A number of opera companies such as the English National Opera, Kent Opera and Opera North receive direct funding from the Arts Council which decides what support it gives to such organisations.

EC (Artistic Dimension)

25. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to seek to ensure that the European Community has an artistic dimension in the formulation of its policies.

Mr. Luce: I regularly attend the meetings of European Community Ministers responsible for cultural affairs. I will be in Santiago de Compostela for an informal meeting of Ministers under the Spanish presidency at the end of this month, when we expect to discuss audiovisual, library and book matters.

Sir David Price: My question went a little wider. Given that an important element of the common European heritage is artistic and cultural, and given that the Community now accepts a social dimension in its formulation of policy, does it not make sense to air a cultural and artistic dimension, and is it not time that my right hon. Friend took an initiative in that direction?

Mr. Luce: I accept what my hon. Friend says, except that cultural co-operation goes beyond the boundaries of the Community. I do not think that it makes sense to draw a line at the Community, although I am in favour of a measure of co-operation within the Community. Of course, this does not come within the area of competence of the treaty of Rome or the Single European Act, but that has not stopped Ministers of the European Community indulging in multilateral co-operation, and I agree with that.

Mr. Buchan: Does the Minister agree that it might be helpful in carrying out his communitaire responsibilities in relation to the city of culture—Glasgow—if he will tell us how much Government money he intends to offer? So far, it has been very little.

Mr. Luce: I admire very much the fact that since the decision was taken to give the status of cultural city of Europe to Glasgow in 1990, it has taken full advantage of it. It is attracting a large number of tourists and others to enjoy the arts in Glasgow. I believe that next year the cultural city will be a great success. With that in mind, although I made it plain at the beginning that there would be no central Government support for it, I am glad that I have been able to provide £500,000 to help in that process.

Books and Titles

26. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many *(a)* books and *(b)* titles were held in libraries in England and Wales (i) now and (ii) in 1979.

Mr. Luce: In 1986-87—the latest year for which full statistics are available—English library authorities held 115·6 million books compared with 110 million in 1979-80. That is an increase in books per head of population from 2·37 to 2·45.

Details of titles held by libraries are not kept centrally. Welsh library authorities are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Jessel: In view of the significant increase in the number of books, will my right hon. Friend comment on the whingeing, whining and falsehoods put about by the Library Campaign, the leaflets of which pretend that there has been a 4 per cent. drop in the stock of books, that issues have dropped by 7 per cent. and that libraries intend to force people to pay?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. The Library Campaign has dented its credibility by such extraordinary distortions in the launch of its campaign. There was a 9 per cent. increase in real terms in expenditure on libraries between 1979 and 1986-87. Book stocks increased from 110 million to over 115 million in the same period and service points have increased from 14,000 to just under 18,000. Also, there has not been a staff cut as the Library Campaign suggests but a marginal staff increase.

Mr. Fisher: Does the Minister accept that there has been a net loss of over 200 libraries under this Government and that book fund spending is down considerably? If there is a distortion of figures, as the Minister accused the Library Campaign, he also is distorting and giving extremely partial figures.

On the subject of libraries, will the Minister join me in congratulating Mr. Holmes à Court in coming to the aid of the British Theatre Association library? We welcome his generosity but we deplore the Minister's failure to act. How much longer can he go on ducking his responsibilities and hoping that the private sector will bail him out of his refusal to act on important national issues such as this?

Mr. Luce: It is astonishing that the hon. Gentleman and Opposition Members find it impossible to welcome support for the arts when it comes from the private sector. In their judgment it always has to come from the taxpayer. To suggest that the funding should have come from another source is rather silly. The hon. Gentleman should welcome wholeheartedly and without hesitation the remarkable support that Mr. Holmes à Court has now announced. I am glad that the executive committee of the British Theatre Association library has accepted his offer to provide premises for the association in central London. The premises will enable the library to continue its operations with a firm financial base, underwritten by Mr. Holmes à Court. I should like to pay tribute to his generosity. I am contributing £25,000 to the transitional costs of the association.

Southern Arts Association

27. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Southern Arts Association to discuss the funding and structure of the arts in his region.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Smith: Will the Minister join me in congratulating the Southern Arts Association and the other regional associations on their role in fostering community arts? In the light of that, will he assure the House that the Wilding inquiry will not be permitted to undermine the autonomy of the associations or to weaken their links with local authorities in a further act of centralisation for which, sadly the Government have become known?

Mr. Luce: I welcome the role played by the regional arts associations. There has been a substantial shift of resources to them in the past few years, to such an extent that today they handle about £30 million of taxpayers' money. It is for them to decide precisely how they disburse that money. The important point about the Wilding inquiry is to examine the relationship between the regional arts associations, the Arts Council and central Government, to seek greater accountability, to examine the coherence of funding policy and to see whether the structure and procedures can be improved. The inquiry will also study administration and that is needed in view of all the changes that have taken place. There is a principle of arm's-length policy in the allocation of funds. Decisions about artistic freedom and merit are for the Arts Council and the regional arts associations.

Sir David Price: Does my right hon. Friend accept that local authorities of all political persuasions in the Southern Arts Association area are strongly behind that association's work, but that there is a strong feeling that the Arts Council is not giving the Southern Arts Association a fair share of the money allocated to regional arts associations? It is important to resolve the issue reasonably soon, otherwise the initiative about which he has spoken may go a bit sour in the south of England.

Mr. Luce: I take my hon. Friend's point. The Arts Council has devised a new formula for disbursing money between the regional arts associations. The Southern Arts Association has received an 11·4 per cent. increase in resources to recognise the fact that it has been relatively underfunded over the years.

Welsh Arts Council

28. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Welsh Arts Council to discuss the funding and structure of the arts in his region.

31. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Welsh Arts Council to discuss the funding and structure of the arts in his region.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so.

Mrs. Clwyd: Can the Minister give us an assurance that whatever the results of the Wilding inquiry, both the Welsh Arts Council and the Scottish Arts Council will remain autonomous?

Mr. Luce: There are no proposals to change the position of the Welsh Arts Council which, incidentally, under the formula for disbursing funds, receives relatively more per capita than the English regions.

Dr. Marek: Has the Minister consulted the Welsh Arts Council about a picture gallery in north Wales? Will he take a grip of the spending at Bodelwyddan by Clwyd county council? There are many of us who want to see a proper arts gallery there, but money must be spent wisely and properly.

Mr. Luce: That is largely a matter for the county council, but if the hon. Gentleman is referring to the national portrait gallery at Bodelwyddan, I hope that the House will welcome the extension of a national body to north Wales.

CIVIL SERVICE

Agencies

49. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether any further Civil Service agencies have been announced.

53. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on progress towards the establishment of the new agencies.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): Since I last reported to the House on 1 February, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that he has concluded that the Central Office of Information should become an agency. In addition last week my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement announced the decision to set up the four main non-nuclear research establishments, covering 12,500 staff, as a single organisation with the intention that they should become a next steps agency by April 1991. I strongly welcome both those announcements which illustrate the importance that the Government attach to the next steps initiative.

Mr. Butler: Will the agencies benefit from an infusion of new talent? Will they be able to advertise for their chief executives from outside the Civil Service?

Mr. Luce: As my hon. Friend's question is about next steps, I hope that he will allow me to congratulate him on his own next step—his marriage later this week.

In many cases, the best way to fill top posts will be by competition, open to both external and internal candidates. My hon. Friend may be interested to know that the chief executive designate for the defence research agency will be recruited by open competition.

Mr. Thurnham: In the search for new talent, will my right hon. Friend confirm that he is doing all in his power to encourage the agencies to move to areas of high unemployment out of London whenever possible? How many more agencies does he expect to be able to announce this year?

Mr. Luce: Yes, I confirm that it is the Government's policy to seek ways in which we can encourage Departments to move to other parts of the country. Indeed, only today I announced that the occupational health service, which is part of the Cabinet Office, is planning to move its headquarters to Edinburgh in the autumn, bringing cost and operational advantages, and involving co-location with the Scottish regional office of the occupational health service. As my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General has already disclosed to the House, no fewer than 34,000 jobs are being reviewed for possible relocation elsewhere, outside the south-east.

Mr. Skinner: Can the Minister tell us whether a new agancy has been set up, such as a Ministry for looking after the Christmas mail? Is it true that the Secretary of State for Transport resigned, sending his resignation three months ago, but that it got mixed up in the Christmas mail? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Morgan: Will the Minister explain whether the creation of an agency alters the status of the members of staff of the agency, and especially that of the most senior member of staff? Does that person become the accounting officer instead of that role being fulfilled by the permanent secretary of the Department, and if so, does that mean that Opposition Members can have access to the chief accounting officer of the agency, which they would not have to a civil servant? At the moment, hon. Members have access to, for example, the heads of the Welsh Arts Council, the Welsh Development Agency and the Wales tourist board, but not to the head of the National Health Service or to the permanent secretary of the Welsh Office. What will be the status of the head of an agency?

Mr. Luce: I am glad to answer a serious question—*[Interruption.]* I am prepared to answer a serious question. On the question of the positions of the chief executives of the agencies, the system of the accountability of Ministers remains the same, but there will have been—there is under this system—delegation of responsibility to chief executives. It is perfectly possible—not only because they are accounting officers—for the Select Committees to summon them to give evidence. The hon. Gentleman was right to ask his question about hon. Members. Access will be open to Members of Parliament. The operational duties of the chief executives will be their responsibility, not that of the Secretary of State. Hon. Members will be free to write direct and to take up issues direct with the chief executives.

Bridge Scheme

51. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what has been the uptake of the bridge scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I launched the bridge scheme with my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 1 March. The scheme aims to encourage secondment and exchanges between Government and business, and I hope businesses as well as Government Departments and other areas of the public sector will take full advantage of the opportunities available.

Mr. Jack: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the excellence of the advertising of the bridge scheme? Will he confirm that its success will be ensured if the right example comes from the top? How many people are currently on secondment at the Cabinet Office?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. If the scheme is to succeed in encouraging secondment both ways, it is important that people at the top of industry, as well as in the Civil Service, should encourage the process. Between 1977 and 1987, secondment quadrupled, which is a considerable improvement. I confirm that 24 people are on secondment at the Cabinet Office—10 out and 14 in. There are 1,600 staff in post in the Cabinet Office, and at grade 7 and above 64 per cent. are on loan from other Government Departments.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is that what the Americans call the "revolving door" with which John Tower had so many difficulties? What safeguards are in place to ensure that cosy relationships do not develop between senior civil servants, Ministers and defence and other suppliers to the Government through contracts?

Mr. Luce: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not welcome the idea of more exchanges between civil servants and the private sector. Surely it is healthy for both the Civil Service and the private sector to learn how the Government work and for the Civil Service to learn how commerce and industry work. I think that the Civil Service will welcome a breath of fresh air from the outside.

Morale

54. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on morale in the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Like other employers, the Government attach great importance to ensuring that the levels of morale are maintained and improved.

Mr. Soames: Is my right hon. Friend aware that morale in Civil Service offices in my constituency is extremely high, particularly in the DSS, because the civil servants do an exceptionally good job? Does my right hon. Friend agree that we are now moving towards a time when regional pay would make an enormous difference to the performance of civil servants and Government agencies? Will my right hon. Friend see what he can do to achieve that laudable aim as quickly as he can?

Mr. Luce: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for paying a tribute to the work of the DSS in Crawley. I include also the excellent work done by the 900 or so staff in the office of my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General. It is now very much the consistent policy of the Government, in terms of flexible pay, pay additions, performance bonuses and so on, to take into account the requirements of a particular area or a particular skill that may be in short supply. I agree with my hon. Friend that that policy should do a lot to help recruitment and retention in the Civil Service.

Dr. Marek: Is the Minister aware that one of the ways in which morale could be improved is to put into operation the recommendations in the consultation paper "Service to the Public"? That paper clearly implies extra staffing in social security offices, especially in London. What representations will he make to the relevant Secretary of State?

Mr. Luce: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman referred to the paper about the quality of services. It was placed in the Library of the House of Commons. Everything has been done under our training schemes to encourage civil servants to provide the best quality service, given the resources that they have. I am certainly glad that, in that paper, there are signs of the kind of job that is being done by a number of Ministries to improve the quality of their services. Staff numbers are for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State.

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend agree that performance often goes with morale? In that case, the morale of DSS officers in Blackpool must be at an all-time low. Performance in relation to the general public is abysmal. Is it not time that a management audit was carried out to ensure that attendance and mobility allowance departments are given a thorough shaking-up from top to bottom?

Mr. Luce: I am concerned to hear what my hon. Friend says. I will certainly draw that point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security so that he can give my hon. Friend a full reply.

Civil Service College

55. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if the Civil Service college has any plans to include rain forest issues in its general training programmes on environmental awareness.

Mr. Luce: As part of its general programme of raising awareness of issues of public interest, the college is holding a briefing session for senior civil servants on the greenhouse effect on 22 March, in collaboration with the Committee for the Public Understanding of Science.

Mr. Dalyell: Added to a session on the greenhouse effect, which one welcomes, could there be a similar seminar at the college on issues—climatological and otherwise—arising from the botanical and biological holocaust that is taking place in the rain forests of the world? Given world weather patterns, it could affect us in a most severe way.

Mr. Luce: I admire the hon. Gentleman for the persistence with which he pursues this important matter. I should point out that training at the Civil Service college is principally geared to training for better management. Clearly, if there are opportunities such as the one that I have demonstrated to bring in wider environmental issues, the college will take them.

Lockerbie Air Crash

3.33 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the handling of the Lockerbie incident by the Secretary of State for Transport."

The matter is important, as the country and Parliament want to know the truth about what has happened. On 18 November last year, a warning was issued by the United States Federal Aviation Administration, alerting the authorities to the activities of terrorists who were likely to use a new type of bomb which could be concealed in a radio cassette player. That information was also raised at the Wiesbaden conference, following upon which the British Airports Authority was also alerted.

On 19 December, two days before the Lockerbie disaster, the Department of Transport received additional vital information concerning details of the radio cassette player, which included colour photographs, information about the wiring of the bomb, X-ray identification characteristics, and details of the arrangements for packing Semtex explosives within the cassette player. That information was not relayed to the airlines until after the disaster took place.

The Secretary of State, in a desperate attempt to hide his blunder, now says that the information was unimportant. He indicated his lack of concern at the time by posting this vital new information to the appropriate authorities by second-class mail, far too late, while adding the utterly irresponsible suggestion that suspicious packages should be placed in the holds of aircraft. My hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State for Transport has said that the Secretary of State for Transport could have given a full explanation on 10 January, yet he has singularly failed to do so. Indeed, he deliberately tried to block further questions in Parliament by telling an hon. Friend on 10 January:

"I am not prepared to go further than my earlier remarks about warnings being subject to the assessment process."—[*Official Report*, 10 January 1989, Vol. 144, c. 708.]

This was a blatant attempt to hide the truth from Parliament by refusing to be drawn on the vital issue of his Department's failure to communicate. [HON. MEMBERS: "Order."] The public want to know why he refused in January to comment on details of the radio cassette bomb, when the German authorities were perfectly prepared to comment on details of the same device in Wiesbaden at the beginning of November. Hiding behind the police inquiry is no answer.

This matter is urgent because the Secretary of State insists on refusing to comment on it in the Chamber, while at the same time he makes statements to Lobby correspondents, who, last Wednesday, were told by him that the police were allegedly doing a brilliant job and that the whereabouts of the terrorists who had planted the Lockerbie bomb were known. His denial of this allegation, which he leaked with his ambiguous and misleading statement, "The only person I saw on the relevant dates were three journalists on the record," is quite outrageous.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has had his time.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The handling of the Lockerbie incident by the Secretary of State for Transport."

As the House knows, under Standing Order 20, I have to take into account the requirements of the order and to announce my decision without giving reasons to the House. I have listened with care to what the hon. Member has said, but, as he knows, my sole duty in considering his application is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for this evening or for tomorrow. I regret that the matter that he has raised does not meet the requirements of the Standing Order, and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you say whether the Government have indicated whether they are prepared to make a statement, before the Easter recess, on the early bomb warnings prior to the Lockerbie tragedy, in view of the statement, made today by the *Daily Record* editor, that "Mr. Channon", despite his denial, was the source of information that claimed that the arrest of the terrorists responsible was imminent? Will you make it clear, Mr. Speaker, that this House will not tolerate the denial of a debate on the importance of airport security before the Easter recess, as such denial will only feed the view that a cover-up is now being conducted by the Government?

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Are they all on the same matter?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Very well.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During the course of the diatribe by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), he accused my right hon. Friend of telling a lie to the House of Commons. He may have wrapped it up in parliamentary language of a sort, but that is what he said, and it should be withdrawn. You heard him, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear it, and if hon. Members wrap comment up in a certain way, I cannot interpret it. *[Interruption.]* Well, we are all honourable Members in this House.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Unlike most Opposition Members or those on this side of the House, my husband and I were actually present at Heathrow that evening, and we know very well that security was extremely tight. I very much hope that if there is a statement I shall have an opportunity——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Whether the Government come forward with a statement or volunteer a debate, or whether the Opposition gives time for a debate, is not a matter for me.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is here a matter that is directly for you, Mr. Speaker, because the country is beginning to

wonder what on earth is happening when the House of Commons cannot get statements or answers on matters of clear and immediate public interest. I know that it is not customary procedure to refer to the fact that private notice questions have been asked or have not been asked, but if the Government are refusing to do that which they constitutionally should and that which the public is entitled to expect—to come to the House and explain themselves—we as a House look to you and the private notice question procedure to ensure that they do.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, but the right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that, in considering these difficult decisions, I must take into account the requirements of the Standing Order. It is not for the Chair to get involved in party political controversy. There are other methods of debating this matter.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. What is most important is that the perpetrators of this appalling crime are brought to justice. This sort of interference from Opposition Members, who are nakedly trying to advance their ambition and chances of becoming deputy leader of the Labour party, does no good whatever.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that we can take the matter any further.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Surely it is unacceptable for the House to learn through the drip, drip, drip of media leaks and briefings what happened in this serious incident. Is there no way that you can bring the Secretary of State to the House to answer to the public, as is his duty?

Mr. Speaker: I am well aware of the concern about this matter, but there are other ways of achieving a debate or statement, which do not go through the Chair.

Mr. Alan Williams: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You made a perfectly legitimate point when you said that you must stand aside from the party wrangling within the House. No one would challenge that. However, if you look at the quotations over the weekend in relation to Lockerbie and what has happened in the past few days, you will see that Tory Members as well as Labour Members have been asking for the statement that we have been denied, or for a private notice question on the subject. It is not a matter of party wrangling, but of general national concern on both sides.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman knows that we do not discuss the criteria for private notice questions in the Chamber.

Mr. Alan Williams: Well, accept a private notice question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well, because he has indications of this, that there are other ways of raising this matter, and he should take them.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It would appear that there is a certain amount of arguing with the referee, which is not a very attractive situation. Can some of us on this side of the House express our gratitude to you in preserving the dignity of the House from the charm school of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) and his carrion ratbag as they seek to gorge themselves yet further on the blood of Lockerbie? This was an American aircraft exchanging cargo with another American aircraft. It was an American responsibility which tragically fell out of the skies in Britain. We want to seek the people who committed this atrocity and bring them to justice. I am sure that that is the overwhelming desire of my right hon. Friend. We are disgusted at the disgraceful behaviour of the Opposition in seeking to dredge into the entrails——

Mr. Speaker: Order. These points of order are also getting out of hand.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: I cannot say any more.

Mr. Dobson: Mr. Speaker, on several occasions you have rightly said that you prefer important statements by Ministers to be made in this House rather than in other places, whether the Parliamentary Press Gallery or at unattributable briefings. Throughout the whole history of the sad business of Lockerbie, my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has asked the Secretary of State time and again to come to the House to make a statement. We have been told in various ways, "No that would be inappropriate," "There is nothing to say," "It would be a threat to the security arrangements," "It would upset our relations with the West German intelligence service," and so on. Then, later the same day, the Secretary of State, who will not come to the House, rushes to the newspapers and tells them everything that we have been asking him to come to speak about in the House.

Under the rules of procedure, if a Minister will not make a statement, a way of bringing him to the House is to get him to answer a private notice question, provided that you will authorise it, Mr. Speaker. I shall not discuss what private notice questions have been sought or refused, but it would make Labour Members happier if, when they were refused, my hon. Friend was the first to know. On two recent occasions the press have rung to tell him, from whatever source I know not, that his private notice question application has been refused.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not having any more of this. We cannot have a debate on the matter now, and certainly not on private notice questions. I say to the House that I have an extremely difficult decision to make every day as to whether to grant private notice questions. In doing so, I must take many factors into account. As I have already said to the House, I must give no reasons for my decision but must simply stick to the criteria set down in the Standing Order. I invite the House to study those criteria; then it can make its judgment. Whether there is to be a statement or a debate is not a matter for the Chair.

Water Bill (Money Resolution)

3.45 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker. When the business of the House was announced on Thursday last week no reference was made to the fact that we would be asked to debate later tonight the Water Bill money resolution. I understand that money resolutions are normally appended to other substantive matters that come before the House. No statement was made on Friday and no notification has been given to the parties at any stage since last Thursday that this matter would be forthcoming.

I ask for your guidance, Mr. Speaker, as to what defence we have when the first that we hear of substantive matters of significance to the Water Bill is when we pick up our Order Papers. Is that in order?

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the money resolution arises from amendments to be made to the Bill. That is a question to be asked during the debate later this evening.

Mr. Wigley: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I have a further point of order. No doubt the money resolution is a matter that arises from amendments to the Bill, but the Bill is being debated tomorrow and on Wednesday and there will be time then to debate the substance of the money resolution. When we went away last week we were not under the impression—nor were we given any indication or guidance—that the Water Bill would be considered tonight, whether on this amendment or on anything else. We are in an impossible situation, because all our papers are lined up to be here tomorrow and not today.

Mr. Speaker: That is in order, and it has frequently been done. I believe that those are matters that the hon. Gentleman must argue tonight; if he objects, he must vote against the money resolution.

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [14 March].

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and the Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;
(b) for refunding any amount of tax, otherwise than in a case where the amount has been paid by reason of a mistake;
(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or
(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

Question again proposed.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

[Relevant documents: European Community document No. 8887/88, Annual Economic Report 1988-89 and the unnumbered document, "Annual Economic Report 1988-89" (final version as adopted by the Council).]

3.47 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): One of the central achievements of the Budget has been to tackle some of the outstanding barriers to employment that still remain in this country. Employment is already at an all-time record with more people in employment now—more than 26 million—than at any stage in our history. Unemployment has fallen at a record rate since the 1987 election and has fallen by more than 1 million since then. However, my right hon. Friend's Budget recognises the potential for further improvement. It sets out ways that new employment can be created and, above all, it sets out those proposals at a time when the labour market is changing rapidly.

Perhaps the Budget measure that gives some of us on this side of the House most cause for satisfaction is the abolition of the pensioners' earnings rule, because that removes a major disincentive to people who want—it is their choice—to work beyond the statutory retirement age. It means that men between 65 and 69 and women between 60 and 64 will no longer be faced with the loss of pension income if they remain in employment. We previously raised the earnings limit, but that still meant that anyone earning more than £75 a week had the disincentive of a reduced pension if they remained in employment.

The abolition of the earnings rule means that there is substantially more choice for men and women in their sixties. If they choose to work on—whether full-time or part-time—it will not affect their pension entitlement; while, of course, if the man or woman does not draw his or her pension at all, he or she builds up an increased pension. In other words, the Budget achieves an increase in flexibility and choice for the older worker. That recognises the changing nature of the British labour market.

I am probably the first Employment Secretary in 20 years to come to a Budget debate to say that, now, our priority is to increase the supply of labour to meet the rising demand that we will face in the years ahead. In the next seven to eight years we will face, for the first time, a relative shortage of new school leavers coming to the labour market—there will be a drop of a quarter by the mid-1990s. That is in stark contrast to the position in the 1970s and most of the 1980s, when our central concern was to find jobs for young people. That position is now changing radically, and for the better.

In the past two years, unemployment among young people has fallen substantially. The United Kingdom now has a lower unemployment rate for the under-25s than any other major European Community country, with the exception of Germany. Today, the prospects for well-qualified young people have never been better, but we must recognise that the supply of new school leavers will not be sufficient to keep up with demand in the manufacturing and service industries or in the public services, such as the Health Service.

One of the aims of policy, therefore, must be to look at new sources of recruitment. One course is to attract back married women, and a range of employers are currently pursuing that policy. A less obvious but vital course is the recruitment and retainment of older workers.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is aware of the woefully low level of over-16s who go on to further education in Britain. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman agrees that there is a need to raise that percentage towards the levels enjoyed in Germany and Japan—60 per cent. and 90 per cent. respectively. Will he give an undertaking to the House that no deficiency in the labour market will stop the Government seeking to raise the numbers who go on to further education and to better qualifications?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, Sir. I will give such a commitment, as it is entirely correct. We want people aged between 16 and 18 to be as well educated and as well trained as possible. The fact that there will be fewer young people coming on to the labour market underlines the importance of that, but it is a question not just of education, but of training. The whole aim and purpose of policy must be to improve the professional standards of all people not only young people.

The abolition of the earnings rule takes a giant step towards more choice for older workers. As a nation, we have not sufficiently valued the contribution that older workers can make. At a time when people are living longer, we have become preoccupied with earlier and earlier retirement. I believe that debate should be about maximum flexibility and about maximum choice for people.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): The Secretary of State mentioned the need to attract married women back into the labour market. Can he tell us why the Budget did not abolish the tax on women using workplace nurseries? Was that not a mistake?

Mr. Fowler: I do not think so. We are witnessing the unprecedented development of the exact measures to attract women back to the labour market. A whole range of employers are undertaking developments that are not only right—of course, they get tax relief on them—but in their own interests. I can hardly think of a time when there has been more development in such measures.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): On the last available figures, GDP per head has been rising at about 2·6 per cent. per annum. The Treasury is forecasting that the economy will grow in the coming year by only about 2·5 per cent. The labour force is rising. If output rises by 2·5 per cent. and productivity goes up by more than 2·5 per cent., it is impossible for unemployment to go on falling, even without increasing the labour force as the Government are suggesting. Would my right hon. Friend please comment on that?

Mr. Fowler: I will comment on that at some length at the relevant stage in my speech.

The second major change in the Budget concerns national insurance. That proposal will bring gains to nearly 19 million workers at an annual cost of about £2·8 billion. Every employee with a weekly income of £115 or more will gain £3 a week. Everyone with a weekly income of more than £75 will gain between £1·50 and £3 a week. The change will particularly benefit those on half average earnings, where the national insurance charge is of crucial importance.

Just as important is the fundamental change which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has introduced to the system of national insurance. In 1985, the Government introduced lower rate contributions for the lower-paid. That was a welcome step, but a major problem remained. When an individual crossed the lower earnings limit of national insurance, he had to pay 5 per cent. on all his earnings. If he earned £1 more than the lower earnings limit of £43, he lost £2·15 through national insurance. Not surprisingly, many people were deterred by that cliff-edge effect from crossing the lower earnings limit. Among other things, they were excluded from a range of national insurance benefits.

The changes introduced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor means that those earning below £43 a week will continue to pay nothing. Those with earnings above the lower earnings limit will pay 2 per cent. on the first £43 —that is, 86p—and 9 per cent. on the rest, up to the upper earnings limit of £325. The 86p earns entitlement—I must stress this—to contributory benefits including the basic retirement pension.

In summary, those changes will remove a disincentive for employees to increase the hours that they work. They will also generally increase incentives for people on low incomes. They should contribute to employment where growth has already been so remarkable.

The 1988 labour force survey, published last week, shows that there has been a real and dramatic improvement in employment in this country. It shows that there are now 1 million more people in employment than in 1979. It shows that, in the year to September 1988, total employment increased by more than 730,000 and that 85 per cent. of those new jobs were full-time posts. It also shows that self-employment has increased by 1·1 million since 1979 and by 125,000 in the year to September 1988. It shows that, over the past two years, we have had the fastest employment growth since 1945.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Despite those impressive figures, will the Secretary of State accept that in the standard planning regions in the United Kingdom of

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

Wales, the west midlands, the north-west, the north, Yorkshire and Humberside, Scotland and Northern Ireland, there are still 800,000 fewer jobs than in 1979 despite this economic miracle? Virtually all the jobs have been created south of a line between the Severn and the Wash, and most of them are part-time.

Mr. Fowler: That is not true of the growth in employment or of the fall in the rate of unemployment. The rate of unemployment has come down fastest in many of the areas to which the hon. Gentleman referred including the west midlands, Wales, the north and north-west.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Fowler: I want to continue for a moment.

The labour force survey shows that there is absolutely no truth in the suggestion that unemployment has not been falling at the rate shown by the monthly unemployment count. On the contrary, it shows that, in the 12 months to June 1988, unemployment fell by 500,000 on the international definition of unemployment used in the labour force survey and on the figures recorded by the unemployment count.

Furthermore, the survey confirms that unemployment fell because of the record number of new jobs created. In the 12 months to June 1988, employment increased by 870,000, more than matching the fall of 540,000 in the number unemployed. In other words, more than enough jobs were created to bring about a fall in unemployment and to provide employment for a 300,000 increase in the labour force. Those are the facts about Britain's employment position.

Only the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) seeks to contradict that improvement. He is on record as saying that the labour force survey would show unemployment at 2·6 million in the spring of 1988. He is on record as saying that both in the House and outside it as well. The hon. Gentleman is wrong to the tune of 200,000. Last Thursday, the hon. Gentleman made another prediction:

"Unemployment has fallen as far as it can go with current Government policies."

With the hon. Gentleman's record, that prediction must be the best news that the unemployed have had for a very long time.

Mr. Marlow: Would it be true to say that one of the reasons that unemployment has dropped so dramatically over the last couple of years or so is the large amount of inward investment we have had into this country—particularly from Japan and countries like that? Would my right hon. Friend confirm that one thing that would put off the Japanese and other people wishing to invest in our productive and successful economy would be the institution by him or somebody else of some airy-fairy concept like a Ministry of Innovation or, alternatively, a system of picking winners, whereby my right hon. Friend would take more tax from some companies so that he could expend his largesse on various political operations that he thought might be beneficial?

Mr. Fowler: I am sure that my hon. Friend is entirely right. We do not even need to consider the hypothetical situation. We can see what happened in respect of inward investment at Dundee, where the threat of industrial action, and the rest, deterred valuable inward investment. Worst of all, the hon. Member for Oldham, West, who leads for the Opposition on employment, did not at any stage have the courage to condemn the action that was taken at Dundee. That is the condemnation of the Labour party.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Secretary of State really bragging about the fact that unemployment is still over 2 million and still twice as high as it was in 1979? Is he aware that the latest labour force survey figure shows also that, in the period following the end of March 1988, which is the half-year for which figures are available, jobs increased at only half the rate of the year before, showing that the jobs boom is clearly over and that unemployment is clearly bottoming out? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware also that vacancies have fallen by 39,000 net over the past year, which is a trend normally associated with rising unemployment? Is he satisfied that adult male unemployment is still twice as high as the European average?

Mr. Fowler: I am not bragging about the employment or unemployment situation. I am saying that the hon. Gentleman not only got his predictions wrong but self-evidently wrong, and that if he had any courage at all, he would get up and apologise to the House and to the country for his inaccurate statements about the fall of unemployment. The fact remains that unemployment has come down, but that the hon. Gentleman has sought month after month to fiddle the unemployment figures upwards. His claims have now been shown to be entirely bogus, which comes as no surprise to those of us who have known the hon. Gentleman over the years.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Leicester): Will my right hon. Friend commiserate with the 1,000 workers in Liverpool who have lost their jobs because of the Luddite tactics of the antiquated unions there?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is right. The part of the Transport and General Workers Union in that dispute needs to be examined, and people need to learn what is going on.

Let me take up what the hon. Member for Oldham, West has just said about vacancies. The significant point about unfilled vacancies is how the number has kept up. On Thursday, the hon. Gentleman issued a press release in which he talked about the alarming fall in vacancies. He said that vacancies had fallen by 1,000 in jobcentres over the past month, and if he wants to deny that we have it on record. There are now nearly 230,000 vacancies in jobcentres alone, which means that in the economy generally there are probably between 600,000 and 700,000.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh) *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I would like to make progress.

In such circumstances, it is entirely right for the Chancellor to remove barriers that stand in the way of those jobs being taken up, and to take away obstacles that prevent new jobs from being created.

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Fowler: I would like to make progress, if my hon. Friend will forgive me.

My right hon. Friend has done that by ending the pensioners' earnings rule for men and women in their sixties. He has done it by reforming the national insurance system, which I should have thought would be welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. He has also done it by increasing corporation——

Mr. Holt: I am sorry that my right hon. Friend does not wish to hear the good news from Teesside that I would like to give him. The latest newsletter from the Teesside chamber of commerce shows that 28 per cent. of firms anticipate taking on new labour in the next few months, and that the vacancies advertised in the newspapers in that location are running into pages and pages. Last Friday, there were five pages of vacancies.

One reason why the number of vacancies registered with the jobcentres is not as high as it was may be that jobcentres are no longer a source of labour. Jobs are being advertised in newspapers, as has been the case historically, and in Teesside they are booming.

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I apologise for not having given way to him earlier. It was unforgivable of me not to allow him to give news of that kind. I should like, however, to make a few minutes' progress with my speech before giving way to any more hon. Members on either side of the House.

By increasing the corporation tax threshold for small companies, my right hon. Friend has reduced the corporation tax burden for 20,000 small companies. He has simplified the tax regime for small business men and raised the compulsory threshold for VAT. By any standards those are significant measures, but of course other barriers to employment exist.

At the same time as making those reforms, it is right for us to consider other measures to improve employment levels. As my right hon. Friend said in his Budget speech:

"The task of business and industry is to control their pay and other costs. The more successfully they do so, the less costly in terms of output and employment the necessary adjustment will be."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 245.]

As the House knows, we have been reviewing the closed shop, particularly the pre-entry closed shop. The effect of the closed shop is to limit employment opportunities and to reduce the supply of labour. At the same time, it limits the employer's freedom to decide whom to employ and whom not to employ, and the employee's freedom to decide whether or not to join a trade union in the first place.

As part of the review, I commissioned a special survey of the extent of the closed shop, which shows that the number of jobs covered by the closed shop has fallen from a peak of 5 million in 1978 to just over 2·5 million today. Nevertheless, the survey found that one worker in 10 said that the most important reason for union membership was that

"it was a condition of having the job."

The survey also shows that 1·3 million jobs are the subject of a pre-entry closed shop. To get the job, one needs a union card. That is substantially more than previous estimates and, in effect means that there are still 1·3 million jobs which are closed to anyone who is not already a member of a trade union. We have already taken action against the post-entry closed shop whereby the employer may take on a non-unionist, so long as such a recruit joins the union shortly after starting the job. In such a case, the victim of the post-entry closed shop can go to an industrial tribunal with a claim for unfair dismissal.

As I said in my December statement, I believe that the time has now come to act against the pre-entry closed shop. I am publishing today for consultation a Green Paper which for the first time gives a similar remedy to anyone who is excluded from a job because of the pre-entry closed shop.

At the same time, we need to recognise that bad industrial relations can also provide a major obstacle to employment growth. Strikes export jobs to our competititors. In the 1970s, this country lost on average 13 million working days a year because of strikes. At this time 10 years ago, we were in the immediate aftermath of the winter of discontent which did so much damage to the reputation of this country.

Working days lost through strikes are now down to about 3·75 million a year. The number of working days lost in January of this year was the lowest in any month since August 1940, but although the position has improved, there are still areas where I believe that action should be taken.

We are particularly concerned with secondary industrial action. Although the 1980 Act took important action in this area, the position remains that as the law stands at present immunity can apply to organising certain forms of secondary action. The Government's view is that there is no good reason why employers who are not party to a dispute should be at risk of having industrial action organised against them.

For example, secondary action can deter employers from starting up for the first time in this country—in a situation where secondary action is threatened among workers in the new firm's customers or suppliers with the aim of forcing the new enterprise to accept certain terms and conditions. Indeed, exactly that sort of threat was made at Dundee, when the American Ford company planned to establish a new factory. Dundee, above all, shows the link between industrial relations and jobs.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I welcome the news about the closed shop, but will my right hon. Friend deal as soon as possible with that relic of the corporate state, the national dock labour scheme, as a result of which the container terminal in Hull remains shut, jobs are being lost and trade is going to other ports?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend will not be surprised to learn—if he is, I apologise for it—that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave an exact reply to his question on 19 January. I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend said then. My announcement today will enable the reform of industrial relations to go forward. There will be a step-by-step reform of industrial relations law. I am glad that my hon. Friend welcomes the proposals.

A range of measures is being taken to tackle barriers and obstacles to employment, but the Budget goes beyond that. It also gives opportunities for employment itself to be more attractive. It gives employees further opportunities to participate in the success of their firm. It recognises the impact that successful employee participation schemes can have on staff commitment and the business performance of the company. The experience of many leading British companies bears this out. So the Budget includes

[Mr. Fowler]

important new proposals on employee share ownership, profit-related pay, and pensions, including personal pensions.

In all these areas, the Budget builds on the substantial progress that has already been made. More than 1·75 million employees have already benefited from approved employee share scheme. They have received shares or options for shares worth some £4 billion. The tax relief on profit-related pay, which came into effect only 18 months ago, already covers more than 120,000 employees and profit-related pay worth more than £100 million. In this Budget, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has proposed significant improvements which will give further encouragement to those important developmemnts.

First, increased benefits will be available under employee share schemes. The limits will be raised so that firms will be able to give staff more shares free of tax. Secondly, the Budget proposes a new tax relief which is specially designed to help companies that set up employee share ownership plans. My right hon. Friend also proposes to increase the maximum of profit-related pay which can attract tax relief.

For the individual worker, the new personal pensions and money purchase pension schemes are making it substantially easier for employees to move from firm to firm and take their pension entitlement with them. That is a substantial advance in the rights of working people.

Personal pensions have been a major success story. One million people have already taken advantage of the new opportunities that have been available since last July. Money purchase schemes can be used to contract out of the state earnings-related pension scheme. Already, more than 8,000 schemes have been established, including some industrywide schemes, such as those in engineering, construction and the footwear industry.

The Budget changes will allow greater flexibility in pension provision. They will improve the arrangements for personal pensions and make very significant increases in the contribution limits for people over 35 who, as a result, will be able to make better provision for their retirement. They will make it easier and more attractive for employees to pay additional voluntary contributions to secure better benefits, simplify the rules for occupational pension schemes, and reduce the administrative burden on employers.

All in all, the Budget proposals offer employers a range of important opportunities to increase employee participation in the prosperity of their firms. They will give a further impetus to developments which have already proved successful, effective and popular with employers and employees alike.

There are other issues that affect workers' and staff commitment. At the beginning of this debate on Wednesday, the shadow Chancellor, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), referred to the importance of investment in training. I agree about its importance. That is why the Government are investing £3 billion in training for young people and the long-term unemployed—£3 billion made possible by the Chancellor's policies. It is also why we are setting up training and enterprise councils around the country—to achieve more training by employers and more training generally, geared to the needs of the local labour markets. It is because of the crucial importance that we attach to training that I published two White Papers last year proposing important changes in our arrangements.

On training, we are entitled to say to the Opposition, "We hear the words, but we remember the action." We remember that, when the employment training programme for the long-term unemployed was launched, it was bitterly opposed by the Labour party conference. We remember that, although—to his credit—the Leader of the Opposition backed the programme, the Trades Union Congress rejected his advice. We remember that the shadow spokesman on employment, to his great discredit, took the easy way and campaigned against a training programme for the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Meacher: If the right hon. Gentleman is so pleased with his employment training scheme, will he explain why, after six months, only 50 per cent. of the target number of places have been filled and why a large number of companies, including McAlpine, which has close associations with the Tory party, refuse to have anything to do with it?

Mr. Fowler: I thought for a moment that the hon. Gentleman might have been getting to the Dispatch Box to deny that he has been campaigning against employment training. His intervention establishes and underlines what I was saying. I shall answer the hon. Gentleman directly. At the moment, we are getting about 40,000 entries to the programme each month. There are now about 170,000 people on employment training. Therefore, given that employment training has been going for only six months, the programme is off to an extremely good start by any standard. The new job training scheme, which the hon. Member for Oldham, West also tried to sabotage, attracted only 30,000 people after 12 months. After six months, 170,000 people are on employment training.

What I find so distasteful about the hon. Gentleman's attitude is that it entirely confirms what I said. Although the Leader of the Opposition had the guts to get up and back employment training, I cannot say the same for the Labour party spokesman on employment.

A whole range of companies is involved in employment training, including IBM, Sainsbury, Laing and many other major companies. McAlpine occupied a special position in Yorkshire. The hon. Gentleman's only contribution to training in the past 12 months has been to try to prevent training in Britain. We shall not take lectures about training from the shadow Chancellor at least until he gets rid of the Opposition spokesman on employment, and that can only be a matter of time. I notice that we shall not have the pleasure of hearing the Opposition spokesman on employment reply to the debate. Obviously, he is on the substitutes' bench in these matters.

The Budget builds on the policies which have made possible the record growth in jobs and the record fall in unemployment in Britain. Since the last general election, unemployment has fallen by more than 1 million. Over the last year, the rate of unemployment has fallen faster in this country than in any other major industrialised country. Unemployment in Britain is now well below the European Community average, and below the figures for France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy and Ireland.

Contrary to what the hon. Member for Oldham, West suggested, the 1988 labour force survey published last week has confirmed the record of rapidly falling

unemployment which the monthly unemployment count has shown for the last 31 months. It also confirmed that unemployment has fallen, because record numbers of new jobs have been created.

At the last general election, the Labour party promised to reduce unemployment by 1 million within two years. Part of its plan for achieving that was to extend early retirement to 160,000 people in Britain, and a whole range of similar measures. However, since the election this Government have reduced unemployment by more than 1 million in less than two years, and our policies have reduced unemployment by creating real jobs—more than 1·75 million new jobs between March 1987 and September 1988 and a total of more than 2·5 million since 1983.

The truth is that the Opposition have nothing to offer except a return to a high taxation, low incentive and a low-growth economy. My right hon. Friend's Budget is a budget for investment, for continued employment growth and for a strong economy. I commend it to the House.

4.24 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): I regret that about half an hour before the debate we, or rather I, learnt of the indisposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). I am sure that we all wish him a speedy recovery.

Our view is that once again the Budget has failed to provide for a fair society and a strong economy. It does nothing to strengthen our economy. The 1988 Budget gave tax breaks to the rich when any economic scribbler knew that resources should have been spent on the supply side—education, research and development and training. The overheating caused by boosting demand and neglecting supply has led to savage increases in mortgage interest rates and we all know from our advice surgeries how much suffering that has caused to our constituents. This version of the Barber-boom is over and we have to ask two basic questions: first, when will interest rates come down and, secondly, when will the balance of payments improve?

The Budget insults the low paid. After last year's giveaway to the rich, the decent thing would have been to have given something to the poor this year. However, analysis shows that for those earning under £100 a week the gain is only £1 and for the ordinary working family it is just £3. That should be compared with last year when a person on £100,000 a year was given an extra £260 a week—more than the average family will receive in a year from the 1989 Budget.

Many tax dodges still exist to be exploited by those who can afford accountants. The Government's latest contribution to the condition of the low paid has been to attack the wages councils, so the poorly paid will lose the only defence that they have had in past years.

The Government tell us that Budgets are to increase incentives. Is it efficient to discourage women from going to work by failing to end the tax on workplace nurseries? Is it efficient to increase loopholes for the rich by tax relief on private health schemes or to throw money around to encourage share ownership simply to ensure that privatisation works? The Budget shows that the economy and the Chancellor have grave problems. Despite having accumulated a Budget surplus of £14 billion over the past year when the Chancellor forecast £3 billion originally, he has been unable to reduce the burden of taxation or to begin investing in the supply-side measures that Britain needs. He should have begun the supply-side revival by targeting expenditure on training, research and development and our deteriorating infrastructure. Not to do so is folly, not prudence.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garrett: Not for a minute.

Those long-term problems are the outcome of 10 years of Government economic mismanagement. Our problems are coming home to roost in the appalling balance of payments deficit—a deficit that the Chancellor admits is here to stay as far ahead as we can see because balance of payments deficits of over £10 billion a year are forecast in the Red Book over the planning period. The deficit is the product of 10 years of under-investment in the productive strength of the British economy. In those 10 years manufacturing investment has never returned to the 1979 level. It has been 10 years of a growing trade deficit in almost every sector of British industry.

Mr. Andrew MacKay *rose*——

Mr. Garrett: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in my own time, not his.

Let us look at some of the most noticeable loopholes in the Budget. Let us look at those affecting corporate management, such as personal equity plans. That pet scheme of the Government flopped last year. Now, in their passion to make it work, they have created an even bigger tax loophole. Before now, only new money could be used to invest in PEPs to gain from the tax breaks that were offered. Now, privatisation shares taken up outside PEP schemes can be transferred into them, tax free. Tax-free privatisation is now the Government's policy.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: The hon. Gentleman has just criticised my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for not further reducing the tax burden. This seems a suitable opportunity for him to tell us what the basic level of taxation would be under a future Labour Government. Would it be above or below 25 per cent? That is not clear at the moment.

Mr. Garrett: I do not need to take instruction from any hon. Member on that. I am here to discuss the Budget and that is what I intend to do. My duty is to examine the Budget in terms of its effect on industry and the economy.

Another corporate issue is company cars. Understandably, the Chancellor has reduced the tax benefits accruing from having a company car. That seems fair enough, but he has failed to distinguish between those for whom cars are essential for work and those for whom a company car is a tax perk. The health visitor, for example, has been hit as hard as the company director.

We now have a simpler system for the assessment of the earnings of directors. Directors will now pay tax on the amount that they receive in the tax year, rather than the amount they earn or accrue in the tax year. Clearly, that can be exploited, giving company directors the ability to minimise tax bills by choosing when they receive income.

I want to consider the effect of the Budget on industry and the economy generally. Instead of strengthening the trading industries of Britain—the industries that must capture new markets abroad and defend markets at home—the Government's high interest rate strategy hits investment, building up yet further problems for the

[Mr. Garrett]

future. It is no wonder that we find the Chancellor's trade forcasts incredible. In his Autumn Statement, five months ago, he forecast that in 1989 exports would grow by 7 per cent. and imports by 5 per cent. The export forecast has now been reduced to 5·5 per cent. and the import forecast has been revised up to 5·5 per cent. as well. Even so, the Chancellor is assuming that the growth of exports will have to accelerate from 0·5 per cent., which it is today, to 5·5 per cent. and that imports will have to fall from a rate of growth of 13 per cent. to 5·5 per cent., while he keeps interest rates up and the pound high.

The Government's failure over the past decade has led to a massive increase in the percentage of products in the domestic market that are imported. I shall give a few examples. In 1978, 18 per cent. of colour televisions were imported. From January to September 1988, the figure was 40 per cent. For telephone receivers, the figure has increased from 2 per cent. to 41 per cent. and for buses and coaches, from 3 per cent. to 38 per cent. In my own constituency, 4,000 to 5,000 people are still employed in the footwear industry. There is great concern that imports of footwear have risen from 30 per cent. to 47 per cent. The Government boast that investment is booming, but as investment in manufacturing is down on 1979, the main growth areas have been investment in distribution and the financial sector—aiding the financing and distribution of imports.

Growth in the past year has been fuelled by a massive consumer boom, irresponsibly stoked up by the Government. The boom has been paid for by growing personal debt. The ratio of debt to income in Britain is now the highest in the western world, threatening the future of individual families and the future stability of the economy. In the past year, the amount of mortgage lending would have bought all new housing stock twice over.

The Chancellor has admitted that inflation will rise to over 8 per cent. before falling back towards the end of the year. That fall will be caused not by any slackening in the rate of price increases, but because year-on-year comparisons will be with the high inflation months in the second half of 1988.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garrett: No, although I know that this is a debate.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): My hon. Friend should ignore the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo). He is a ratbag. He is a person who interrupts.

Mr. Garrett: I do not care whether the hon. Gentleman is a ratbag or not. That is my hon. Friend's opinion. The hon. Gentleman may be a good husband and father, for all I know.

There are substantial and mysterious anomalies in the Red Book. I was trying to draft some questions for the Chancellor on those when I was hauled in here, protesting, half an hour ago. These questions really are my questions and I am trying to get at the truth of the matter. The Red Book tells us that underlying inflation is continuing to fall. Yet if I look at table 3.9 on page 34 of the Red Book, which deals with the increase in output prices over the previous year, I see that in 1987 the increase was 4¼ per cent. In 1988 it was forecast at 4¾ per cent. and for 1989 the forecast is 5½ per cent. However, the Chancellor forecast a fall in inflation, as measured by the retail price index in 1989. The only way that that can be achieved is if he is right in his assumption that interest rates will stop rising, that is, unless he tries to fiddle the RPI by taking mortgage interest out of it.

Mr. Yeo: I know how difficult it must be for the hon. Gentleman to know his party's policy on income tax, so I shall not ask him any questions about that, but he may like to recall a historical fact. Can he tell the House the lowest rate of inflation achieved by the previous Labour Government?

Mr. Garrett: As I recall, when the Labour Government left office inflation was 7 per cent.—and it was falling. But what is the point of discussing that when we are talking about the Chancellor's forecast? I am simply saying that the Chancellor's forecasts of inflation do not gel or make sense. If output prices have risen by 5 per cent. on the year before, how does he expect the cost of living to fall as he forecasts?

Mr. Ashdown: Perhaps I can assist the hon. Gentleman on this point.

Mr. Garrett: I thank the hon. Gentleman but I do not need any assistance with my speech and if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, the hon. Gentleman can make his own speech later.

When reading the newspapers over the weekend, I noted that the Americans are planning to push up interest rates, which will inevitably lead to a round of interest rate increases throughout the world in which we shall have to take the lead, as at the moment. With the forecast balance of payments deficit running at well over £10 billion into the future, the pound will not be sustainable at its present level without further interest rate increases. Think of the personal misery that interest rate increases cause. Think of the mortgage foreclosures and of the people I have mentioned who come to my surgery in tears because they cannot continue to maintain their mortgage interest repayments.

In recent years we have had a novel development in economic policy—the repayment of the national debt. According to the Government, that is a new triumph, and I am willing to believe them up to a point. However, the Government also say that it represents the repayment of the debt that Labour incurred in its years of government. When one considers it, it is, in fact, the Tory debt that has been run up in the past eight years. It is the bill for unemployment.

The biggest mystery is why, when the Government forecast a repayment of £3 billion for 1988-89, they repaid £14 billion. We can piece together some of the answers. There was, for example, a £2 billion overrun on privatisation receipts and a £1·5 billion shortfall on fixed investment by the Government. There was also excess revenue from income tax, national insurance contributions and VAT because the Government could not control inflation. Receipts were increased by the Government's own inflation. I am sorry to have to say that those figures also include a £0·3 billion saving on transport spending —which is a matter of some resonance given recent news.

The Chancellor's Budget shows no recognition of the hard landing forecast in his predictions for British industry. The Budget and the public expenditure

programme that preceded it do not help the reconstruction of industry and do not provide the training, the education or the infrastructure that our economy must have in order to be efficient and competitive. Worse still, the Budget does nothing for our new underclass, such as the homeless young people whom one can see sleeping in cardboard boxes across the river at Waterloo on any night of the week; the confused who have been discharged from mental institutions; single parents or for the great grey army of the unemployed. The Budget combines incompetence with inhumanity.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Before I call other hon. Members, I must tell the House that Mr. Speaker has determined that, because of the number of hon. Members who wish to speak, there should be a 10-minute limit on speeches between the hours of 7 pm and 9 pm.

4.38 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): I was somewhat taken aback by the abrupt end of the hilarity promoted by the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett).

I shall concentrate on two main points. Before I do so, I agree with the praise by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment for the measures which the Chancellor of the Exchequer has taken in respect of the benefit system and, in particular, of the abolition of the earnings rule. I utter just one word of caution. I am not convinced that, although desirable, the abolition of the earnings rule will lead to a great increase in production or employment. Those who were affected by the earnings rule usually found ways and means of achieving their ends without necessarily having the rule abolished or falling into trouble. But its abolition is a sound measure, and one which we have wanted for a long time. I hope that it leads to a solution of the problem.

My one reservation about my right hon. Friend's speech concerns his comments about training. I shall say much more about that point later on. He mentioned that we had the utmost difficulty in finding jobs for young people in the 1970s. I ask him to take further advice from his Department on that point. As we had 580,000 unemployed when we left office in 1974, there was no problem about finding jobs for young people—they were all in jobs. It was only in limited areas where we had any serious degree of unemployment.

I now refer to the two points on which I wish to concentrate, although fairly briefly. First, this Government have now been in power for a decade. The debate is an opportunity to look at matters over the decade, in the light of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget. On this occasion, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has proved himself to be a wise man. He is not a far-seeing man, that we must know—*[Interruption.]* He will agree that, in his previous Budget, he did not foresee that his surplus would be four or five times that which he calculated. He is not a well-informed Chancellor. The reason for that is that the Prime Minister's campaign against the worthless bureaucracy has so affected the statistical department of the Treasury that it often does not know what is going on.

But the Chancellor is wise. The reason I say that is that he has got himself and the country into a position in which he does not know what to do. He has therefore very wisely decided to do nothing. It may be for that that we should be grateful.

As the Chancellor knows, he is my favourite one-club golfer. On the last occasion, he made a splendid drive from the tee. Enormous reductions in taxation were widely hailed. He now finds himself in a bunker, and he is discovering how difficult it is to get out of a bunker with the wooden club with which he drove off. All I ask is that he should now reconsider his bag of clubs and perhaps embrace a few more.

Why did I say that I want to examine matters over the past decade? It is because we have been through a decade which has not been altogether different from the decades since the second world war. The sooner we recognise that, the better. It is true that, at the beginning of this decade, the depression was lengthened because of the measures taken by the Government at the time, in particular by imposing a drastic increase in indirect taxation and allowing the pound to rise to heights which put our businesses out of practice. Our exports were seriously damaged, and they have never been able to recover. Since then, we have had the upward graph and now, undoubtedly on the Chancellor's calculations, we are at the top of that graph and are on the downward slope again. Nobody challenges that.

I accept that we have gone through that process yet again. It is the fourth time that that has happened in my time in the House of Commons. Quite honestly, I am getting rather bored with it. Every time, it has happened to a greater and worse degree.

We have heard the employment figures. Increases in the number of people employed are welcome, but there are still more than 2 million unemployed. On the basis of the statistical adjustment that is made at the end of the month, according to the season, the figure is just under 2 million, but the number of people who do not actually have jobs is over 2 million. *[Interruption.]* Well, that is the figure, which is seasonally adjusted. I have not forgotten completely my days as Minister of Labour. The problem is that, for the first time when we have been at the top of the cycle, we still have more than 2 million people without jobs—a large number of them young people. That is the first factor.

Secondly, borrowers now have to face interest rates higher than at any time in the past 45 years when we have been at the top of the cycle. Indeed, interest rates are higher than they have ever been. Thirdly, the adverse balance of trade is of a scale that we have never had at this point of the cycle. All these things constitute an appalling aspect of the development of the cycle in this decade, compared with the previous four and a half decades. *[Interruption.]* Was there a sedentary interruption?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I was just pointing out that my right hon. Friend seems to look on the gloomy side. Never in his day, or in any other day, did we have such a massive improvement in the Budget surplus.

Mr. Heath: I am coming to that. The Chancellor's problem is that he did not expect this surplus, and he does not know what to do with it. He and the Prime Minister regard the rate of inflation as abominably high, so he has said that he is going to use the surplus to repay the national

[Mr. Heath]

debt. One has to ask oneself what will happen when the national debt has been repaid. What guarantee does the Chancellor have that the funds will not be used for consumption? One cannot automatically assume that they will be used by corporations for further investment.

The Chancellor may very well find that, with the pressures of high interest rates, those people who now find themselves with cash instead of investments will start spending the cash. That would defeat his purpose, and preventing it must be one of his problems. Indeed, can he prevent it at all? I do not think so. That is another aspect of his having got himself deep into the bunker.

This is the situation in which we find ourselves after a decade. Parliament and the country ought to be asking how we can get out of this situation, which has occurred four times in the last 40 years, and achieve a stabilised system in which we are not forced to expand the economy and then to wreck that economy automatically.

I am not ignoring the personal harm, anxiety and agony caused by the measures that are taken in these circumstances. I am, thinking, for instance, of high interest rates. I sometimes feel that those, both in the City and in Whitehall, who have to deal with policy of this kind are dealing with something which, to them, has no relationship at all to human beings; that the level at which interest rates have to be pitched is a pure intellectual exercise to get a certain answer as to money circulation, and that that is only a guide as to which particular monetary definition may be adopted at a given time—they can change it as they go along.

People come to our advice bureaux. Indeed, a lady from outside my constituency wrote to me the other day saying:

"It was such a happy time when we got our mortgage as first buyers. We did what the Government told us to do. Now it is agony. I can see no future except suicide. The only thing that stops me is my two children."

It is appalling that people should get to that stage, which is brought about by those who regard as a purely intellectual exercise the level at which interest rates should be set. It behoves us all to look at that.

Several factors have kept us in this state. First, at the beginning of this decade, the market dogma adopted wiped out any question of regional aid. The market was going to put everything right. If the market preferred the south, it would move to the south and everything would be put right. We know that that was nonsense. Even if we wanted the market to move to the south, we did not make it possible for it to do so. We did not provide housing, roads, railways or anything. *[Interruption.]* Look at the state of the railway lines. Do I need to comment on that? I shall be accused of interfering with justice if I comment on railway lines. We did not make it possible for those in regional development to move to the south. We continued with long unemployment, and we have suffered the results politically in Scotland, the north-east and over a large part of the country. The Government should bear that in mind.

We were scorned when we said that ways could be found of choosing the infrastructure in which investment could be placed without increasing inflation. Ministers are constantly pulling out figures, saying that we are spending whatever percentage it is more than last time or more than under the Labour Government in 1979, The latter is of no interest to me or the great majority of British people. The former is not relevant to the problem. The question is: is what we are doing satisfactory to deal with the problem which faces the country today? The plain answer is no, even in the south.

My colleagues from the south know that many motorways are unfinished, even in the south. There is the M2 in my constituency, the M20, the M25 and the M27, and in the west country there are none. Our motorways are inadequate, as are all our transport facilities. Our airports are overcrowded. Look at the mess at Heathrow. The Labour Government are largely to blame for that, because they cancelled the plans to build a great new airport on the east coast.

What happens to business men who want to travel to improve their business? I travel a reasonable amount and what am I told? It all depends on whether there is a "slot". That is the latest jargon. The other day at Dusseldorf and Cologne I was told, "You can't get back. We are an hour and a half late. There is not a slot at Heathrow." Life now depends on slots. This is not the higher quality of life of which the Prime Minister spoke at Scarborough on Saturday afternoon.

Housing demands are not being met, again because it was said that the market would do all that was necessary. One sees the conditions in which many of our fellow citizens have to live. The young cannot find anywhere to live; they have families, and they still cannot find anywhere to live. Housing is another major problem that has not been dealt with.

We have not dealt with education. We have bashed it on every possible occasion. We have bashed the teachers just to bash a handful of loony Labour councils in London which do silly things. That has not produced results.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Steady on, old man.

Mr. Heath: I am using modest language.

The other night I heard my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on television say that we must find a new means of dealing with education and that there used to be guilds. They are out of date, yet she compared the new arrangements with the guilds. I find that difficult. I know that we have been looking back the whole time. We looked back to Marshall and the 19th century to give us our economics. He was not entirely satisfactory, so we looked back to Adam Smith and the 18th century for more economics. He has not proved foolproof, so now we are looking back to the guilds for our training arrangements. *[Laughter.]* I am prepared to acknowledge my vested interests. I am a member of Goldsmiths Company and the Honourable Artillery Company. I do not regard those companies as having responsibility for training. Moreover, the guilds were the most protectionist organisations which Europe has ever seen. My right hon. Friend runs all the risks of abolishing the closed shop in every conceivable circumstance, yet creates guilds which will be extremely protectionist and will not produce the education that we want.

We shall never deal with the problems until we have a training system for industry which is embodied in the whole education system—and we must face that. There has always been a Department of Employment which has fought the Department of Education and Science about that. It argues that what happens after pupils leave school has nothing to do with education but is entirely to do with labour. I may even have said that myself. I certainly do not

say that now, because I have seen the experiments and they have all failed. In 1970-74, we made a further attempt with training agencies. Three or four were successful, but the rest were not. I have come firmly to the conclusion that we shall never have a successful industry until training is embodied as part of our complete education system.

That applies equally to management. It is natural for some of my hon. Friends always to shout when a trade union is mentioned—to bash the unions. Unions are not entirely to blame. Today we should encourage enterprising unions which recognise the modern world. They may be expelled from the Trades Union Congress, but they are certainly getting on with the job of training and they are facing the modern world. They should be encouraged, not damned.

I regret to say that many of our management are not interested in management as such. They are interested in finance and the quickest way of getting their money. That is not the same as management. That is horrifying in the context of 1992, especially when one goes around the country asking people what preparations they have made. An employer wrote to me recently, "God help us when we get to 1992." I replied, "Would it not be more appropriate and effective if we helped ourselves?" Alas, that is not helping. Management training is just as important as employee training.

Such training will affect the Chancellor of the Exchequer. If we are to have some overall technical education system for industry and management as part of our education system, the Treasury will have additional burdens put on it. I believe that we have reached that point and that it is necessary.

If we compare ourselves with the two successful countries in the post-war world, the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan, we see enormous contrasts. We have only to ask ourselves the simple question: why are we not doing as they are doing?

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Because we are not like that.

Mr. Heath: I think that my hon. Friend would be more accurate if he said that we were not like them. That is the real point. They were both defeated in war. Japan was bombed with atom bombs and Germany was almost entirely destroyed, yet here are we unable to compete with them or to emulate what they have done.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend, sadly, is in one of his Cassandra-like moods. He is telling us about everything that he finds wrong. I wonder whether he could do us and perhaps himself a favour by telling us some of the things that the Government have done which have been successful and of which he approves.

Mr. Heath: I approve of the abolition of the earnings rule. I said that earlier. I fully approve of that.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: I do not think so.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Heath: Very well, then.

Mr. Budgen: My right hon. Friend appears to believe that our society should be the same as one sees in both Japan and in West Germany. He goes on to say that the main purpose of education should be materialistic and devoted to earning more money in later life. Was that the sort of view that was behind his devotion to music when he was at Oxford? Does he believe that our society would wish to be the same as that in Japan or West Germany?

Mr. Heath: I wish that we had as many opera houses and top-class operas as the Germans. I wish, too, that we were devoting as much to education as the Japanese. I cannot criticise them on those grounds.

I shall quote one or two figures. We have heard about the fixed capital formation, and all I would say is, whatever good we may have done, do not let us think of it as being the answer to everything or that it compares with what other countries have done. We must look at it from the point of view that we are the lowest in the Community league. The latest figures for the whole of 1987 show that we are down to 17·3 per cent. of GDP.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Heath: The Chancellor shakes his head, but that information comes from my best statistical advisers—*[Interruption.]* We were down to 17·3 and everyone was higher than we were.

Mr. John Garrett: That is right.

Mr. Heath: That has been confirmed by the spokesman for the Opposition, who has his own source of information.

We then come to the question of the prime lending rate, which affects the whole of our industry and our citizens. Last week, we were 14 per cent., West Germany 7 per cent. and Japan 3·38 per cent. Why can we not have an economy run with similar figures? *[Interruption.]* There is no answer to that.

Then there is the rate of consumer price inflation.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: No, I shall not at the moment.

The latest figures, in 1988, showed that the United Kingdom had a rate of inflation of 6·8 per cent. and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has said that that will go up to 8 per cent. West Germany is 1·6 per cent. and Japan is 0·9 per cent., with very low interest rates. On the question of trade, if we take the current balances as a percentage of GDP, we have a deficit of 3·26 per cent., West Germany has a plus of 3·09 per cent. and Japan has a plus of 2·76 per cent.—*[Interruption.]*

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Heath: I shall gladly give way to the Chancellor.

Mr. Gow *rose*——

Mr. Heath: I have thought a great many things about my hon. Friend, but I never thought that he was Chancellor.

Mr. Gow: My right hon. Friend accused my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of a lack of compassion in having put up the interest rates. Does my right hon. Friend believe that he showed more compassion by failing to abate inflation or that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is showing true compassion by trying to abate inflation?

Mr. Heath: I did not accuse the Chancellor of a lack of compassion. I said that those who so constantly deal in interest rates as a solution to economic problems do it from a purely intellectual approach, without realising the human consequences, and I stick absolutely by that view.

We did not have to deal with interest rates of that kind, and I believe that we were—*[Interruption.]* The Chancellor was one of the advisers. We were dealing with the problems of infrastructure and of housing on an infinitely bigger scale than the Government have been doing in the past 10 years. However, it will all be in the memoirs.

The question is why, after 45 years, we cannot do the same as those industrial countries. We must address ourselves to that. It means that, instead of going on a purely monetary dogma, a balance must be struck between those matters which emphasise inflation, those which require a reduction of interest rates, a lower pound to get a better balance on trade——

Mr. Lawson *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Heath: The Chancellor always shakes his head about this. He knows that it is right, but he is not allowed to do it. He knows that the pound is too high for our exporters. He knows that it is far too high for our exports to Europe.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Who is stopping him?

Mr. Heath: I never mention names in public.

If we are to give our exporters a chance, the pound must be dealt with. It is always a question of keeping the balance.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): My right hon. Friend made great play of exchange rates stopping us exporting, but is he aware that in the past two years the yen has appreciated against the dollar by virtually 100 per cent., yet the Japanese trade surplus is increasing? Does that not show that there is not necessarily a connection between the two?

Mr. Heath: I am not saying that there is a necessary connection, but our business men recognise that they lose many exports because of the rate of the pound. If we consider Germany from Erhard's time onwards, it is true that he was able step by step to improve the value of the deutschmark and at the same time encourage the exporters to increase their exports. That is right, but that has not happened here.

I am asking the Chancellor and the Government to strike a balance between the different factors involved and gradually to adjust them—with such a crisis, they have not much time—so that exports can be increased and the adverse balance of trade reduced. They could, therefore, do more for the infrastructure and for housing and, above all, they could start thinking about an overall education system for technology and management that is not improvised from Government to Government but becomes part of our internal education system in exactly the same way as it did in Germany in the 19th century and as it is in Japan at the end of the 20th century. That can be the only answer. We must face the facts and not just engage in inter-party squabbles about whose figures were right and whose went up the most. We must look at the real basis of the situation and then start dealing with it.

5.7 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who said so much with which I would agree, little with which I would disagree and some of which I shall mention later. I hope, nevertheless, that he will understand if I say that the pleasure of his speeches comes not just from listening to them but from their visual impact. We have a unique advantage that is denied to those who read the right hon. Gentleman's speeches afterwards—that of watching the miserable, downcast, scowling looks on the faces of all those on the Treasury Bench as the right hon. Gentleman's speech proceeds. At no stage did I see anything other than a deep scowl from the Chancellor. I look forward to the coming of television to the House so that the rest of the British public can enjoy the spectacle.

I am sure that I speak for many other hon. Members in wishing the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) an early recovery. That is no reflection on the speech made by the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), but we always look forward to the speeches of the hon. Member for Dagenham and we always listen attentively. We shall miss him in this debate.

This Budget has been described as "the boring Budget" and no doubt that is an apt description, but the apparent torpor of the Budget should not be allowed to hide the basic realities of the situation in which the British economy finds itself. The realities which should be addressed by the Budget include a structural trade deficit, declining competitiveness, an unacceptable rate of unemployment and rising underlying inflation. Nor should this boring Budget be allowed to hide the injustices contained in the Government's strategy, which have been touched upon by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup.

This was certainly not a Budget for the low paid as more of them will now pay tax. It was not a Budget for those on benefit, nor was it a Budget for families. Those who have seen child benefit effectively cut again will recognise that only too powerfully.

The changes to the pensioners' earnings rule and to national insurance contributions are welcome—the Secretary of State for Employment touched upon them—but they do not go far enough. It was depressing to read recent newspaper reports of the Chancellor saying that he had finished reforming and cutting national insurance contributions. Much more could be done in that regard to relieve the poverty trap and make a substantial contribution towards the proper integration of the tax and benefit system.

Despite a boring Budget, we still have a gambling Chancellor who is prepared to gamble our long-term prospects to leave himself enough room for tax cuts in the run-up to the next general election. It is perfectly clear that that is the purpose of the Budget. As the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said, the Chancellor is prepared to gamble with the quality of our life, preferring to satisfy a narrow materialism today rather than to prepare Britain for tomorrow.

I believe that it was the Chief Secretary who said last week that living standards were the final arbiter of economic performance, and no doubt they rightly have a part to play. The rapid rises in domestic consumption are clearly a key ingredient in the Government's electoral calculations, but the Government will soon have to change their tune because the notion that there is more to life than

personal material acquisition is not an attractive one to a growing number of people. Many of those who have done best out of Treasury policies now realise that they have to look for something more from Ministers and they are looking for policies which will bring our people together rather than sadly and tragically divide them. They are looking for policies which will correct the dog-eared, down-at-heel nature of public Britain and provide a base for the public goods and services which are essential to the enjoyment of our future prosperity. They are looking for policies which invest in the future because they know that today's tax cuts and consumption become tomorrow's debt burden and trade deficit.

Mr. John Townend: How can the right hon. Gentleman talk about tomorrow's debt burden when we have a Budget surplus of some £14 billion?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman fails to recognise what has happened since last year. The tax cuts and the increase in consumption, which was deliberately encouraged by the Government, have plunged many families into debt. The reason is perfectly clear. The hon. Gentleman will have had a stream of leaflets coming through his door from one bank after another, all saying exactly the same thing—"For goodness sake, don't worry —extend yourself; we will offer you as much credit as you like." That is the reality facing people today.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock) *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: No, I shall not give way as I need to make some progress. The hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) has failed to recognise the way in which the 1988 Budget inflated the burden of debt and the burden of public consumption in Britain.

The Government are now hemmed in on the one hand by last year's folly and on the other by their own inflexible ideology. After the rhetoric is stripped away we find an economy that is peculiarly vulnerable and weak. It gives me no pleasure to remind the House of our fundamental economic condition, just as my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) did after the 1988 Budget. The Government's refusal to face up to our trade deficit demands that we press the matter vigorously.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup was right to say that we should look at the whole picture. It is clear that since 1979 the growth of manufacturing output has been the slowest for any similar period since the war. Import penetration has soared and our share of world trade has continued to decline, at times dramatically. Net investment in manufacturing has also fallen. The record under the present Government compares unfavourably with any similar period under their predecessors in the 1960s and the 1970s, never mind with the level of achievement for which we need to aim if we are to compete effectively in the world markets of the 1990s.

The astonishing fact is that the economic problems now facing the Government look remarkably familiar to anyone who remembers the 1950s and 1960s. We are faced with wage rises that are too high, a quality of goods that is too low, under-investment in people and under-achievement in world markets. All those old familiar symptoms of the British disease remain unconquered. The major, age-old weaknesses of the British economy are revealed as having remained uncorrected by the so-called "Thatcher miracle". In some cases they have got far worse.

Those deficiencies are now covered in the gloss of spurious economic theory and dismissed as irrelevant or as a blip. They are rationalised away by this most intellectually agile of Chancellors and by the flexible use of forecasting, but hon. Members should study the Red Book. The fulfilment of the Chancellor's strategy and cosy predictions requires a trust in his forecasting skill which, in view of his record, amounts to little less than a mystical act of faith. This is a complacency that home-owners and businesses are paying for every day in higher interest rates and rising prices.

To fulfil the Red Book predictions, we are required to believe in a dramatic fall in the growth rate of non-oil imports from 14·5 per cent. to 4·5 per cent. At the same time, we are required to believe that the growth of non-oil exports will rise from 3 per cent. to 7·5 per cent. at a time when demand is falling. Even this ambitious target, incidentally, would still leave the United Kingdom with a declining share of world trade.

I wonder whether the Treasury is, even yet, ready to acknowledge the seriousness of the balance of payments problem. For a time, we were told that it did not matter, and the propaganda fed to us was that such things correct themselves in the modern world. Now all the evidence points to a massive, long-term structural problem which is being reflected in the record deficits.

I wish Ministers had listened more to the 1985 report from the Select Committee in the other place under Lord Aldington, which looked at these long-term problems of overseas trade. I recall that the Chancellor used some fairly unpleasant and sometimes hysterical comments to damage and dismiss that report. It is a matter of record, however, that their Lordships' forecasts have fared a good deal better than those of the Chancellor.

Mr. Marlow: The right hon. Gentleman is saying that he is much gloomier than my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. He implies that demand is still too high and that he wants to spend more on services. Therefore, he must want to increase Government expenditure. What does the right hon. Gentleman think of the Budget judgment? Does he feel that my right hon. Friend has been too generous in cutting national insurance or does he feel that taxes should be higher? Would he like Government expenditure to be higher? What would he have done? Will he let the House know because he is inconsistent at the moment?

Mr. Ashdown: Clearly the hon. Gentleman has not listened to the submissions which my party has made. We have made a perfectly clear statement about this. The Government are doing much to increase inflation by raising utility prices. We believe that that money could be used much more effectively in different ways. To give the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) a straight answer, there is a case for selective and careful investment, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said, which would require expenditure but whose inflationary impact would be minimal in comparison with the utility price rises which have stimulated inflation.

The question now is how long will the exchange dealers be persuaded by short-term, hot, high interest rates to ignore the long-term underlying weaknesses in the economy? As the trade deficit mounts inexorably, month after month, how long will short-term high interest rates maintain confidence on the foreign exchanges? As

[Mr. Ashdown]

numerous commentators have pointed out, there must be a real danger of a sterling crisis at some point in the not too distant future with all the attendant inflationary problems and a crisis of confidence.

In the Red Book we are told that interest rates rise only because of the behaviour of narrow money. Everyone knows that that is nonsense. Interest rates rise when the markets are alerted to our real economic state by the trade figures and also when the Government and the Chancellor feel under pressure.

In the 1950s and 1960s, we had stop-go Tory Chancellors. In the 1970s, Tony Barber was the cut-and-run Chancellor. We now have the handout-and-hike Chancellor who hands out tax cuts one year and hikes up interest rates the next.

Our balance of payments deficit will more than likely grow even larger than the Government have suggested. In a recent editorial the *Financial Times* stated:

"It is easy to envisage a current account deficit not far short of £20 billion, in both this year and next."

However, the Government lack the policy instruments or the political will to tackle those problems.

Mr. Janman: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me. I have given way many times and I would like to get on. I will not give way.

The Chancellor wants to fiddle the figures by removing mortgage interest rates from the retail price index. He will be remembered as the Chancellor of dearer mortgages and cheaper cigarettes. The manipulation of the RPI through the Chancellor's new policy on excise duties, amounting to a 0·4 per cent. reduction in the RPI brought about by what amounts to a tax cut of more than £1 billion in those duties, will cut little ice, but it will undermine the Health Service.

Inflation is predicted to be 8 per cent. That is already higher than in any of our major competitor countries in the European monetary system, or in the United States or Japan. Despite all the apparent emphasis on defeating inflation, there are abundant signs of yet more complacency. Last November the Government announced a new policy of "bearing down on inflation". Since then, they have been responsible for its inexorable rise.

The Red Book states:

"It is the Government's policy not to accommodate inflationary impulses."

Instead, the are busy adding to them by deliberately raising utility prices to fatten the calves for privatisation. That is policy-making gone crazy. The value of our money has halved since the Conservative party came to office. Under the Tories, prices have risen by 100 per cent. Over the same period, prices have risen by 68 per cent. in the United States, by 30 per cent. in West Germany and by 25 per cent. in Japan. We have an extra zero on inflation, but it is a zero at the wrong end of the number. It is 100 per cent.

The Chancellor has claimed that inflation is the judge and jury of economic policy. If that is so, he stands in the dock, with the verdict passed, awaiting sentence.

Mr. Janman: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman has made it clear that he wants to make progress and is not giving way.

Mr. Ashdown: The Chancellor has refused to take advantage of closer European economic and monetary integration. That should be a central question facing our economic policy. The Chancellor has indicated his support of our membership of the EMS. He should have the courage of his convictions and battle it out with the Prime Minister. Membership of the EMS would be a far more effective discipline against inflation than any of the monetary routes down which he now seeks to take us.

The British economic problem can be summed up partly in terms of inflation and of the crippling use of high interest rates to keep the currency buoyant. However, we must also consider the impact of the Government's long-term and systematic starvation of the supply side of our economy. The Conservatives now preside over what is becoming a second-class industrial nation which is in danger of drifting down even further to third class status. If we are not careful and are not prepared to act quickly, the opportunities of oil and of world growth may disappear for the foreseeable future.

The forecast figures in the Budget are an admission of the defeat of the supply side miracle of the Prime Minister's years even as we approach 1992 and the single market. The Department of Trade and Industry's slogan was "Europe Open for Business". It might have been better as "Britain Open for Imports".

This year we needed a Budget for industry. If we are to have the right products and services of the highest quality marketed effectively across the world, the Government must work with industry and commerce, not against it. It takes something to provoke the Confederation of British Industry into talking about the "locust years". That something was the disastrous state of our supply-side policies. That is why my hon. Friends and I recommended a package of careful and prudent investment in Britain's future.

It is about time that the Government realised that a supply-side agenda that consists only of cutting taxes and bashing the unions has run its course. The new supply-side agenda for Britain must concentrate on training, regional policy, research and development, involvement and shared communication in British companies, improving standards of quality and safety and developing the new technologies. Taken together, those require a new approach from the Government, which the Conservatives seem incapable of realising.

We are lagging way behind our competitor nations in training. To match France and Japan, we should be training an extra 50,000 skilled engineers a year. To match Germany, we should be training 80,000. Far too many companies in Britain are currently looking to move their operations elsewhere in Europe because the skills that they need are not available in sufficient numbers in this country. Human talent is our value-added asset and by this standard Britain is still going backwards in comparison with the rest of the world. A supply-side strategy is required to fill that vacuum.

There must be a change which will make the care of our environment a Government priority. We all understand that the Prime Minister's new enthusiasm for the planet should be given time to show itself in action. However, the Budget was the fairest test of that. Do the Government

mean what they say about the green agenda? Do they understand what they are saying? Are they prepared to put their money where their mouths are?

The Budget contained only one gesture towards environmental issues, that with regard to unleaded petrol. True to form, it was quickly swallowed by the oil companies. Apart from that, there was nothing. There were no incentives for improvements in waste and pollution controls. No investment in environmental protection, but there were cuts in the energy efficiency office and in insulation grants. There was no investment in relevant research and there was opposition to Community initiatives which would apply energy audits to domestic property.

The Government are brilliant at telling other people what to do, but hopeless at accepting their responsibilities for the environment. An environmental Government would have produced an environmental Budget.

However much Conservative Members might delude themselves, and no matter whether some people have benefited from previous tax cuts, the Thatcher years will not be remembered with affection by the British people in years to come. Those years represent years of under-investment in public transport and years of running down the staff in the public services. They represent years of hostility towards research which led to a brain drain from Britain which the *New York Times* described last year as the greatest movement of intellectual capital into the United States since the Jewish intellectuals left Germany in the 1930s.

That is what is happening as a result of research cuts in Britain today. At best, it may be said that a certain shabbiness in public goods might be endured for the benefit of some. More likely, people will look back in wonder at our collective failure in the 1980s to take advantage of the unique, oil-led opportunities that we had to build a more sustainable industrial base. They will wonder why it was that obvious, massive public support for investment in health, education and the basic infrastructure was ignored at great cost to industry, to the public and to the future. They will dismiss a Budget that fiddled at the edges of the issues and failed to tackle those that really mattered.

We on these Benches believe in the virtues of competition and in the power of the market. However, we fear that, by refusing to play their part on the supply side, this hands-off Tory Government are turning what should be an economy of invention, excellence and quality into a low-wage and low-skill economy that has a tin-tray industrial base.

Sustainable growth in the future depends on investment in the future now. Excellence in the economy depends upon the excellence of our people. The Budget reveals that the Chancellor has not learnt that lesson after six years. They have been correctly described as the "locust years" —the years in which we failed to invest in the future, to heal the divisions in our country, and to take the steps necessary to protect our environment.

5.31 pm

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): I wish to speak briefly on the Budget, as my first and modest contribution to the proceedings of the House. Before I do so, I pay tribute to my predecessor as Member for Richmond, Sir Leon Brittan, and will say a few words about the constituency that he represented so well. I am fortunate to be able to do both with uninhibited pleasure.

Most new Members elected at by-elections speak of a predecessor who was distinguished but is sadly deceased, but I am delighted that my predecessor, who made such a major contribution to the House and who was so highly regarded by his constituents, is very much alive and well and is by all accounts doing an extremely good job as a European Commissioner. There is no doubt that he will be sorely missed in Richmond—a constituency that he served with extreme thoroughness and attention to detail. Even when he was Home Secretary, he never missed a weekend surgery and never failed to involve himself in as many aspects as possible of life in north Yorkshire. He set the highest standards of service to his constituency, and I will be doing well if I can live up to them.

All I can say is that, over the coming months, I shall try to be inspired by Sir Leon's example, rather than being intimidated by it. It would be all too easy for the new Member of Parliament for Richmond to be intimidated by the past. I number among my constituents not only Sir Leon Brittan but his predecessor Sir Timothy Kitson and my noble Friend Lord Tranmire, the former Sir Robin Turton, who sat in this House for 45 years for Thirsk and Malton, part of which is now included in my constituency.

Those former Members will be very valuable sources of advice. Some might observe that they will also be rather varied sources of advice. However, the fact that they remain deeply rooted in the area says something about the strong attachment of Members of Parliament to Richmond and its surrounding area, because of both the natural appeal of its countryside and the independent character of its people.

It is almost unnecessary for me to tell the House about my constituency, because many right hon. and hon. Members are already surprisingly familiar with it. I am one of the few Members of Parliament, along with those representing constituencies in the east end of London, who has a regular television series about his constituency. Also, many right hon. and hon. Members have spent more time in my constituency in the past few months than I have spent in the House. Right hon. and hon. Members could be forgiven for believing that the right hon. Members for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) had taken up permanent residence in my constituency. They certainly provided a valuable off-season boost to the local tourist trade. They will always be welcomed back, though perhaps they are the only two tourists in the whole nation who I hope will spend less money on their next visits than they did on their last.

I hope that all those who visited Richmond during the by-election had an opportunity to enjoy the diverse nature of the region. Although always associated with the magnificent hillside town of Richmond itself and with the splendid dales to the west of it, my constituency embraces a rich breadth of physical geography and human activity —from the hill farmers in the dales and on the edges of the moors, to the lowland arable farmers around Northallerton and Thirsk; from the 20 industrial estates that have brought a growing sense of enterprise and availability of employment to the area, to the commuters in the north-east who work on Teesside and to the large number of people who come to the area to retire. Richmond's variety defies simple description.

[Mr. William Hague]

In addition, my constituency has a huge military presence. The area is proud to host one of the country's largest Army garrisons at Catterick, and now we also have a major air defence base at RAF Leeming. That variety, and the popularity of north Yorkshire as a place to live, means that behind the idyllic image are mounting stresses and strains, both economic and social. Much has been said about the plight of the inner cities in the 1980s, but I fear that much will have to be said in the 1990s about the strains of rural life.

Although my constituency, like the rest of the country, has grown more prosperous in the past 10 years, and although unemployment has fallen by 40 per cent. over the past three years, one must not overlook the depressed incomes of the farming community, the shortage of housing for local people—ironically coinciding with housing development on a scale that threatens traditional village life—the tendency for younger people to move elsewhere, and the appalling and increasing pollution of some of the nation's most beautiful rivers. Those are not the subjects of today's debate. Nevertheless, I hope to help ensure that they will not go unnoticed or unaddressed in the House.

My constituents are interested in all those matters, but they are interested also in the Budget—despite all the efforts of the media to convince us that it was boring. Like me, my constituents approve of the Budget because of its most obvious characteristic—that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer used what room for manoeuvre he had to help those people whose efforts were most unfairly penalised by the existing tax structure. I strongly welcome the changes my right hon. Friend made to national insurance contributions and his abolition of the hated pensioners' earnings rule. I believe that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House believe that the Chancellor did the right thing in the circumstances, and they should have the good grace to say so.

Much of the debate about the economic situation has been taken up with discussing the direction of and the explanations for inflation, interest rates and the public sector surplus. However, that debate has been concerned mainly with the short term—with this year and next year. When I look at the economic background to the Budget, what I find interesting are some of the other economic indicators whose improvement has been strong and marked over a sufficiently long period to become an established trend.

Today, companies' real rate of return is at its highest since the 1960s. Investment has risen twice as fast as consumption for the past seven years. Labour productivity has risen faster in the 1980s even than in the 1960s. That should bring home to us the fact that, whatever the arguments about last year's or this year's forecast, the fundamental indicators of the economy's future performance and output are better than they have been within the political lifetime of most right hon. and hon. Members, and within the entire lifetime of some of them.

Maintaining that progress requires lower levels of inflation and of short-term interest rates—otherwise, the increased confidence that is at the centre of all those improvements will disappear. However, no one has argued convincingly that there is a better policy for bringing inflation down than that which the Chancellor is pursuing. Most criticism has been of the "We wouldn't have started from here" variety, but it is incumbent on those who would do the Chancellor's job for him to say what they would do if they had to start from here.

Nevertheless, it must be recognised that we face over the next year inflation at a higher level than we would have wished. Some people are less able than others to cope with that inflation, and some are particularly worried about it. Foremost among them are elderly people who are wholly or largely dependent on their basic state pension. The Government have done a great deal to help many pensioners in several ways. The abolition of the earnings rule will help many who are still able to earn, and lower inflation over the lifetime of the Government has helped those with savings.

Last autumn's announcement of an additional increase this year for the oldest pensioners will help those in that category. Huge numbers, however, still depend heavily on the basic state pension. In the coming year, they face a pension increase indexed to, but lagging behind, RPI inflation—which may in any case understate the inflation that they experience, as their own expenditure is disproportionately weighted towards some large items such as household rates and basic utilities, the cost of which for most people is rising faster than the retail price index.

I hope that in the coming year the Government will have the pensioner in the forefront of their collective mind and, as far as the economy permits, will feel able by some means to help still more pensioners by doing somewhat more than simply indexing their basic pensions to the RPI. If they can do that, they will avoid much dissatisfaction and some genuine hardship.

That is the point that I wanted to make—within the context of strong and whole-hearted support for the economic and budgetary policies of Her Maesty's Government. I thank the House for its indulgence, and hope that there will be many more occasions, Madam Deputy Speaker, on which I may try to catch your eye.

5.40 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) spoke about his predecessor, Sir Leon Brittan, who is continuing to play a prominent role in public life. He spoke well of Sir Leon; he spoke also of other distinguished former Members of the House whom some of us had forgotten were still his constituents. I urge the hon. Gentleman to remember that when he comes to seek their advice he will be dealing with a two-edged sword, and that he accepts only advice that, after consideration, he considers worth pursuing. He spoke with clarity, and his interesting speech was well received by the House.

Of late there has been a tradition of rather more controversial maiden speeches than we used to hear—a tradition that has extended to the toleration of such speeches. The hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks returned to an earlier and, I think, more acceptable tradition, and perhaps because of that he won greater acceptance today. I am sure that he will come to enjoy the rough and tumble of the House, and I hope that his first contribution will provide an easy entry into it.

The most depressing part of the Red Book is the forecast for the balance of payments deficit. The whole

year is expected to produce yet another devastating £14 billion. That is more serious than any previous balance of payments crisis. We do not now have the large number of manufacturing industries that provided us in the past with the capacity to turn from home trade to export. The main example was the motor car industry, but there have been many others. In my constituency there were many small to medium-sized companies, paying well above the national average, with unemployment below the national average. We lost one third of those skilled firms between 1979 and 1981. They had the capacity to produce for export if they found that the home market was not able to take their goods, but that has now changed considerably.

I have been asked—as, perhaps, have other hon. Members—what is the relationship between the £14 billion public sector debt repayment and the £14 billion balance of payments deficit. The unknowledgeable assumed that there was a strong connection; others, with a little more understanding, realised that the two had no relationship. Some, with even greater understanding, recognised that there was after all a close relationship between the two: it is the £14 billion deficit that makes it impossible to spend the £14 billion debt repayment sum. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, with money to spend, is unable to spend it because of the external problems that he faces.

The Chancellor can justifiably be criticised for his failure to deal with the economy's long-term prospects. He can fairly be censured for failing to deal not only with the balance of payments but with the problems of manufacturing industry, and the lost advantages of North sea oil, which we are unlikely to regain because we are once more on a level field, with our advantages lost.

The Chancellor can also be censured for his failure to control the short term. It is more than six months since fears of a credit explosion—frequently expressed—were finally confirmed. Two years ago, on 10 February 1987, the *Financial Times* was able to say that more was required of the Chancellor than high interest rates, that monetary policy had flitted from one rationale to another in the past few years like a bee in search of honey, and the task was not helped by continuing to trivialise a major deviation from the Chancellor's own target for the economy. It also said:

"The Department of Trade and Industry said that outstanding consumer credit from finance houses, retailers and credit card companies, totalled £23·7 billion in December 1986."

That was over two years ago; there is nothing new in it. What is new is the failure to react to it. This was not a blip, and the action that the Chancellor took was inadequate and slow in its effects.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) talked about stop-go. At least in the days of stop-go we could be sure of the results. They would be dramatic and immediate: purchase tax or VAT increases, a raising of the tobacco duties, increases in taxes on alcohol, petrol prices raised, spending on roads cut. We can see from the state of the roads today that cuts have been made in good times as well as bad, although North sea oil has been abundant.

All those announcements about tobacco, alcohol and petrol took effect at 6 pm on the day of the Chancellor's statement. The result was a highly visible and dramatic appreciation of the change in our economic fortunes. After a few weeks, patterns of spending changed and the economy promptly slowed down. On this occasion, we talked about measures in the autumn. The months went past—we had Christmas and the new year, and now we are in March—and still we have not seen any such effect.

I was once a frequent critic of sudden changes, mainly because of the damage done to our manufacturing industry, which took the brunt of such measures. The present position is different. With the decline of our manufacturing base, the burden of immediate measures would be carried rather more by importers and retailers. There was therefore a strong case for action in the autumn. The Chancellor, however, ruled it out, to the disadvantage of industry and house buyers and ensuring that our economic problems would outlast the year. Failing to administer the short sharp shock was, I believe, a tactical error of the worst kind—waiting for something to turn up—and we shall have to live with the consequences.

Of even greater importance than the tactical failure, however, has been the Chancellor's failure to plan for the long term. He had the opportunity to use the breathing space with which North sea oil provided our balance of payments to help industry and promote training, and to equip the nation to deal with the major problems lying ahead. With the startling growth of world populations, we are destined to be just one of a number of smaller countries. Many more have populations in excess of 100 million, and industrialisation is on the increase elsewhere.

In 1979, with the prospect of the cornucopia of North sea oil, our position appeared enviable and compared favourably, if not with that of Germany and Japan, certainly with that of France and Italy. We were the only country in that group with self-sufficiency in oil. We even had an exportable surplus. Our position could hardly have seemed more attractive, but oil in itself is not enough: only if it can be used sensibly is it a real and lasting benefit. Iran and Iraq have used their advantage disgracefully, Mexico has wasted it, and Britain has squandered it. Meanwhile, Japan and Germany strode on without it.

On the other hand, France and Italy almost seem to have benefited from not possessing this valuable mineral. Those two countries have manufacturing sectors that are highly successful, whereas we have turned, traditionally, to our financial sector that produced rewards that were directly contrary, in a number of cases, to the interests of our productive industries.

The high pound that the City smiles benevolently upon and that the Bank of England believes is crucial to our economic well-being is the deadly affliction of those companies that manufacture. The truth is that, in the long term, manufacturing growth is so much more important than North sea oil. This oil produces so many billion pounds a year which, for a given output, even if its price remained high, would not increase with time. If, however, manufacturing industry is nurtured and encouraged, it grows at a compound rate that leads to an accelerating level of prosperity. That cannot be found in any other kind of industry. Furthermore, that prosperity is enjoyed by all employees and in all the different regions of the country.

Manufacturing industry, however, has been hit very badly. The fact is that 13 per cent. interest rates and an over-valued exchange rate is the recipe that brought about the disasters of 1979 to 1981. The position is not quite so bad now; there was a 17 per cent. interest rate then. That ruined the domestic market, and a $2·40 pound ruined the export market. We hear nonsense about there being no problems with an over-valued exchange rate. If we are

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

interested in the commercial future of our country but rule out price—the dominant factor in selling our goods—we are being absurd. Price is crucial.

Mr. Janman: Throughout the lifetime of the last Labour Government output per person in manufacturing industry increased by 5·8 per cent. Between 1987 and the fourth quarter of 1988, it increased by 10·8 per cent.—nearly double what happened throughout the period when the last Labour Government were in office.

Mr. Sheldon: Interventions of that kind are pretty useless. The hon. Gentleman should not make such an intervention in a serious debate. He should understand that we are considering imports and exports. Manufacturing exports have declined; manufacturing imports have increased. That has led to our country's prospects being put in serious jeopardy. If our prices are higher than they ought to be, we shall sell fewer of our goods.

That has happened in my constituency. One third of the medium-sized firms in my constituency have disappeared. Companies in Germany, Japan and all over the world closed their doors to our exports. We could not live with 17 per cent. interest rates and a $2·40 pound. I fear that a number of them will not be very comfortable with a 13 per cent. interest rate and a $1·70 pound. It is a ruinous combination. The Chancellor of the Exchequer ought to be ashamed of presiding over it.

As for European monetary union, just by chance I happened to speak with three directors of the German Bundesbank. They had the same message. They want European monetary union so that bankers will be able to control the monetary aggregates. That is similar to what the Chancellor of the Exchequer wanted in 1977. He wanted a law to be enacted that would give power to the Bank of England to decide the levels of monetary stability. The Minister of State, Treasury at that time, my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), replied to the debate. The Chancellor of the Exchequer wanted legislation that would enable the bankers to do even more than the Bundesbank allows.

We nationalised the Bank of England in 1945. We were determined that bankers ought to be subordinated to democratic direction, which means Government direction. Of all the privatisation measures announced by the Government, no mention has been made of denationalising the Bank of England, and for a very good reason. The Treasury sometimes takes a different view of economic policy from the Bank of England. The relations between the two are sensitive, as they should be. However, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer decides on the policy, it is the Governor of the Bank of England who has to implement much of it, and it is the Treasury that decides. At one time, the Treasury had an inadequate knowledge of the markets and of the operations of the Bank of England. Its knowledge has improved greatly in recent years. The eyes and ears of the Bank of England are always important, but they do no play quite the same role as they did a decade or more ago.

Those who see dangers in European monetary union are not anti-Europe; nor are they pro or anti any other kind of grouping. However, we feel strongly about the dangers of domination by bankers. In a more integrated Europe there is a threat that, in the absence of political agreement, the power of the central bank might become dominant. Irrespective of whether there ever was a bankers' ramp in the pre-war years, the control of our economic policy cannot be left in the hands of those who are unaccountable and who, moreover, have been known to display certain prejudices that are not identical to those that might be expressed on either side of the Chamber. More than all that is the question of economic power. Bankers cannot be given that kind of authority.

Those who say that it works well in Germany should not assume that a transplant is always successful. The institutions of different countries owe so much to coventions, history and social relationships that they cannot readily be transferred from one country to another —still less from one country to a supranational authority. Those who say that we should have our own representative on the board of the central bank—a supra-European Bundesbank—must accept the reality that that person would be a banker, too, and, like those he joined, would rapidly come to the view that all the important economic decisions are best taken by bankers.

It is for that reason that, however fast one may wish to move towards greater integration in Europe, the transfer of economic power cannot precede common political agreement and common political power. There are no short cuts. Those who seek an easy way into economic and political integration within the Community are wrong on a number of matters, but on this matter I believe that they are dangerously wrong. There has been so little reference in the Budget debates to that important question that I thought it right to include something about it.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is a wise man; he does not know what to do, so the best thing is to do nothing. I am a little less charitable. Another back-handed compliment is that I believe that the Chancellor is a clever man. He has succeeded in pleasing his party for six years, but I believe that he has failed in his long-term economic policy.

5.57 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) on his good maiden speech. It is traditional for a maiden speaker to refer to his constituency. My hon. Friend brought his constituency into the Chamber. I could see the hills, the dales and the valleys. For a few minutes in this otherwise rather dry debate, I enjoyed the pleasures of Richmond. I was also touched by his advocacy of the importance of looking after senior citizens, one of whom I now am. I hope that we shall hear more from him in the years to come.

As the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) recognised, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's room for manoeuvre is limited. The fight has to be against inflation. Like all literate and numerate commentators, he recognised that fact. There may come a day when a Budget could reflect what my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) advocated. It sounded to me rather like the Yellow Books that Keynes wrote for Lloyd George when prices were falling, but the time is not yet. Had we had a Budget that reflected those views, I suspect that there would have been a run on the pound of a pretty sensational dimension.

We have to recognise, like it or not and whatever the causes, that the fight against inflation must take priority. That is intellectually understood, but we in this country do not have a gut feeling about inflation in the way that the Germans and others have. That is natural, and the markets know it. Our rhetoric on this subject is therefore suspect. The markets want to know where the beef is. Determination to keep up interest rates until inflation has been tamed is the most important proof, and the key. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has said it loud and clear, and his commitment and that of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is the best gauge that it will be the answer.

There is, perhaps, a longer haul ahead of us than some observers think. I think that we might find the situation at the end of the year more uncomfortable than we expect. Monetarist high priests such as Friedman have always made it clear that the consequences of their policy would take quite a long time to come through. We may find that that is the case. The question is whether we can do more to meet the problem of inflation.

I should like to ask a question which rather follows on what the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne has just said. Since the general election, my right hon. and hon. Friends have taken credit for past privatisations, brought forward the privatisation of water and electricity, and talked about the railways and coal as possible targets. As the right hon. Gentleman said, there is an important omission. It is curious that nobody has talked about restoring to the Bank of England the independence which it had before 1948. It did not have complete independence. Like the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chief Justice, the Governor of the Bank of England was appointed by the Government of the day but, once appointed, he was very much his own man. The same is true of the Federal Reserve Bank in the United States and the Bundesbank in Germany. Would not a return to that arrangement be a strong guarantee that no British Government would return to an inflationary path?

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has broad shoulders as well as breadth in other respects, and on him rests a heavy responsibility for both fiscal and monetary policy. It is a great burden, even for him. Is there a case for separating the two? Fiscal policy—taxation and the rest—is political in character. But it could be argued that monetary policy is professional. If we commit ourselves to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister calls honest money, there cannot be much difference of opinion about what it is. Should we go back to it? Should we try to institutionalise our counter-inflationary policies by giving the Bank of England greater independence?

I ask those questions in the context of our fight against inflation, as they are the only things that I can think of which might add to the clear commitment of my right hon. Friends the Chancellor and the Prime Minister. Long as I hope to see them reign, they cannot be eternal—much as we might like that. I do not use the word "we" in any facetious sense. Ought we not to be thinking about the longer term?

Is it possible that greater independence allowed to the Bank of England might help us in the international sphere? It is inevitable, and right, that we will have a lot of discussion about a possible European currency, a possible European reserve bank or a possible European central bank. The Delors committee reports in June. I do not think that decisions will be taken at once. The matter is bound to be controversial, but I wonder whether it is possible that the depoliticising, if I my use that horrible word, of our monetary policy, by moving responsibility for it from the Treasury to the Bank of England, would help co-ordinate monetary policy in Europe.

There is a school of thought, which I rather favour although I am not sure that I am right, that we ought to make the European currency unit, the ECU, legal tender in parallel with our own currency. Such a move would involve considerable professional problems. If it were adopted in all Community countries, it would call for consideration at a very professional level.

Would such a change help to depoliticise the Bank of England in a wider context? We have meetings of the Group of Five or Seven—would it help in deliberations with the other banks concerned? It would certainly align us with the two giants—the Federal Reserve Bank and the Bundesbank.

In the old days, the Bank of England had a great reputation. It was enhanced, if anything, in 1931 when we went off the gold standard. The general view of pundits in the City was that the heavens would fall in. But not at all —they did not even dip. The Bank of England went on to create the sterling area; and sterling became a reserve currency which, within two or three years, was accepted by all countries in the world. I shall not go into the details of what the Bank did, but what it did was little short of a miracle by the standards of those days. No other bank in Europe has that experience. Even the Federal Reserve Bank, which inherited a currency, has never created a new one. It was quite extraordinary.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: It was Winston Churchill who brought Britain back on to the gold standard as a result of the Bank's involvement. The right hon. Gentleman is saying that the Bank just corrected its previous mistake, which was a grave error that led to some of the country's many problems during the early 1930s.

Mr. Amery: I would be happy to discuss with the right hon. Gentleman whether Churchill was right to make the pound look the dollar in the face. I am talking about 1931 when we were forced, rightly, to go off the gold standard and the Bank of England picked up the consequences which many people thought would lead to world collapse. That did not happen. The skill of the Bank of England made a currency, which was backed not by gold but by the reserves of the other members of the sterling area, a world currency which was accepted and, until the 1960s, remained a world currency. No other bank in Europe, and not even the Federal Reserve Bank, has the same experience. Do we still have the expertise to do that? Maybe some of the expertise has been hived off to the Treasury. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will have that in mind.

Could any Government happily delegate control of monetary policy? I can see that it would be awkward to surrender such control—it would be awkward for my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary and for my right hon. Friends the Chancellor and the Prime Minister. I am asking questions, not making proposals. The return of inflation, which we thought we had got under control, suggests that the time has come to ask these questions. If I am right, the time has also come to ask the Government to consider them seriously.

6.9 pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): I was fascinated by the suggestions of the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) that monetary policy could be cured by some administrative changes and that one of those changes should be that the Bank of England should be given an independence which it has not had since it was nationalised. As he began his argument, I thought that he would suggest that we should return to the gold standard at the same time. After all, it was only 10 years ago that Sir William Rees-Mogg, the smutty man in charge of the Broadcasting Standards Council, wrote a pamphlet saying that all our economic ills could be cured by a return to God and the gold standard. I am not sure that doing things by hunch, by guess and by God is the right way to deal with economic problems and I shall not follow the right hon. Member for Pavilion down the line of historical fantasy.

There is broad agreement in the country, if not in the House, that the 1989 Budget is the price that we have to pay for the 1988 Budget. That price includes listening to the Chancellor's words about lower economic growth, wage restraints, a balance of payments crisis, high inflation and more unemployment. Although the responsibility for the current mess, muddle and moronity in economic affairs lies entirely with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I felt sorry for him as he delivered his Budget. As the blood drained from his face and his eyebrows drooped, I thought about the excrutiating pain he must be suffering—that haughty, ebullient, cocky, arrogant Chancellor, forced at the Dispatch Box to disport himself in such a diffident fashion, and produce such a demeaning, piddling little Budget which has made him the object of political scorn and economic contempt. As he sat down, I was reminded of the words of President Lyndon Baines Johnson, when he listened to a speech by Richard Nixon. He turned to the press corps and said:

"Boys, I may not know much, but I know chicken shit from chicken salad."

The Chancellor began his speech by talking about the enterprise culture and telling us about the Thatcher economic revolution of the past 10 years. Recently I have spent a great deal of time examining the Thatcher economic revolution of the past 10 years and comparing our economic performance with the country's economic performance during the 10 years preceding 1979. The results are quite interesting. Those who salivate at the thought of the Thatcher revolution claim that it has brought about a sea-change in our economic performance, but my analysis shows that the Thatcher revolution is an illusion, a mirage, and a will-o'-the-wisp that belongs to the media world of make believe.

The theory of the Thatcher revolution was to have been monetarist. In practice, it has been a mish mash of monetarism and crypto-Keynesianism. At first the neo-monetarism theorists of the revolution told us that they would control inflation by controlling M3. When the evidence confounded the theorists, they turned to M1, and when that did not work they turned progressively to a variety of monetary indicators—M0, M2, M4, M5, PSL1, PSL2 and DCE. In the 1989 Budget the Chancellor has gone back to M0. Needless to say, none of those monetary indicators did what was claimed of them and M0 will not do what was claimed for it. In theoretical terms, the revolution has turned out to be Grecian tragedy and only the Chancellor's pride prevents him from admitting that.

According to conventional media wisdom, high levels of economic growth in the 10 Thatcher years have brought about the enterprise culture, better management and more hard work. According to conventional media wisdom, low economic growth is a thing of the past. Alan Budd, a Thatcher apologist and professor of economics, and director of the centre for economic forecasting at the London Business school, argued in volume 2, No. 2 of the "Contemporary Record":

"The Conservatives could look back to 10 years prior to 1979 when GDP had grown at an average rate of 2·2 per cent . . . Since the second quarter of 1981; GDP growth has averaged 3·4 per cent. a year."

Even the most stupid member of the stupid party can see the trick. Thatcher did not come to power during the second quarter of 1981; the Conservative Government were elected in 1979. The average rate of growth in GDP since 1979 is 1·8 per cent. rather than 3·4 per cent. and is less than in the 10 years preceding 1979. Professor Budd also ignored entirely the contribution of oil and gas production on the United Kingdom continental shelf to economic growth since 1981. The figures show that without oil and gas production virtually all the economic growth would have been wiped out.

In 1983, oil and gas production accounted for 6 per cent. of gross national product—twice the rate of economic growth for that year. On average, in the years 1982-87—the only reason I stop at 1987 is that I cannot obtain any figures for 1988—oil and gas production more than accounted for all the economic growth in Britain. We should remember that prior to 1979 there was virtually no oil and gas production in the United Kingdom.

So what kind of revolution is it? After 10 years there has been no growth other than that from a God-given source, and not even Thatcher can claim that she is God. Even sanctification will probably have to await her death. After 10 years we have just surpassed the level of manufacturing output that existed at the beginning of 1979. As North sea oil and gas revenues and production diminish, and a balance of payments crisis of super proportions hits us, the Thatcher revolution will be seen by the public and by history as little more than a chimera.

I read incessantly that one of the major characteristics of the enterprise culture and the Thatcher revolution is low taxation. It is said that Thatcher lets the people spend more of their own money, that the Tories are the party of low inflation and that Labour is the party of high taxation. I hate to say it, but it is a whopping great lie. The truth is the reverse. Thatcher takes more money from people and lets them spend less than Labour did. The statistics show that the Tories are the party of high taxation. *[Interruption.]* I hear the laughter of the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) who accompanied me to Tokyo. Apologists of the Thatcher revolution, of whom he is one, talk only about income tax and avoid all mention of VAT, national insurance, royalties and rates because the figures show that, after a difficult start, the Labour Government brought down taxation as a proportion of GDP. Whereas Labour took only 33·9 per cent. of gross domestic product in taxation in 1978-79, in the current tax year the Conservative Government are taking some 37·4 per cent. of GDP in taxes. In every year that the Conservatives have been in power, they have taken a

higher proportion of GDP in taxes than Labour took in 1978-79. In 1984-85 the Conservative Government took as much as 39·1 per cent. in taxes. I remind the hon. Member for Bridlington that that is our money.

Mr. John Townend: Will the hon. Gentleman be good enough to explain why he and his colleagues systematically vote against every tax reduction that the Government propose? In view of the fact that this year there is a Budget surplus of almost £14 billion, if he were in power, would the hon. Gentleman reduce taxes—a measure that I would support—and which taxes would he reduce?

Mr. Sedgemore: I will set out my taxation policy at the end of my speech if I have time. It is incorrect to say that we have opposed every tax reduction that the Government have made. It does not help an argument in the House for somebody to stand up and make a cheap debating point on the wrong premise. When I studied logic at university I learnt that if one moves from false premises to using false logic, one invariably reaches false conclusions. I invite the hon. Gentleman to study Aristotelian syllogisms and he might be able to make a reasonable intervention.

I was talking about the high proportion of taxation that the Conservative Government have taken in respect of GDP. The figures show that in every year in which the Government have been in office they have taken away a higher percentage of the gross earnings of a married couple with two children when the husband is on average earnings and where child benefit is treated as negative income tax. In 1978-79 only 35·1 per cent. of the average family's earnings was taken in tax, but in the current year, 1988-89, the Government are taking away 37·3 per cent. I am not sure how the hon. Member for Bridlington will justify that.

Moreover, it is much worse than that. John Hills of the London School of Economics has just shown in a pamphlet produced by the Child Poverty Action Group called "Changing Tax" that the Government's cuts in direct taxes have been paid for entirely by cuts in the generosity of benefits. That is another way of saying that the poor are subsidising the rich. According to Hills—I do not think that anybody has challenged his figures—the bottom half of the population has lost £6·5 billion through the failure to uprate benefits since 1978-79 and £5·6 billion of that has gone to the top 10 per cent. of income earners. In other words, the Government have used the benefits and tax systems to target relief on the rich. What sort of miracle is that of which any Government can be proud?

I shall deal now with the national debt and Government borrowing. Inherent in the idea of the enterprise culture —I read it again and again—is the notion that the Government have achieved a miracle by more than balancing the budget and by replacing the public sector borrowing requirement with the public sector debt repayment. That miracle may appeal to the daughter of a Grantham grocer, but if one examines the historical data one can see that it is a miracle that is rather commonplace. If one examines the definition of a miracle, one will see that it cannot be a miracle if it is commonplace.

In 1969-70 Labour had a budget surplus or a PSDR of £1 billion when Roy Jenkins, now Lord Jenkins, was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Budget surpluses or a PSDR also existed in 1947-48 and 1948-49 when times were hard. When the Chancellor said in a speech last year

"For the first time for at least half a century we have a Government in this country that are engaged in repaying the national debt"

he was not telling the truth.

In that respect, he reminds me of Bernard Shaw's "Major Barbara" of whom it was said:

"He knows nothing and he thinks he knows everything. That points clearly to a political career."

I sometimes wonder who carries out the Chancellor's high level statistical research. It could be that one of the major problems of the British economy is that Miss Pamella Bordes has a Treasury pass too. Somebody who does not understand the way in which this place works is producing the Chancellor's statistics.

The miracle of the PSDR palls even more when we realise that Socialist Governments in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Australia have budget surpluses. When the country desperately needs investment in infrastructure, education, science and industry if it is to remain competitive, why do we want to repay the national debt, particularly as it is now at historically low levels in relation to GDP? As my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said, it is our surplus and it should be used to meet our needs.

I shall now deal with savings and investment in the Thatcher revolution. In the enterprise culture and as part of the Thatcher revolution, we are encouraged to save, or at least so we are told. Again, the facts show that the reverse is true. The enterprise culture and the Thatcher revolution have encouraged people to spend, spend, spend and borrow, borrow, borrow. The statistics show that they have well and truly created a loads of money consumerist mentality in which nobody saves at all.

If we define borrowing as negative saving, which is what the Government do, the figures show that when Labour was in power between 1975 and 1979 the personal sector savings ratio averaged 11 per cent. The latest figures show that it is down to just over 1 per cent. The decline in savings—savings are essential to investment unless it is assumed that all our investment is to be done by foreigners —seems to be terminal.

The Thatcher revolution in investment seems to have been still-born in one crucial area of the economy. Surely it is a very small miracle that has left manufacturing investment in 1988 still below the 1979 levels. In 1979 at 1985 prices, £10,136 million was invested in manufacturing. By 1982 that figure had plummeted to £6,360 million. In 1988, at £10,013 million it was still lower than in 1979.

Let us turn to the one big area that always brings a smile to the faces of Conservative Members, the ability of the Government to control inflation relative to everybody else. It is axiomatic to everybody who believes in the theory of the Thatcher revolution that Britain has low inflation. Again, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn said, the figures suggest that the Chancellor is Mr. Inflation himself. The man who promised us zero inflation now has a rate of inflation of 7·5 per cent., which is the highest of all the major industrial countries. It is higher than in America, Canada, Japan, Germany, France and Italy and 50 per cent. higher than the EEC average.

Before any hon. Member stands up and asks, "What happened under the Labour Government?" I can provide them with all the figures for the past 20 years. Every hon. Member knows that 7·5 per cent. inflation is historically high bearing in mind that it is Government-induced and owes nothing to oil price increases or a rise in commodity prices. It is fair to say—I want to be fair—that inflation blipped in 1986 at 3·4 per cent. However, as the figures show, it has never looked like reaching zero. In 1980 under

[Mr. Sedgemore]

this Government it was as high as 18 per cent. In fact, that was the average for 1980 but in 1980 on a year-on-year basis it touched 22 per cent. I am puzzled, as are all my hon. Friends, as to how the Chancellor is to reach zero inflation when he is pushing inflation up. He is pushing up mortgage interest relief and the cost of borrowing. He is supporting the privatisation of the water and electricity industries, the former of which is already pushing prices up by 43 per cent. and the latter of which will push up prices by 10 per cent. per annum.

On that subject, I believe that the Chancellor, like President Nixon, is such a conformer in duplicity that he now lends himself to what Lawrence Peter called the Nixon political principle: if two wrongs do not make a right, try three.

The Chancellor denies that this will be his last Budget. We do not know. I doubt it because the Chancellor, as we all know, wants to go to the City of London. The feelers have been put out by the Treasury and the advertisements have been placed. The entire Government progaganda machine has gone into action. I can inform the House privately that he has not had a single offer from the City of London. In practice, the City, like the country, cannot afford a clapped-out second-rate Chancellor whose luck has run out. To paraphrase a comment made by Adlai Stevenson about Nixon—and I apologise for the constant comparisons between the Chancellor and Nixon—the Budget shows that the Chancellor is the kind of politician who would cut down a redwood tree and then mount the stump for a speech on conservation. It is a bad Budget by a bad Chancellor, so I hope that all hon. Members will oppose it.

6.30 pm

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), with his usual panache, has made a speech, as always, that is offensive to the Minister about whom he is speaking. That is a pity because some of his points could be debated. He accused my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) of making a cheap debating point. That was priceless coming from the hon. Gentleman—definitely a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

Like other hon. Members, I enjoyed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague). I could not help reflecting how different it was from the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). My right hon. Friend's speech was well received by the Opposition, but he should sometimes make himself say something kind and good about the Government and our economic performance. His gratuitous insult to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was inexcusable. When he was talking about exchange rates and interest rates, he said that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor wanted to bring them down, but was stopped. That reflects on the integrity of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. Exchange rates and interest rates are an extremely important matter of principle for my right hon. Friend. Knowing him as I do, I am convinced that if he had been stopped from bringing them down, he would not be Chancellor today. He would never put forward policies with which he did not agree, so I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup will, on reflection, regret having made that remark.

In 1979, the Conservative party made the following two pledges, among others—first, to reduce the standard rate of tax to 25 pence in the pound and, secondly, to abolish the earnings rule for pensioners. I am sure that my hon. Friends will join me in congratulating my right hon. Friend on being the Chancellor who has fulfilled both those pledges. Others of my hon. Friends have already said that the Budget will help the lower paid through the readjustment of national insurance contributions, but none of my hon. Friends has mentioned the help that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has given to charity. It is a great step forward and should be commended. I am delighted that my right hon. Friend has not touched life assurance funds—the only long-term savings that we have in this country—as I believe that it would have been a mistake to make any changes in that respect.

The Opposition always sell Britain short, as did the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch. Every speech from the Opposition denigrates the economy. The Opposition make three points—first, the overseas deficit, secondly, high interest rates and, thirdly, inflation. On the overseas deficit, I wonder how many of our imports are capital goods, how many are commodities and how many are consumer durables. I do not know how the Central Statistical Office works out such figures. One reads in various financial papers and journals that the CSO's margin of error is considerable. Consequently, when we talk of a deficit of, say, £14 billion, that figure may not be accurate and the deficit may be only £10 billion. The journals that I have read maintain that the estimated deficit has been exaggerated. The Treasury should, perhaps, spend some time dealing with that. Even if we take the figure of £14 billion, however, we should not continue to say that there is gloom and doom around the corner. One difference between this deficit and that of the Labour Government is that we have gold and dollar reserves of £29 billion to cover the deficit, so we can easily sustain it even if we do not want it to continue.

I know that Labour Members do not like us to mention the financial position of the last Labour Administration. The Labour party asks for more public expenditure, but it conveniently forgets that when Labour was in office, especially after the meeting with the International Monetary Fund, the Labour Government cut expenditure across the board, including education, roads and the National Health Service. We all want to debate the economy, but hon. Members should not run down the economy and imply that there is a catastrophe around the corner.

With hindsight—I emphasise that word—all hon. Members would agree that in 1988 the reduction in interest rates was too lax, although one must remember that it was preceded by the stock market crash and all the economic pundits were saying that there might be a recession around the corner. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor thought that he should boost consumption and he did so by reducing interest rates. Having seen that a world recession did not occur, some have criticised his taking remedial action. In my view, however, he should not be criticised but congratulated. This Chancellor is not afraid to take unpopular measures, rather than trying to buy votes. If economic policy deviates, action must be taken. It is all

very well for the Opposition to criticise my right hon. Friend. The only time the last Labour Government took action was when the IMF told them to do so.

Mr. Hawkins: I would go further and say that not only did a recession not occur, but that it did not occur because of the measures taken by Britain and the rest of the Group of 7. It is easy for people to say that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor over-reacted and that there was not a world recession, but there could have been one, as there had been after every other stock market crash in history. It was the actions of Britain and the rest of the Group of 7 that stopped the recession from coming this time.

Sir William Clark: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making the point rather better than I could.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) said in his excellent speech, it is obvious that the first priority is the control of inflation. That has meant that interest rates have risen, but that is a temporary and not a permanent measure and in the months to come the 13 per cent. base rate will come down.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has cut consumer demand. When one considers house prices and trade and retail sales, one sees that his policy is having an effect. In effect, my right hon. Friend has told people, "If you want to spend, borrowing will be expensive." Consequently, expenditure has been cut. However, that does not affect the person who does not want to borrow for his spending. I therefore welcome the Budget measures on personal equity plans, workers' share option schemes and pensions.

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will enjoy an even greater surplus in the coming year, I should like him to repay some of the national debt in his next Budget. However, I have slight reservations about repaying too much of the national debt because some day there may be a profligate Government and it would be far too easy for them just to spend, spend, spend. I therefore offer that caveat to my right hon. Friend.

The rate of savings causes me some concern as it has reduced from about 14 per cent. of disposable income to about 4 or 5 per cent. although we do not know the exact figures. Again, I do not know whether the Central Statistical Office has got its sums right, but the trend is clear. In the next Budget we should give a definite boost to savings. My right hon. Friend has done so much this month for which we thank him, but next year I should like contractual savings to be allowed as a charge against one's taxable income. That would give a great boost to savings.

In 1979 there were 2·75 million shareholders in this country. Today, through the Government's economic policy and privatisation, we have more than 9 million shareholders—9 million capitalists. We should build on that, so that more and more of our fellow countrymen have something to conserve. Between now and his next Budget, next March, I should like my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to concentrate on seeing how we can increase the savings of this country and create more and more capitalists.

6.42 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): As has been said, it is now more than 10 years since the Prime Minister's first Government introduced their first Budget, and, almost 10 years later, all that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had to show last Tuesday for the Government's policies and efforts was a truly dismal and, in some senses, truly horrendous set of economic statistics and forecasts.

The Government, who have made the elimination of inflation the cornerstone of their policies, have had to admit that inflation will now rise to over 8 per cent. As has been pointed out, that is by far the highest rate among all the major western industrial countries. Indeed, over the past 10 years, inflation in Britain—under this Government—has been higher than that of most of our industrial competitors in the western world. Does the Chancellor, the Chief Secretary or the Prime Minister ever ask why all those other countries can apparently do so much befter than Britain is doing under their Administration?

The deficit on the current account of the balance of payments is appalling. It is £14·5 billion this year and is forecast to be £14·5 billion next year, according to the Red Book. Again, that is by far the worst deficit of all the western industrial nations. Again, does the Chancellor or the Prime Minister ever ask why all those other countries, except possibly the United States—why all our competitors and trading partners in the EEC—can do so much better than Britain is doing under their Administration?

On the balance of payments, is it not surprising and worrying that, according to the Red Book, despite high interest rates and despite there now being an apparent reduction and a fall in growth next year to 2·5 per cent., next year the balance of payments will stay the same as it is this year—that is £14·5 billion—and that the deficit on manufactured goods will increase to £15·5 billion?

There may be many reasons for that—it may be our old friends the leads and the lags—but I suspect that one reason is that Britain's manufacturing capacity has so shrunk over the past 10 years that we are not producing the capital and consumer goods that industry and individuals have little option but to purchase, because they cannot do without them, whatever the cost. If that is the case—and I suspect that it may be—the future for this country, for our balance of payments deficit and for our industrial base is truly bleak and appalling.

Our interest rates are the highest in the western world and I believe that the Government—this will be shown in the next few years—have failed to arrest or reverse Britain's relative industrial decline when compared with the other trading nations of the EEC.

All that is despite the fact that, over at least eight of the past 10 years—the first two years were more difficult—the Government have had the benefit of the most favourable economic climate of any British Government since the war. During the 1980s, most Governments in the western industrial world recognised the dangers of inflation and, because they all did so, the measures to combat it were politically easier to carry out than they had been in the 1960s and 1970s. As the Red Book clearly shows, over the past 10 years, from 1980 to now, commodity prices, especially of oil, food and industrial materials, have fallen substantially and steadily in real terms. However, they are now beginning to rise again.

As has been said, on top of those international advantages, the Government have had the enormous domestic benefit of a boost to their revenues and to the balance of payments through the oil surplus and the oil revenues from the North sea. Yet after 10 years of the most

[Mr. Denzil Davies]

favourable industrial and economic climate, we were presented with dismal and appalling figures in last Tuesday's Budget.

When the Government came to power in 1979, they knew what they wanted to do and they knew what had caused Britain's economic ills. The radical Right, like the Ayatollah, had no doubts. Their targets were clear and simple. Some of us remember the rhetoric. The targets were the trade unions, the over-sized public sector, high public expenditure, the dreadful public sector borrowing requirement, high income tax and the appalling lack of monetary discipline and control.

The trade unions were the first to fall. Their power was broken; especially, their power over collective bargaining in manufacturing industry has diminished. However, despite that, in the past 10 years rises in wages and earnings have consistently exceeded the rate of inflation. I accept that some of the difference and excess obviously comes from increased productivity, but not all of it. Despite the fact that the power of collective bargaining has been broken, much of that excess does not come from productivity.

Next came the over-sized public sector, which was diminished by privatisation. High public expenditure was cut, perhaps not by as much as some Conservative Members would have liked, but it was cut. The dreaded PSBR was eliminated, destroyed, slain and turned into a surplus, albeit a surplus that cannot be used. Despite all that, inflation is apparently going up to 8 per cent., the balance of payments is horrendous, and interest rates are crippling. All the bogeys have been shot down.

There were also high rates of income tax. Reduce them, so the rhetoric went, and British management would be galvanised and the supply side of the economy would supply. Income tax is now down to 25 per cent. and 40 per cent., but it has done nothing for Britain's supply side. It has worked wonders for the supply side of our competitors. The supply of BMWs and European imports has gone up considerably, but tax cuts have done nothing to the supply side of British manufacturing industry.

Since 1985, manufacturing imports have risen by 200 per cent. in value, and exports have risen by only 30 per cent. Next year, the deficit on manufactured goods will be £15·5 billion. Our share of world trade in manufactures has fallen consistently over the past 10 years. That deficit in manufactured goods is not a deficit with the sweatshops of Asia. Most of it is a deficit with other EEC countries —countries that pay higher wages and have a better provision of public expenditure. Many of them have a higher rate of income tax than we have. So much for the supply side.

Let us examine monetarism—the ark of the covenant, the reincarnation of everything that the Prime Minister learned in that little corner shop in Grantham. Rhetoric was high early in 1980, but, since then, there has been little monetary control—certainly not under this Chancellor. This Chancellor set up one monetary target, missed it, changed it, and then set up another. So it went on and on. Hon. Members heard tonight how it is called money GDP. It is about the worst target that could be chosen. One target after another has been missed. The Chancellor has zig-zagged between monetary flags like a giant slalomist. The only difference is that the game is to hit them and not to miss them, but he has missed them almost every time.

There is now no strategy left. The medium-term financial strategy is a joke and nobody believes it. There was an attempt to use an exchange rate strategy but, for whatever reason, it did not last long. All we have left are high exchange rates and the hope that, somehow, high interest rates will be able to free the Chancellor from the restraints on domestic inflation and foreign exchange markets. When the miracle has been achieved, a year before the election, the unearned surplus—it has not been earned, it has not been produced, and that is why it cannot be spent—will somehow or another be redistributed to a grateful electorate. I do not think that that will work.

The tragedy of the past 10 years is that much could have been achieved, but much damage has been done. It is a tragedy for which the British public will pay for a long time.

6.53 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Since the Chancellor made his Budget statement, hon. Members have heard several remarkable speeches. I am sorry that I was unable to be in the Chamber for the opening speeches this afternoon, as I was attending the funeral of a greatly respected constituent who was tragically killed in the Purley rail crash.

The Chancellor's Budget has been described as prudent and cautious. That is what it is, and it is appropriate in the present circumstances. Within the restraints of the present economy, he has got his priorities right. It is a Budget for pensioners. I was delighted that the Chancellor took the step of abolishing the earnings rule. Its abolition is long overdue. Against the background of changes in the demography of our country, in which the work force will clearly diminish in size as a proportion of the total population, that step is entirely appropriate. Taxes or other restrictions which are abolished rarely stage a comeback. However, if we merely change limits or increase allowances, all too often in a subsequent year we find that the improved position deteriorates. Therefore, the abolition of the earnings rule is welcome. On top of that, the Chancellor has made other changes to help pensioners. For example, he has reduced the limit at which extra help becomes available, from 80 to 75.

I shall refer to two other points in relation to specific taxation measures. The first is unleaded petrol. I certainly welcome that change, which is already having a perceivable effect. In his Budget speech, the Chancellor made an important point. He said that people have the impression that, if they switch to unleaded petrol, they cannot switch back to leaded petrol. We in this country are not in the same situation as that which obtains in the United States, where cars which are converted or designed to take unleaded petrol cannot be used with leaded petrol. There is no reason why people should worry about using unleaded petrol when their cars are converted simply because they fear that they may not be able to get unleaded petrol at a given time. It is important that some newpapers, particularly the *Daily Mail*, which has been campaigning on the issue, should get that point across. The change which the Chancellor has made will greatly increase the incentive to improve the environment.

The other point is the exclusion of any increase in the price of drink and tobacco. Hon. Members understand what the impact on the RPI would have been if the Chancellor had increased those duties. However, there is a case for taking tobacco out of the retail prices index. It is a cost of living index, not a cost of dying index. It is quite absurd for the Chancellor to be inhibited from taking that action simply because of the effect that it would have on the RPI and the likely consequences of wage settlements.

It has been suggested that the Budget is cautious and prudent because last year's Budget was a misjudgment. I simply do not believe that to have been the case. In the light of the stock exchange crash, along with many other Finance Ministers, the Chancellor took measures to stimulate the economy by monetary means. Of course, that had the desired effect. As was pointed out, a world recession was avoided. The timing of these matters is difficult, but, on the fiscal side, it is quite extraordinary for Opposition Members to say that the overall tax reductions last year were too big, when the outcome of the year was a massive surplus of unprecedented proportions. I am not clear whether they thought that we should have had fewer tax reductions last year and an even greater surplus this year.

My constituents are somewhat puzzled by the surplus, if only because they have never seen anything of its size before and are a little worried about why it has not been distributed. Some points need to be made about that. If greater taxation reductions or further increases in expenditure had been made, it would have inevitably put more purchasing power in consumers' pockets, when, quite clearly, the Chancellor's intention is to exert downward pressure on inflation rather than stimulate the economy. It is important to stress that the surplus has arisen not because of increases in tax rates or cuts in public expenditure but despite reductions in tax rates and increases in public expenditure. Therefore, it is not a case of the surplus being accumulated in some adverse way. It has occurred despite improvements in tax and spending.

As I understand it, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am subject to the 10-minute limit, so I shall make a passing reference——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman may speak until 10 minutes past seven.

Mr. Higgins: I shall try not to take that long, Madam Deputy Speaker. Having thrown away my notes for the part of the speech that I thought I should be unable to deliver, I shall make no effort to recover them.

The surplus is, in part, the product of the proceeds of asset sales. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has been inclined to argue that those proceeds should be treated as a means of funding the public sector borrowing requirement, rather than as a means of reducing public expenditure, or as revenue. Now that we do not have a public sector borrowing requirement, we need to rethink the position, because the proceeds of asset sales increase the overall surplus. To some extent, the cash raised by the issue of shares in privatised companies is being used to pay off Government borrowing in another form.

Even if I am allowed to speak rather longer than I expected, I think these matters are rather technical to be dealt with on the Floor of the House. However, I hope very much that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee will be able, having taken evidence, to elucidate these matters in a subsequent report.

The Chancellor's fiscal stance is a tighter one than we have had previously, reinforcing his overall stance on interest rate policy. It is very difficult to think of ways of using the surplus, in terms of extra Government expenditure or tax cuts, that would not increase the inflationary pressure. If there are any such means, we shall no doubt hear suggestions about them, but they are difficult to find. That is the reason for the policy of repaying the national debt. In many ways, the consequences are favourable—for example, the shape of the yield curve, longer-term interest rates having been driven down, with benefit to manufacturing industry and commerce.

The Chancellor says that he proposes to return eventually to a balanced budget. It looks as though we shall by that time have paid about £30 billion of the national debt, resulting in a saving of about £3 billion in interest payments. The question is whether this can be used in a non-inflationary way. It is important to stress that, had that commitment remained, there would have been a transfer from one group of people to another—mostly domestic, but perhaps some overseas. Those resources may now be put to use, allowing for some variation, depending on whether the people receiving the new resources have a propensity for saving greater than that of those who were getting the interest payments. The result will be increased, genuine choice—and that is welcome.

The unexpected, extremely large surplus raises matters that can be dealt with in economic theory, but we in this country have not had any practical experience of a surplus on this scale. One aspect of the matter that creates very serious problems is the Government's statistics. I hope that the Chancellor will soon announce the improvements that he proposes to make in that regard.

In addition, the evidence that the Treasury Committee received from the head of the Government's statistical service was extraordinary, in that it seemed seriously to underestimate the impact of inadequate statistics on markets. However, I shall leave that on one side.

I hope that we shall see some improvement in forecasting models. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has always been very sceptical about forecasting models. Normally, a balance of payments surplus would be forecast if there were a fiscal surplus. However, with a fiscal surplus on a massive scale, we had the reality of a massive balance of payments deficit. That raises some very serious questions about the model and about the way in which such forecasting should be revised and reformed. Perhaps we shall have to take into account the impact of the overall borrowing—Government, private and corporate—rather than simply Government borrowing.

Finally, when he made his Autumn Statement the Chancellor was on something of a tightrope. He was using interest rates to try to get the economy back on course, following a period, as he rightly pointed out, of a very rapid inflation rate, overall, of some 4·5 per cent. per year —a rate which, clearly, could not be sustained indefinitely. The danger for a Chancellor on a tightrope is that, on one side, he can fall off into a recession, whereas, on the other side, he can fall off into a situation in which confidence is shaken internationally, the exchange rate collapses, and we get inflation. I believe that the Chancellor is still on that tightrope and that he will remain there until the situation

[Mr. Higgins]

eases. Having said that, however, I must say that the combination of interest rates and fiscal measures reinforces the overall anti-inflationary stance, and for that reason, as well as for the reason that I gave earlier—the benefit of the specific tax change for pensioners—I welcome the Budget very much indeed.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches is in operation.

7.6 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The hon. Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) began this debate by thanking the Leader of the Opposition—I am sure that he was speaking for all Conservative Members—for saving the timing of the Chancellor's Budget speech. It was indeed a generous and highly unusual gesture by the Leader of the Opposition. Most Leaders of the Opposition on acquiring that role have as their ambition to serve as Prime Minister; the present Leader of the Opposition seems to content himself with serving the Prime Minister. Most Leaders of the Opposition see it as their role to create procedural difficulties for the Government; this Leader of the Opposition sees it as his role to solve the procedural problems of the Government. At any rate, he has committed a political blunder that will haunt him for many years to come in Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) had the best of last Tuesday. He was lucky enough to miss the Budget speech, which was well worth missing. If last year's Budget speech contained the sins of commission, this year's was about the sins of omission. Never has a Chancellor with so much available given so little to so few, and kept the unhealthy concentration on those who have been so favoured by his past largesse.

I wonder if the right hon. Gentleman appreciates the nausea that is felt by many Opposition Members when they see that, with so much to do, no fewer than nine paragraphs of the Budget speech are devoted to the attempted resuscitation of his pet scheme for personal equity plans. The real task is to rebalance the economy, to unfasten the straitjacket in which the Chancellor's past mistakes have put him.

First, there is the task of rebalancing the economy between rich and poor. Like many other Scottish Members, I faced my constituents this weekend—people who have received their poll tax demands. The reality is of people on tiny incomes qualifying for tiny rebates of poll tax, and, in some cases, no rebate. Young people earning £60 a week will face the full blast of the poll tax on 1 April. On Saturday I spoke to a constituent in Turriff, who faced a doubling of the rates bill. He did not qualify for any rebate whatsoever, although he had been sent a very helpful note to the effect that he could always apply for family credit. To a family in receipt of only £6,000 or £7,000 a year, what comfort is it to tell them that the limit for personal equity plans has been increased to £2,400? Such people get nothing but the crumbs from the table of this Chancellor's largesse.

I say to Labour Members that it is a very dangerous tendency—the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) illustrated it tonight—to try to outflank the Conservatives as a tax-cutting party. Let me mention something from today's *Evening Standard*. I am not claiming that the *Evening Standard* has the best interests of the Labour party at heart, but it was very interesting that even that newspaper was attempting today to remind the Labour party that it should be the party which represents the poor and the under-privileged. Our position on this side of the House should be that fair taxes are a just return for fair public expenditure.

The second rebalancing of the economy should be between north and south, between Scotland and England. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has been engaged in Treasury sabotage of regional policy. If we are to believe his public statements, not content with sabotaging regional policy within the United Kingdom, his ambition is to sabotage regional policy throughout the European Community. The Treasury has been conducting a fight with the European Commission over the past few years —one which it has unfortunately won—to spend less in the regions of the United Kingdom by not obeying the rules of additionality.

The Chancellor and the Treasury ignore the massive "regional policies" which are implicit within the United Kingdom economy, for example, in mortgage interest tax relief. Thirty per cent. of the United Kingdom population are in the south of England but obtain 50 per cent. of the mortgage interest tax relief—tax relief which is spiralling, with the Chancellor's high interest rates policy, to a level this year of some £6 billion. That is additional regional spending in the south of England of £1,000 million a year —approximately equal to the entire regional development grant budget for the rest of the United Kingdom.

Then we have regional policy in the defence procurement budget. A parliamentary answer to me on 22 February revealed that, of the defence procurement budget of £10,000 million, no less than 62 per cent. was spent in the south-east and south-west of England. That is a "regional policy" which dwarfs the official regional policy of the United Kingdom.

We have a regional policy in transport spending. British Rail's announcement that it will contemplate an additional £500 million, perhaps even £1,000 million, of spending in taking the Chunnel underground towards the coast is a massive regional preference for that area. It matters not whether that is funded by the public or the private sector. If it is funded by the public sector, it will come from the burden of taxation on all of us. If it is funded by the private sector, it will come from the charges levied on that transport and paid by the whole country for its communications with Europe.

The Budget should have entailed a massive expenditure and investment programme on the infrastructure of the north of England, Wales and Scotland. That spending would not have been inflationary. It would have had a low import component and would have prepared those areas for the challenges of the European market and 1992.

Today in Scotland we debated Scottish enterprise in the Scottish Grand Committee. It was an arid and sterile debate because, even in Scottish Committees which are not packed by English Tory Members, there is no decision-making power at the end of a debate. The debate was also misdirected because we were debating the supply side of the Scottish economy. Obviously, that is important

and improvements could be made, but the debate was out of focus. The basic economic problems of Scotland lie in a deficiency of demand.

The real level of unemployment in Scotland is some 400,000, or 15 per cent. of the total work force. There is little capacity constraint within the Scottish economy and no real inflationary pressure. We know that total revenue over total expenditure is running at some £2,000 million, yet, in the face of deficient demand, we have interest rates, as a by-product of policies which are being pursued in the interest of overheating elsewhere in the economy, at 13 per cent. Moreover, there is no increase in public spending which is necessary to meet the problems of the Scottish economy.

Not only do we have an inappropriate monetary policy as a by-product of inflationary pressure in the south-east, but that policy hits the Scottish economy harder than many other areas. The Scottish economy relies heavily on investment expenditure, capital goods, exports and construction expenditure, so high interest rates are particularly damaging to Scottish industry.

The Government often claim consistency in their economic policies. It is true that interest rates have been consistently high, although the underlying reason for that has been changing substantially over the past 10 years. At the outset of their term of office, we had high interest rates because the then Chancellor of the Exchequer was in hot pursuit of sterling M3. Eventually that was given up as being immeasurable. Some years ago, the present Chancellor hyped interest rates to stabilise the currency and latterly we have had high interest rates to stop the so-called "overheating" in the economy. That phrase has a bitter irony for the regions of England and Scotland and Wales, whose economies are still just coming out of the deep freeze.

The Chancellor's Budget, and his management of the economy, are biased towards the south of England where he has concentrated power, income and wealth, and which just happens to hold the friends, supporters and voters of the Conservative party.

7.15 pm

Mr. David Davis (Boothferry): I do not intend to follow the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) down his antiquated route, as expenditure per head in Scotland is second only to public expenditure in Northern Ireland, with all the troubles that the Province has. His analysis falls on that alone.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davis: No, with all due respect, I cannot give way as I have only 10 minutes.

This is a Budget for the future, not the past. In cutting the national debt the Chancellor of the Exchequer is cutting tomorrow's taxes and enhancing tomorrow's prospects. It is a Budget for the poor. In reforming national insurance, amending the age allowance and abolishing the earnings rule, the Chancellor is allowing some of the least well-off the chance of significantly improving their lot.

In the past 10 years we have built and developed a successful enterprise strategy. From listening to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, I have some hope that the Budget is the first stage of a new strategy for enhancing the enterprise culture's impact on the poorest. Our first duty to the poorest is to maintain the impetus for prosperity that we have developed in the past 10 years. Prosperity increases job opportunities—500,000 in the past 18 months—enhances earnings, which are up 25 per cent. in the past 10 years, and allows the nation to pay for the welfare benefits of the least well-off among us. Therefore, there is an overwhelming need to maintain policies that promote prosperity. The first of those policies is to reduce the tax burden on the nation. I am a little disappointed that we did not see a further reduction in income tax, but things cannot be perfect all the time.

Having assured that prosperity, we can turn our minds to ensuring that the combination of taxes and welfare benefits creates the sort of nation that we seek. We want to see a nation of self-reliant people, free from the heavy hand of government. We have achieved that for the vast majority of the population but, I fear, not yet for the very poor. Some of them face high rates of tax combined with benefit withdrawal. The worst case that I can find involves a 97 per cent. marginal rate of taxation and benefit withdrawal. That is higher than the highest rate of taxation on any earnings under any Government of any persuasion.

While 97 per cent. is a rare occurrence, half a million of our people face a tax and withdrawal rate of 70 per cent. or more, which is worse than the old, top-rate taxes. Such a situation creates not just a dependency culture, but a despondency culture. Why on earth, then, do a Conservative Government, of all Governments, tolerate what is both economic idiocy and economic injustice?

The reason unfortunately is a Gordian knot of logic that at first sight allows no answer. The paradox is that in reducing the marginal rate of withdrawal, we drag more and more people into the welfare net. In doing so, costs are dramatically increased, which in turn pushes up taxes, which depresses incentives, and thereby destroys the very enterprise culture that we are trying to create. Targeting, tax cuts and prosperity go hand in hand. Targeting and welfare incentives are logical opposites.

The effect of reduced withdrawal rates is best demonstrated by example. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will not need this particular example, but I shall give it anyway. To understand we must imagine a family —say two parents and two young children—on about £100 a week, who receive £40 a week in benefit. With a withdrawal rate of 80 per cent.—which is about the present rate—80p is lost for every pound of extra earnings. Their benefits drop to nothing when their earnings climb to £150. That is close to reality for many families. With a withdrawal rate of 40 per cent., their benefits drop to nothing at £200 and of 25 per cent. at £260. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will realise immediately that I am leaving out the taxation component. If I added that to my last calculation, the level would be £400.

If we consider the effects of the withdrawal rate on the number of people who receive benefits, the current withdrawal rate leads to all families with incomes of £150 or less being on benefit. If the rate was 40 per cent., all families on incomes under £200 would be on benefit, which is between 3 million and 5 million more households. That is a significant cost increase of more than £5 billion. A 25 per cent. withdrawal rate would take us up to having the majority of the households on benefit, and, if we took tax into account, the vast majority.

That is the paradox. Targeting creates a poverty trap, but not targeting incurs massive costs and sucks a massive

[Mr. Davis]

number of people into dependence on the state. The question is whether the problem can be unpicked. The key that will unlock the problem is time and earnings growth. Already the Government operate welfare benefits and their qualifying income level in line with inflation. Since average earnings have grown by about 2 per cent. per annum above inflation during the past 10 years because of the Government's policies, qualifying levels for support should become a smaller and smaller fraction of average earnings. Thus the gap between the welfare benefit level and average earnings increases.

To illustrate this, I shall return to our example. Dropping the withdrawal rate to 40 per cent. would mean that benefit would be paid up to earnings of £200 a week —that is £50 more than today. However, in 10 years time the average wage will be significantly more than £50 higher. As a result, a 40 per cent. withdrawal rate then would bring slightly more people into the net than 80 per cent. does now. Therefore, over 10 years it should be possible gradually to reduce the withdrawal rates from 80 per cent. to 40 per cent. as real incomes grow.

The income improvement arising from our incentive policies creates the leeway to improve the withdrawal rate, to combine incentives and targeting. The strategy must be seen as a whole to be understood. I would say to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary that most of it is already Government policy. It requires four parts—first, to continue the downward pressure on basic rates to maintain the initiative and drive that underpins growth in earnings, which is the key to the economy; secondly, to maintain basic levels of benefit at constant levels in real terms, which is Government policy; thirdly, gradually to increase tax thresholds with the aim of ensuring that people and families who receive welfare benefits do not incur tax at all, which is why I used the non-taxed numbers; and, fourthly, to increase the earnings level at which zero benefit is paid by the same percentage as wages each year; which is to say that the taper should be lifted by the same percentage as wages each year—say about 2 per cent. above inflation.

Over a period of 10 years or so that would force down the marginal rates significantly without increasing the proportion of GDP that goes into welfare payments—in fact, it would probably reduce it. What would happen is that the balance of targeting and incentives would reach a rational basis that has not been seen in this country for 25 years.

Churchill once described the ideal modern state as one having

"a net beneath which no man may fall and a ladder up which any man might climb."

We have spent the past 10 years repairing the net and rebuilding the ladder. In the next 10 years, it would be an honourable objective to lower the rung at which that ladder starts.

7.24 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I am grateful for a chance to speak briefly and to follow, though not immediately, the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore). I believe that he paid a great service to the House and to the people of this country when he exposed the gigantic con trick of the so-called Thatcher miracle. It is a sham, and my hon. Friend eloquently exposed the Chancellor as wearing no clothes, which was not a pretty sight.

The truth is that by every major economic indicator the Government's policies have failed. Unemployment is still at more than twice the 1979 level. As my constituency reels under the hundreds of redundancies since Christmas, I can understand why the Secretary of State would not allow me to intervene. When I give the figures, the House will also understand. The trade deficit is still more than £14 billion and rising, and we have the highest interest rates and inflation of any of the major industrialised nations.

British industry did not invest enough in the early oil-rich 1980s and we are paying the price. My constituency is a good example of an area where imports have been sucked in to the detriment of the local economy. There was not one proposal in last week's Budget which would help manufacturing. In a constituency such as mine, one can see the situation becoming worse. Because no attempt has been made to bring down interest rates, there is a high pound, high water and energy charges and the Government have deliberately forced up rates by starving councils of rate support grant. This has led to a lower demand for goods, which has been graphically demonstrated in my constituency.

Mr. Janman: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Mahon: No, the hon. Gentleman can make his own speech.

Since Christmas, in Halifax and in the Calder Valley which covers the Calderdale council area, 850 jobs have been lost in manufacturing—in textiles, engineering, the food industry and bed manufacturing. This morning I heard of a further 34 redundancies in textiles at an excellent hosiery and knitwear firm with a good record —the Wolsey socks division of Courtauld. The textile industry is not noted for its militancy and certainly not for its high pay. The reward to the textile industry and to engineering has been a kick in the teeth from the Government.

The hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) spoke about increased prosperity and then shed crocodile tears for those caught in the poverty trap. That really made me sick. How can he pretend to care when he walks through the Lobby with a Government who have persistently cut benefits, held down wages and bashed the unions to the extent that they have over the years?

West Yorkshire is the lower-paid capital of this country. On too many occasions in the House I have highlighted what is happening to the local economy in my constituency. Our once highly skilled manufacturing jobs have been replaced by the sweat-shop type of economy towards which the Government have been urging us. I have been heavily involved with the problems of home working, which is on the increase. The average pay for a home worker is 50p to 60p per hour, and average pay in many of the factories in my constituency—this is borne out by the Government's own figures—is less than £2 an hour.

I still have many thousands of constituents employed in the textile industry, which is an area of grave concern to me. Had I not been limited to 10 minutes I should have liked to quote what captains of the textile industry are saying about the Government's policy. I could have quoted letters from mill owners in my constituency who are deeply concerned about water privatisation because

the textile maufacturing process uses a great deal of water. They have already seen unfair increases in energy costs, compared with their competitors, and they have seen the results in terms of imports. The Government have let them down badly.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) highlighted the need for the Government to invest in real training. Whatever the Secretary of State for Employment may say about employment training, it has been an utter failure. A fortnight ago a young graduate, Michael Pickles, came to my surgery. He has been unemployed since last June. He has an extremely good degree and in desperation he went on employment training for three months, but in that time he has had just two weeks placement with a firm. For the rest of the time he has been kicking his heels. He told me that if I got the chance I should tell the Government that they are just wasting the taxpayers' money on a rubbish scheme that was no good for him and no good to anyone else.

In 1988 a survey of the local economy of Halifax showed that we are moving towards a two-tier labour market with a widening gap between the professional and skilled occupations and those workers concentrated in low-status, low-skill and unskilled jobs. The latter groups are often part of the flexible work force. Such people need training. In Halifax we fought back and tried desperately to help. We were involved with the business in the community initiative, which used the combined resources of the local council and the local trade unions, with the help of excellent officers who guided us through it. The chamber of commerce sulked, however, and would not join the regeneration committee. We used the small amount of European money available to us to try to train people for the future, but what have the Government done for us in return? They have done absolutely nothing—we are the hole in the middle of the doughnut. The Government have kicked us in the teeth. In the early 1980s the Government took assisted-area status away from Halifax, followed by urban programme area status. Recently Calderdale has been told that no derelict land grant will be given for the only piece of flat land available for industrial development.

We have been betrayed by the Government. They are not putting our area forward for objective 2 status for the EC structural fund. The Government have ignored our pleas and representations, although we have pointed out that thousands more jobs are about to be lost. Last week, with two officers of the council, I made representations to the Department of Trade and Industry to get objective 2 money from Europe. We were given the impression that the Department was doing all that it could to press our case, and the Minister told us that our case was being flagged up in Brussels. Unfortunately for the Minister, however, the new Commissioner—Bruce Millan—told us the truth. The Government have not represented Calderdale and they have not highlighted the new unemployment levels in the area. The Commissioner told us that the Government were doing absolutely nothing for us. I have written to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to say that if his Department wants to help Calderdale, Halifax and the Calder valley to get that money, we should have assisted area status.

I see nothing in the Budget to help manufacturing. When the oil runs out—the income from that oil is already sliding—I wonder how we shall pay our way. What is happening in my town is a sign of things to come. I know why the Secretary of State for Employment would not allow me to intervene—since Christmas nearly 1,000 jobs have been lost in my constituency and it would be difficult to explain that away in the so-called boom economy.

7.32 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) comes from the west riding, but the story is different in east Yorkshire. I represent a constituency in the hinterland of Hull; anyone visiting Humberside today will see nothing but expansion and the development of the manufacturing industry, which is taking on more labour.

The Budget tax changes, modest though they were, have been universally approved. I particularly support the radical reform of employers' national insurance contributions, which will remove some of the stupid anomalies that created the poverty trap in the previous system.

I represent a constituency with an above average number of old people, so I particularly welcome the removal of the earnings rule. That is a particularly useful supply-side measure when one considers that in the next few years there will be a fall in the number of school leavers coming on to the market. In common with my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) I also approve of the reduction in the age limit for the higher rate of age allowances.

I am chairman of the Back-Bench small businesses committee and I naturally welcome the 50 per cent. increase in the band for small company corporation tax to £150,000. Mainly that will help medium-sized firms, not small firms. I am disappointed that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was unable to accept the recommendations of our committee, which would have been of enormous help to small businesses that have just started. We suggested that the first £5,000 of taxable profit retained in a business should be tax-free. That would be particularly helpful to small businesses desperate for capital in the early years.

Another suggestion that we made and which I commend to the Chancellor for next year's Budget is roll-over relief for inheritance tax on private businesses or shares in private businesses until the disposal of the business or the shares. There would be no loss of revenue in the long term and in the short term it would stop smaller businesses being bled of much-needed capital to pay the Revenue's inheritance tax.

In formulating this year's Budget, the Chancellor faced a completely different situation from any faced by a Chancellor this century. He not only balanced the Budget, but had a surplus of almost £14 billion. That is a clear sign of the success of the Government's handling of public finances. In the coming year, based on no changes other than indexation, my right hon. Friend has a surplus of £15·5 billion. At one bound, he could have achived his stated ambition of reducing the standard rate to 20p—at a cost of some £7 billion—still leaving him a further £8·5 billion for further tax cuts.

In this century we have not had a Chancellor as successful as my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson) at introducing tax reductions and tax reforms to help the supply side of the economy. Therefore, it must have been terribly frustrating for him to be unable

[Mr. John Townend]

to use the enormous surplus to continue that policy. My right hon. Friend was unable to use that surplus because of the current economic situation.

In the event, my right hon. Friend is repaying another £14 billion of the national debt. That means that in about three years he will have repaid one sixth of the debt which has accumulated in the past 200 years. I do not believe that we should overlook what is, without doubt, an enormous achievement. For many years, the Government and their predecessors have increased the burden that will be bestowed on our children and grandchildren. The one exception to that practice which was brought to the attention of the House was not a budgeted surplus but one achieved by accident at the end of the year. It is truly wonderful that, at last, we are reducing the burden on future generations.

Let us consider our economic difficulties. As my hon. Friends have said, it is always easy to be wise after the event. It could be argued that pumping more money into the economy and reducing interest rates prevented a world economic collapse. It could also be argued that the growth in the world economy was so strong that those measures were unnecessary. There is no doubt, however, that our current problems stem from pumping too much money into the system and reducing interest rates. This monetarist Government were not monetarist enough, and they paid the price. Our monetarist stance was too lax even before the October crisis. Therefore, for two years the economy had been growing at an unsustainable rate. It is nonsense to blame the Budget of 1988. That Budget produced a £14 billion surplus, which was fiscally tight.

The main culprit is monetary policy. To be fair to my right hon. Friend, he has only done what his critics on the Opposition Front Bench have demanded for years—reflated the economy and reduced unemployment. To combat inflation, the Chancellor had to suppress his natural desire to cut taxes in this Budget, and he had to introduce a prudent and cautious Budget. He had to convince everyone, not least the markets, that when he said that the Government's No. 1 priority was to reduce inflation he really meant it. That is the only justification for sacrificing more than £1 billion in revenue by not valorising excise duties.

We required a Budget for the markets this year and I believe that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has succeeded so far. The Budget was far more cautious than many people expected. I am sure that the Chancellor hopes, if he gets the right response from the markets, that he will not have to increase interest rates any further. We will have to see whether that happens. However, I am heartened by the fact that my right hon. Friend has made it clear that, if necessary, he will raise interest rates further.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor is faced with two significant problems—inflation and the balance of payments deficit. The Budget will undoubtedly help, but it will not solve those problems. The only way to reduce inflation is through further monetary policies. It is a tragedy that, when the Government managed to reduce inflation to 3·5 per cent., they did not continue their policy to get it down to zero. They traded off reflation to bring down unemployment. I hope that the Government have learnt a lesson and will not be diverted from their main aim in future.

I am worried whether targeting MO is sufficient. I am not certain whether we need to return to targeting broad money, despite all the problems that that would cause.

A vital factor in reducing inflation relates to wage increases. All private employers should heed the Chancellor's warning that he will not let the exchange rate fall to accommodate real wage increases which are not covered by increases in productivity. The Government also have an important part to play because they are a major employer. Regardless of the political clout of this year's special interest groups, whether they be doctors, nurses or teachers, the Government should not allow themselves to be pressured into allowing wage increases much in excess of 6 per cent.

I believe that the balance of payments deficit will right itself in due course because this deficit, unlike previous deficits, is mirrored by a private sector deficit and not a public sector one. As hon. Members have said, a considerable proportion of the deficit is made up of imports of capital goods. When they enter production, they should reduce imports and increase exports.

In the short term, the Government should take a much tougher line with countries which have free access to our markets, but which make it difficult for us to export to them. For example, for 25 years Japan has discriminated against Scotch whisky and that discrimination will be removed only after 1 April. We have a significant deficit with South Korea, but it is virtually illegal to sell Scotch whisky there, other than in tourist hotels. That is not good enough, and retaliatory action must be taken. We believe in free trade in both directions. If we open access to our markets, we demand equal access for our exporters.

Also, while we have this worrying balance of payments deficit, we should not increase overseas aid, however much the bleeding hearts brigade might plead. Indeed, we might do well to restrict it.

We must all hope that "Lawson's luck" holds and that the British economy has a soft landing. The Budget has hopefully created the right environment. Backed by firm monetary control, inflation should fall and there should be a reduction in the balance of payments deficit. When that happens, I hope that the patience of the British people will be rewarded and that the Government will once more embark on their avowed policy of reducing taxation. We should have enough of a surplus then to bring the standard rate down to 20p in the pound and to make significant reductions in other areas. On that basis, I strongly support the Budget.

7.43 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): We have heard much from Conservative Members about the importance of incentives and I support much of what has been said. It is particularly important that the less well-off should have incentives. They should have a sense of achievement and a sense of being able to surmount their own economic problems. However, the incentives issue becomes less important when we consider the more wealthy. There appears to be an area of diminishing returns. For many reasons many people who become wealthy cannot benefit or gain any more enjoyment from increased wealth. The wealthy often have the opportunity to set their own wages and incentives and use their own power. In many cases they cannot work much harder. It is ironic that the Prime Minister who claims that it is crucial

that the well-off should have large tax cuts does not take her own wages. It is clear that the Prime Minister, although she works extremely hard, realises that she cannot work any harder.

The well-off often gain tremendous benefits from firms. They receive income which is more than a simple salary. In this Budget debate, we should be debating the Government's attitude towards different forms of taxation although I have not heard such a debate so far. Is it true, as we often hear, that the Government favour indirect taxation instead of direct taxation? If so, why? Is it true, as we often hear, that the Government favour regressive taxation rather progressive taxation? If so, why? It seems that there is a move towards more indirect and regressive taxation. That should be justified in this House.

In 1978, income tax raised one third of all revenue. In 1988-89 it will raise only 24 per cent. In 1985, the poorest one fifth of the community paid 5·9 per cent. of their disposable income in VAT. The best-off one fifth paid only marginally more—7·3 per cent.—of their income. The bottom one fifth paid 29 per cent. of their disposable income in indirect taxation, but the top one fifth paid 21 per cent. There is a built-in unfairness there.

We have heard today, as we have heard ad nauseam in the past, that we have a tax-cutting Government. If we consider the almost mythical married couple with two children on average income, we discover that in 1978-79 that family paid 35 per cent. of its income in taxation while in 1988-89 it paid 37 per cent. as a result of the shift towards indirect taxation.

The position for the less well-off is worse than that because the role of benefits is neglected. In 1988-89 a wage earner with four children earning £75 a week, with cash benefits actually received about £123 a week. To increase his income from £123 to £140—an increase of £17—he would have to earn an extra £90 because of the loss of cash benefits. That represents a taxation loss of 80 per cent.

We all welcome the minor changes in national insurance contributions, but that affects only a tiny part of the poverty trap. At the top end of the scale people are treated even more favourably than would appear from the way in which the Chancellor cut the tax rates to 40 per cent.

People at the top end are looked after by their employers. It was pleasing to see the reduction in allowances relating to company cars, but that is a small part of what is happening at the moment. Recent surveys show that 84 per cent. of senior managers receive free medical insurance. Many receive life assurance policies, have their telephone bills paid for them or receive money to pay for their newspapers. According to the data, 30 per cent. have their golf club fees paid. Such benefits are not taken into account in the Budget.

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke) *rose*——

Mr. Worthington: I cannot give way in a 10-minute speech.

All of that is a form of middle class, welfare state subsidy that is not taken into account. Others receive share option schemes, and they do not pay the market price. They receive free meals from their companies, whereas a working person will receive only luncheon vouchers to the value of 75p per week before that benefit is taxed.

What is to be done about that extremely unfair system? We all need incentives, and the greatest benefits should go to those who are least well off. I believe in the importance of incentives to working people. I am much attracted to the scheme proposed, admittedly in embryo form, by my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), which seeks to re-examine the present system of tax allowances. In tonight's debate, we have heard from hon. Members who are hostile to any benefit being given to working-class people but who have urged the value of incentives for savings schemes, for example. If there is no such thing as a free lunch, there is no such thing as a free tax allowance. A free tax allowance is being paid for by someone else, who is often receiving a lower income than the person enjoying the tax allowance.

At present, about 100 tax allowances are in existence. Major allowances include mortgage relief, while others include car allowances, tax-free pension schemes, business expansion schemes, and subsidies to invest in privatisation. They are all largely biased towards the better off. The value of that tax welfare rises with one's income. There has been a great growth in tax welfare, and one of the things that that has done is to drag poorer people into the tax net.

The only way to end the drastic poverty trap, with people effectively paying 80 per cent. income tax, is to get rid of that panoply of tax allowances. If that is done, it will be possible to have a standard rate of income tax of around 12p to 15p in the pound. One could then have a progressive tax system based on fairness and linked with that rate of 12p to 15p in the pound. It would also be necessary to increase considerably child benefits, and to do more for pensioners.

The unfair divide that currently exists between those at the top who are assumed to need incentives and those at the bottom who are clobbered massively for every increase in income that they receive is totally unsatisfactory. One of the ways of ending that, as was suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead, is by re-examining the current system of tax allowances, which probably costs the rest of us about £50 billion. We must then return to what is surely the only fair system of taxation—a system of progressive, not regressive, taxation, under which one pays according to one's ability to pay.

7.53 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): This has been an interesting debate because we have heard from both the old and the new. It included a contribution from the newest Member of this House, my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), whom I congratulate on the excellence of his maiden speech. He was preceded by the oldest Conservative Member of the House—with the exception of the Father of the House—my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) commented that he wished that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup sometimes said something good about the Government and that he approved of what they are doing. However, that would amount to an act of apostasy on the part of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, so it is not likely that he would do such a thing. To be more even-handed might also give his opinions a spurious credibility. I am delighted that when he speaks to the House he does so only to attack, because that can only diminish the strength of his message.

[Mr. Neil Hamilton]

If we learned anything in the past year, the two lessons that have come home to us are that monetarism is still alive and well and that the inflation experienced in recent months is a reflection of a laxity in monetary policy, and how potentially dangerous it is to rig exchange rates by intervention in the foreign exchange markets—and how even more dangerous it would be to tie us up in a permanent, formalised system such as the European monetary system.

I am delighted that in his opening remarks on the Budget my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer agreed, at least partially, with my view, when he said:

"Inflation is a disease of money; and monetary policy is the cure."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 293.]

I am glad that my right hon. Friend gave that ringing endorsement of what I believe to be the underlying cause of the difficulties we have recently experienced. I endorse his comments that interest rates should stay as high as necessary for as long as necessary. I do not believe that we shall cure inflation unless we adhere to that policy.

That is not a policy that commends itself to my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. He comes to the House only when he perceives that the Government are in some difficulty, and feasts upon perceived Government misfortune like a vampire given free run of a blood bank. However, where inflation is concerned, I dare say that we should to some extent listen to him, because he is one of the greatest experts on the causes of inflation—having himself presided over some of the worst bouts of it in living memory.

On occasions, my right hon. Friend attacked the Chancellor for his excessive reliance, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup sees it, on interest rates. He says that the Chancellor has only one golf club. In the period 1972-74, my right hon. Friend used every golf club apart from the right one, played most of the time in the rough, and ended up well and truly bunkered. It ill becomes him to pose now as the club professional. It is my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer who deserves that description.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup has the support of various bodies such as the CBI, which seems to spend all its time whining about matters that are beyond its control and ignoring those within its control, such as wage increases—which have a far greater influence upon the costs of manufacturing industry than interest rates. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup is supported also by Opposition Members, though the same applies to them as to him. When the Labour party comes to the House to accuse the Government over their record on inflation, that is the nearest thing that one can imagine to Satan rebuking sin.

Several times during the debate Opposition Members have called for non-inflationary increases in Government spending. I should like to know what is a non-inflationary increase in Government spending, because unless one can achieve a 100 per cent. rate of return, any investment is likely to lead to an increase in total demand—and as excessive demand is the cause of inflation, such investment is likely to stoke the fires of inflation rather than dampen them.

Another mistake that has been made in Opposition Members' speeches this evening is to say that last year's Budget produced the upturn in inflation that we now have, and that the tax cuts it introduced must be held responsible. I do not understand the logic of that argument. Last year's tax cuts totalled £4 billion and there has been an increase in personal sector credit of £40 billion. It sems unlikely, to say the least, that £40 billion extra spending should result from a £4 billion increase in disposable income as a consequence of tax cuts. In an economy now approaching £450 billion, it is impossible to believe that last year's modest tax cuts were in any way responsible for the current inflation upturn.

The problem is that credit has been allowed to expand too rapidly for too long. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend): we were satisfied, when we should not have been, with inflation continuing at 3, 4 or 5 per cent. We lost the momentum of our campaign to squeeze inflation out of the system. Bank credit has trebled in the five years between 1984 and 1989, and broad money has expanded at a rate of about 20 per cent. a year.

I appreciate the problems relating to M3. World changes in the past eight years—freedom of capital movements and so forth—have made it a less reliable indicator than it was. I certainly do not think, however, that it is right to concentrate our attention on a narrow measure of money—M0—which has nothing to do with credit, when credit is the basis of our current problems. We need a new monetary measure which balances the different kinds of money that are held.

Although inflation is unacceptably high, we should not overstate the recent increases. I am a zero-inflation man myself, and I should not like it to be thought that I am being soft on inflation, but we should recognise that earnings have risen by 9 per cent. in the past year and productivity by 4 or 5 per cent. The real level of inflation in the economy is still only about 4 to 5 per cent., although it is rising, which is worrying.

We need a tight monetary policy, but I am sorry that we have such a tight fiscal policy. I believe that the supply side implications of our tax reductions have been the basis of the huge increase in prosperity at all income levels in the past 10 years, and we need to go further in that direction. I want Britain to become a tax haven, and taxation to cease to be a consideration in people's decisions about how hard to work or what jobs they do.

For all the talk by Opposition Members about cuts in spending in the past 10 years, figures in the Red Book show that expenditure has not been cut as a proportion of GDP. It has started to decline only recently, and I look forward to further falls in the coming years. Table 2.5 shows that the proportion of our national income taken by taxation also has not declined much. When we came into office in 1979 it stood at 35 per cent. of GDP, while the figure for 1988-89 is 37·5 per cent. Of course Government spending is more honestly financed today as a result of the abolition of the public sector borrowing requirement, but I believe that 37·5 per cent. is far too much for the Government to take in taxation, and that significant reductions are needed.

I recognise that market sentiment was probably against the Chancellor this year but I think that, although the markets had discounted it, there was room for a 1p cut in the basic rate of income tax, and I wish that the Chancellor had felt able to take such action. The problems that we have faced in the past year have been familiar to economic theorists and others for a long time. It is many years since

Professor Milton Friedman pointed out the dangers of a discretionary monetary policy. Along with my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), I hope that we may think again of establishing an entirely independent control of the money supply by privatising the Bank of England.

In this as in many walks of life, it is politicians who cause the difficulties with which we must grapple. If their hands are kept off the levers, more often than not the market will ensure that the right solution emerges. That will remove the uncertainties and unpredictabilities inherent in the fickle nature of politicians' decisions.

Limited though its effects may be, I welcome this year's Budget. I regret the necessity to tread water, and I look forward to further progress on tax reductions, particularly income tax reductions, in future years. In the long run, however, the country's prosperity will be assured only if the Government keep firm control of the money supply, inflation and their own expenditure, and reduce significantly the proportion of the national income that they take out of people's pockets.

8.4 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): This year, as last year, the Chancellor may have left excise duty on alcoholic beverages alone, but in economic terms the bacchanalian binge for the rich from last year's tax cuts have been succeeded by a Budget of relative sobriety. Even last year's celebrations were enjoyed by a very small section of the population—in the board rooms of banks and finance houses, in the large monopoly companies, by the stock exchange and property speculators and by other assorted rich spivs, by the 1 per cent. of the population who received more in tax cuts than the bottom 70 per cent. of taxpayers—some £1,880 million compared with £1,730 million. Those on more or less average incomes—in terms of prosperity, the medium band—found that their modest glass of wine soon turned sour during the year as inflation, interest rates, rents and mortgages rose for most families.

As for the 6·6 million earning what by any civilised standards must be regarded as low wages, the most that they have received have been crumbs from the rich man's table, despite the cuts in national insurance payments in this year's Budget which, incidentally, has brought 150,000 people into the payment band for the first time. Any gains can be offset against the plight of those who have to survive on the workfare schemes, which the Government suggest are some kind of training programme, and those who lose the protection of wages councils. Millions of others—the unemployed, the sick, the disabled and many pensioners—have been excluded from any benefits conferred by last year's or this year's Budget.

It is, indeed, surprising that at the height of what the Chancellor calls the first ever post-war boom this "reforming" Chancellor should find it necessary to eschew reforms. It is even more remarkable that a Chancellor who claims to be tax-cutting should increase the overall tax burden to 37·5 per cent., compared with 34 per cent. in 1978-79.

The spectre that haunts the Conservative Benches above all else, however, is the balance of trade deficit, which the OECD estimates will rise from its present level of £14·4 billion to £15 billion in 1989 and £16·5 billion in 1990. On the basis of last month's figures projected for a year it could reach around £20 billion.

The Government claim particular credit for their period in office. Between 1980 and 1988 exports increased by one third, roughly in line with the performance with the rest of the manufacturing world. At the same time, however, imports increased by two thirds—twice the rate in the leading economies in the Group of 7 and the OECD countries.

In the so-called first ever boom years since 1985, exports have increased by 12 per cent. and imports by 39 per cent. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) pointed out in a recent speech, in the past 12 months exports increased by only 0·5 per cent. while imports increased by 14 per cent.

That presents a picture of grave deterioration. Between 1985 and 1988—excluding oil and energy products, which are declining in any event—manufacturing exports rose by 23 per cent., while imports rose by 48 per cent., but that is not the only deficit problem that the Government face. In the first nine months of 1988, the net outflow of direct investment amounted to £6·3 billion. To that has to be added £5·6 billion of portfolio investments abroad. If that is rounded up on a yearly basis, the deficit amounts to about £15 billion.

Taken together, that deficit on trade and capital outflow abroad—about £30 billion—is 6 per cent. of gross domestic product. Sir Donald MacDougall said recently that a £10 billion surplus on the trade account is required to finance the current level of capital outflow. The Chancellor of the Exchequer dismisses that argument. He says that our fiscal reserves stand at £30 billion. That is a dangerous confidence trick to play on Britain's economic wellbeing. It rests on the fact that we attract foreign investment because of our current high interest rates. That has led to an over-valued pound. The result is that exports continue to lag behind imports.

The Chancellor's confidence trick rests entirely on our ability to attract foreign investment. A lack of confidence in the pound could wipe out our entire capital reserves within a year. There would be a run on the pound, which would have a disastrous effect on Britain's economy, but not just a return to stop-go and stagnation. The IMF would have to intervene. There would be a reversal of the downturn in unemployment and working people's wages would have to be cut. The signs are already there, in the fall in the value of the pound both against the dollar and against the basket of world currencies.

The Government boast about unit labour costs. In 1986, they rose by 4·8 per cent., compared with 3·1 per cent. in OECD countries. In 1987, the Government achieved a reduction in unit labour costs of 3·1 per cent. against an increase of 3·1 per cent. in OECD countries. In 1988, however, the increase in unit labour costs was 5·7 per cent. and it is still rising, compared with a rate of 3·3 per cent. in OECD countries. During that period, labour costs remained static in America but fell by 4 per cent. in Japan and by 2 per cent. in France. The British economy is not, therefore, competitive. It is not succeeding in world markets or against its major competitors, so any loss of confidence when the pound stands at an artificially high level will lead to a serious deterioration in Britain's economic outlook.

The British economy is part of the world economy, which is dominated by the problems faced by the United States. The US budget deficit stands at $155 billion, its trade deficit has been reduced but is still about $130 billion, and there are enormous corporate debt problems.

[Mr. Pat Wall]

Merger mania in America is not properly financed and these are problems facing US savings and loans banks, which are similar to those which face building societies in this country.

Third-world debt creates great problems and it has been suggested that overseas aid should be cut. During 1988, the net outflow from the poorest countries in the world to the wealthiest industrial countries amounted to £46 billion. That has had political repercussions, with a swing to the Left in the Mexican general election and riots in Venezuela. The Government boast that capitalist policies are being followed in China, Russia and eastern Europe and are the way out of the problem, but the reality of the market economy is that millions of people are starving, the world is divided between north and south and in countries such as Britain there are millions of poor people, with a handful of very rich people growing ever richer at the expense of the poor.

I am pleased that there have been demonstrations this week in support of a candidate in the Russian parliamentary elections. I refer to Boris Yeltsin in Moscow. Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in the streets, though not in favour of capitalism. Boris Yeltsin says that Russia needs a society where there are no perks for the bureaucrats and no privileges at the expense of ordinary people. He says that land is needed for the peasants and that factories should be controlled and owned by the workers. I believe that the British people, too, will see through their Government's flawed policy and will see the need for change in society. That change will be brought about only by a change of Government. Only in that way will a democratic society be created in which wealth is shared equally and fairly among all.

8.14 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): There have been some interesting speeches in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) made an excellent maiden speech. He has much more common sense than my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) who has been a Member of this House for far longer than my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks.

The Budget is contained within a rather dull crown, albeit of necessity, but there are some shining jewels hidden within it. The changes to national insurance contributions, corporation tax, charitable donations direct from the payroll and petrol tax—which will act as a stimulant to motorists to change to lead-free petrol—are examples of those jewels. The most important, in the long term, and the most pleasing aspect of the Budget, is the fact that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is coming back on course to monetary policy.

I was pleased to hear that there are to be targets for MO, and that they will be kept to, and that the annualised rate of growth of MO over the last six months was only 3 per cent. I echo what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), that MO and its close monitoring and targeting are not enough. I hope that when he replies to the debate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will provide more detail about how much weight is to be placed on broader supplies of money. That is important. I accept, however, that in a free economy—we now have the freest economy in Europe, with the exception of Switzerland—that is more of a challenge than it used to be.

The changes to national insurance contributions are particularly to be welcomed. They will be good for people on low, below-average and average incomes. I am disappointed, however, that the tax-cutting momentum has not been continued in the Budget. If the Chancellor had taken another penny off the standard rate of income tax, I do not believe that a warning note would have been sounded by the money markets. Tax cuts are not inflationary. It cannot be inflationary to let people keep the money that they earn. Inflation has been caused by the irresponsibly low interest rates of a year or so ago and by too much meddling and interference with the exchange rate, particularly with reference to the deutschmark.

I echo the comments of my hon. Friends the Members for Tatton and Bridlington (Mr. Townend). Not to reduce tax by 1p in the Budget only gives credence to the economic illiteracy of the Opposition. The 1988 Budget was excellent. It was certainly not inflationary. The figures that were given earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton prove that point excellently. The standard rate of tax should have been reduced by 1p to show our detractors that we do not intend to be blown off course and that we intend to move away from the "they will" society to which the Opposition wish to return.

There are many small and medium-size companies in Thurrock and the corporation tax changes will enhance their profitability. That will enhance employment and job security in the area. It is a pity, perhaps, that local government taxes cannot also be related to profitability. Many small businesses, especially those in the retail sector, continue to face huge rate bills. The Government's reform of commercial rates will, I am afraid, fail in many cases to resolve this outstanding issue.

The Budget is, to some extent, borne out of a climate of inflationary fear. That is good. We must never take our eye off the ball of inflation. The Opposition are hypocritical and confused on the subject and about the right level of taxation. In at least two speeches today, Opposition Members have called for tax cuts that would benefit people on lower incomes, but last year they trooped into the Lobby to vote against 2p off the standard rate of income tax. Any party which, when in government for five years, presided over an inflation rate of 15·5 per cent. is in no position to lecture the present Government about their record on inflation. Nevertheless, like many of my colleagues, I believe that 7·5 per cent. or 8 per cent. inflation is far too high. Our target should be not 5 per cent. or 4 per cent. but nil per cent.

The economy is fundamentally sound. The statistics prove that. We need only take the example of output per person in manufacturing, or productivity. Anybody can make something. What is important is whether it is made cost effectively. Productivity is the key measure. The increase in productivity in manufacturing during the entire term of the previous Labour Government was 5·8 per cent. Just from 1987 to the fourth quarter of 1988, there has been an increase of 10·3 per cent.—nearly double what was witnessed under Labour.

We have also built up huge overseas assets, second only to Japan, and a huge fiscal surplus, and public expenditure is going down in real terms. The state is taking a smaller proportion of gross national product. That is something which we have always been elected to achieve.

Nevertheless, public expenditure is increasing in real terms. There have been no cuts. Public expenditure continues to rise in crucial areas such as health and the fight against crime.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor is to be congratulated on a well balanced Budget. It is important that we do not lose the momentum to return to individuals more of the money that they earn so that they can be less dependent on the state. The Leader of the Opposition spoke of our record and said that the Government had created a "me, now" society. His alternative is a "they will" society in which individuals lose their sense of responsibility for themselves and turn to the great they, whether it be local government, central Government, social services or the Department of Social Security to take on their individual responsibilities in life.

The Government have a duty to ensure that there is a safety net and that citizens do not fall below it, but they also have a duty to maximise the amount of money that people can keep and spend as they wish. Although the Budget is excellent in many other ways, we have lost an opportunity to keep our tax-cutting momentum going.

8.23 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): We are debating a Budget that has been created in the shadow of storm clouds caused by all the miscalculations on which the Chancellor's last Budget was based.

The Chancellor's forecasting record is such that, if he was an economic analyst or financial executive of a privatised Great Britain Ltd, he would have been sacked a good while ago. His inflation figures proved to be 100 per cent. out, his forecast for the balance of payments deficit was a quarter of what it has turned out to be, and the same is true of the Budget surplus. It is therefore extremely difficult to enter a debate with the Chancellor on the basis of his forecast this year for what is likely to happen in the coming financial year. We have to take his forecasts with a pinch of salt and hope that he has learnt something from all the mistakes of the last year.

Will the Budget strengthen the economy and create jobs? We have to answer that question with a resounding no. The continuing underlying trend of weakening in the manufacturing sector will continue. During the past decade, Britain's share of world trade has decreased by more than 10 per cent. We have managed to convert a £3·7 billion surplus when Labour was last in power to a £16·4 billion deficit today—some economic miracle. Even allowing for invisibles, which we are often told we have to bear in mind when considering the whole economy, the deficit has doubled.

Those figures show an appalling performance. The economy has been saved only by the Chancellor being absolutely resolute about pushing up interest rates time and again to bring hot money into the country. We must remember that it can just as easily leave. In the meantime, home owners and businesses, especially small and medium-size businesses, face the difficulty—and sometimes the misery—of coping with the extra costs that high interest rates involve. Those interest rates are the creation of the Chancellor alone as he tries to make up for some of the mistakes of last year's Budget. The Chancellor told us in his Budget statement that he will maintain high interest rates for as long as is necessary. No doubt he will increase them if he considers that necessary.

At the beginning of today's debate, the Secretary of State for Employment made great play of the Government's job creation record. His view was blinkered and short-sighted in terms of recent history. I intervened in his speech, but he was unwilling to accept the figures that I produced, which are based on answers given by his Department to questions about how the economy has developed.

I shall remind the House of those rather stark figures. During the past decade, jobs have been created, but they have been created in the south-east, East Anglia, the south-west and the east midlands. In those areas, 580,000 jobs have been created for men and 433,000 jobs have been created for women. They are all full-time jobs. Just over 1 million jobs have been created in the area below a line drawn from the Severn to the Wash. However, in the west midlands, the north, the north-west, Yorkshire and Humberside, Wales and Scotland there are 650,000 fewer jobs for men and 149,000 fewer full-time jobs for women.

Therefore, as a result of the economic miracle of the past decade, there are almost 800,000 fewer jobs north of the line from the Severn to the Wash. The only bright spot is the west midlands, where there are 8,000 extra full-time jobs for women. Therefore, the Government should not be proud of their record on jobs. By the Chancellor's own admission, the situation is unlikely to improve in the coming year. The squeeze which is meant to affect the southern part of the country is more than likely to affect the north and will mean that while the south gets a cold the north and the west will get influenza.

We have to take the Chancellor's predictions with a pinch of salt because he was so wrong last year. He predicts that the growth in GDP will slow done from 4·5 per cent. in 1988 to 2·5 per cent. in 1989, and that domestic demand will slow down from 6·5 per cent. in 1988 to 2·5 per cent. in 1989. Yet at the same time he predicts no fall in the current account deficit or import penetration when the economy is supposedly slowing down. He predicts that the more sophisticated GDP deflator will be 5·5 per cent. in 1989-90. That must mean a decline in the rate of growth of earnings and profits which are moving well ahead of inflation at present. It would be interesting to know from the Minister exactly how the Government plan to achieve that target. It is very difficult to perceive that the economy, which is running away on the credit boom, will slow down without an extremely hard landing.

Much has been said about the extension of PEPs and ESOPs. While ESOPs are to be welcomed, PEPs appear to be an attempt to bribe people to buy shares in water and electricity—a way in which the Government hope to get out of the hole which they have dug for themselves in attempting to privatise water and electricity, neither of which has been accepted by the public as a suitable industry for privatisation.

After last year's Budget, the Chancellor was hailed as Wonderman, but within six months he has been described as Blunderman—a blunderman who, in his Budget speech last week, appeared to have no confidence in the ability of British business to increase its share of the domestic market or overseas market. If he had, he would be predicting a drop in import penetration into Britain. The Chancellor is so scared stiff of the credit-based consumer boom that he unleashed in his last Budget that for yet another year he has refused to index duties on alcohol and cigarettes, showing the scandalous disregard for the health of individuals that he showed for the health of the nation

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

in his Budgets in the past couple of years. If the Chancellor cared for the nation's health, he would never have ended up with a £14 billion Budget surplus this year or be planning a similar or bigger surplus next year.

There are ways of spending the Budget surplus without stoking up inflation. For example, having got rid of the earnings rule for pensioners, the Chancellor might have struck an even bigger blow for the standing and the prosperity of pensioners by giving them back the £4 billion that was taken from them in the past decade. Such an investment in the state pension would not have unleashed the inflationary credit boom that we have experienced in the past year. A great deal could have been spent on infrastructure, the Health Service and education, and that would not have been inflationary. By its nature, such spending is used for products made in the home market, and that would have benefited British industry.

8.37 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I have listened with increasing disbelief to the catalogue of whining, whingeing, moaning and groaning which has eminated from the Opposition, as I did last year. They really are very bad losers. They recognise the Government's achievements but try to find fault with them. One has to admire their ingenuity in managing to find fault where practically none exists.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) said that people would regard with nausea the way in which the Government have continued to help the same friends they have helped in the past. That is true. We have consistently helped pensioners and we have done so again this year. The abolition of the earnings rule and the raising of the age allowance presumably are greeted with nausea by the electorate of Banff and Buchan, if we are to believe the hon. Gentleman. We have consistently aided charities and this year we have doubled the limit for charitable giving, yet we have been led to believe that that will be regarded with nausea. We have made the most significant contribution of any Government in the past decade to the financial independence of women, and this year we have helped them through assistance with savings schemes as women are often the savers in the family. Yet that is supposedly greeted with nausea.

Once again we have helped the lower paid by raising the tax thresholds, and particularly by the reforms of national insurance contributions. We have also helped small businesses through corporation tax changes, so we have helped our friends as we have in the past. I cannot believe that pensioners, charities, women, the lower paid and small businesses regard the Budget in quite the same light as the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan does.

The hon. Member went on to say that Government policies militate against those living in the north, particularly in Scotland, and favour those in the south. But his examples were rather peculiar. First, he quoted mortgage tax relief. I nearly did a double take because the level of relief is the same whether one lives in the north or south, but property prices are very much lower in the north. I should have thought that the system of mortgage tax relief would encourage the purchase of property in the north and migration to the north. That is not a regional policy to be deplored if the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan wants to encourage investment in the north.

To my utter amazement, having been involved in it recently, the hon. Gentleman then mentioned the Channel tunnel and its attendant rail link. He said that somehow that was of vast benefit to the south. He should try telling that to my constituents who fought hard not to have it. We are witnessing the devastation of the southern environment to bring prosperity to the north.

We need a regional policy, but it must be a policy connected with regional pay which would finally enable those in the south to recruit as they deserve. It is a poor show for the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan to talk about regional discrimination when we discriminate heavily in favour of Scotland in terms of public expenditure. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan is no longer in the Chamber to hear what I am saying.

Another hon. Member who is no longer in the Chamber talked about inflation and what he called the balance of payments crisis and the iniquitous level of interest rates. He appeared to think that such things were indicative of general failure. It is a tribute to the achievements of the Government and of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor that we now get hysterical at the thought of an inflation rate of 8 per cent. Over the past five years the average rate of inflation has been 5 per cent. When the Opposition were in power it was 15 per cent. and they tolerated 20 per cent. or more. They did not appear to regard it with anything like the hysteria they are trying to work up over a mere 8 per cent.

We are facing the problem of success. The Opposition do not understand that because they never have success and do not understand the problems associated with it. Yes, we have a balance of payments problem but it has not been brought about because exports have fallen. In fact, exports rose by 5 per cent. and are predicted to rise by another 7·5 per cent. We are facing the problems of a prosperous country whose inhabitants can afford to buy overseas. We are facing the problems of prosperity, not poverty. The Opposition know well how to address the problems of poverty and failure because they have had to cope with them for so long. They do not understand the problems of success and they cannot masquerade our outstanding achievements as Government failures.

The Opposition fail to acknowledge that interest rates have been low for several years. Therefore, when they have to rise, it looks painful. Over the past 15 years, interest rates have been higher than they are now and they have seldom been as low as they have been in the past couple of years. Once again, we are suffering from the reputation we have built ourselves of being able to have low inflation, low interest rates and an extremely successful economy. The slightest blip is greeted by the Opposition as proof that somehow our policies are not working. Our economy has never been more buoyant and we have never had a greater boom.

The only slight degree of sympathy I felt with anything said by Opposition Members was when the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) said that he wished the excise duty had been increased on drink and cigarettes. I sympathise and want to control the consumption of both those commodities. I am particularly alarmed at the increased incidence of uncontrolled drinking among the young and the increase in smoking among young girls.

However, we have to be practical. A few extra pence on the price of a packet of cigarettes or a bottle of whisky will not make any real difference to consumption. Somehow, if such commodities are a regular part of someone's life, people seem able to afford them regardless of what happens to taxation. We need a campaign of public information and health education, particularly among the young. We already have some such campaigns but I should like to see more. However, that is a matter for another debate.

In summary, the Opposition cannot recognise the difference between success and failure. They do not recognise that we have looked after, yet again, those least able to look after themselves. They fail completely to recognise what we have done for the financial and social status of women and for our pensioners. That failure of recognition reflects only their total lack of morale. They know that they could not achieve what we will have achieved and that the electorate will never give them an opportunity to try.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay) *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The wind-up speeches are expected at 9 o'clock so the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) can have a little more than 10 minutes if she wishes.

8.45 pm

Mrs. Gorman: I, too, wish to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and his predecessor on the amazing changes that they have brought about in our economy in the past 10 years. Those changes have restored people's incentive to go to work and to invest their money in creating new jobs. That is why I am doubly disappointed that the Budget did not do more to help women, who now form a most important part of the labour force. Almost half the people who go to work are women, and many of them have to carry out domestic duties as well. They need help with those duties if they are to fulfil both roles satisfactorily.

The Budget did not give any tax advantages to women who employ domestic help. In fact, it threatens to make life more difficult for those who employ people at relatively low rates of pay in domestic and other jobs. In a nasty little piece on page 46 of the financial statement, we are told that the Government intend to give the Inland Revenue increased powers to chase up people paying fairly modest sums of money directly to others. It is well known that if one employs domestic help, or a part-time gardener or someone who occasionally cleans out the gutters or the drains and generally helps to support the structure of the family unit, one usually pays in cash and it is usually relatively small amounts of money. It seems, however, that the Inland Revenue intends to beef up its attack on such arrangements. One can imagine the spectacle of a tax inspector with his ear to the letter box listening for the noise of children and perhaps of a babyminder scolding them. He will knock on the door and burst in, waving his little plastic card and asking the babyminder how much she is earning. If it is more than £50 per week, he will demand to know whether the harassed mother is operating PAYE and national insurance deductions. If I were the mother, I would empty the baby's chamberpot over the inspector's head.

I wonder whether the new strictures will apply to gentlemen who keep mistresses, which is a favourite topic just now. Will gentlemen who support a woman full-time, wholly and singularly, be visited by the same tax inspectors and be asked whether they are paying national insurance and operating PAYE on the money that they spend in support of their mistresses? That is the kind of legislation that we can well do without. It is a nasty aspect of the growing authoritarianism that we are seeing in taxation legislation.

The Inland Revenue seems to have the idea that those jobs will exist whether or not it spends its time chasing up employers, but I do not believe that they will. If we make it more difficult to employ a live-in cook, housekeeper, or whatever, fewer people will be employed in those roles. The hassle of operating the bureaucracy involved with those relatively modestly paid jobs puts people off. If hon. Members do not believe me, they should go to their local supermarket. One has to pack one's own shopping because the supermarket does not think the hassle of tax and national insurance worth while for relatively modestly paid packers. If one goes to the cinema, one stumbles down the aisle because the cinema owner does not consider it worth paying relatively modest sums and then taking income tax and national insurance to have somebody with a torch to show people to their seats.

Such jobs will not exist, and nor will people want to do them. When the Inland Revenue goes on the rampage after such groups of people, the people and the jobs usually disappear. A good example of that was when the Inland Revenue had a purge on people doing casual work in horticulture in Norfolk and Suffolk. The casual workers came now and again to carry out carrot topping, leek washing or strawberry picking. The Inland Revenue came with all its battalions to chase those people to find out whether they were paying tax and national insurance on their relatively modest incomes—which, over the year, did not amount to taxable pay, but which in the odd weeks when they were working went over the limit at which tax and national insurance began—and the result was that the crops rotted in the fields that year. The new imposition set out in the financial statement is likely to create a similar situation.

Miss Widdecombe: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Gorman: No; I have only a short time.

Such jobs will not exist and that will be a great pity for young people, many of whom come to cities and obtain jobs with accommodation attached by doing domestic work such as helping with children and the household. Such jobs will not exist for many older people who have part-time jobs helping with gardening, cutting grass, washing cars and cleaning out gutters and drains. Such odd jobs will no longer be a useful help to the family, but will disappear as a result of an authoritarian tradition making life more difficult.

The penalty for being found to be paying somebody more than £50 a week without operating one of the schemes is to be increased from £250 to £3,000. That is enough to scare some people into thinking that they would rather do without the extra pair of hands.

One of the proposals that I sent to the Chancellor, and which he ignored, along with most other people's, was that it was time we treated the family as a taxable unit—Mr. and Mrs. Average Taxpayer plc—and that jobs necessary

[Mrs. Gorman]

to help the family function, including domestic work, should be tax deductible. At present, if one has people to do jobs for one, one has to pay them out of taxed income. I pay £80 for domestic help, spread over two people in the course of a week. I have to pay that out of my taxed income. If I have to start keeping PAYE records and national insurance records, I shall not only have that extra work, but I shall have to earn the money to pay those wages. If I do not have help, my life will be made much more difficult. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor should either say that all those domestic jobs are tax deductible, which they are not at the moment, or he should concentrate on raising the base level at which tax starts to be paid.

Before the last war, the starting point for income tax was the equivalent of around £30,000 in today's money. We have gradually drawn lower-paid people into the tax net, which has not helped them or those who need assistance. Women are needed in the labour market. We say increasingly that we want their skills and time, yet we are not willing to do much to help them by allowing them to offset the costs of the domestic help that they need. I do not advocate creches, and I do not believe that the taxpayer should be expected to pay, but if a mother goes out to work and puts her baby into a creche or pays for a babyminder or home help, she should be able to deduct that from the money that she earns in the same way as her husband does if he pays for a secretary. If a mother pays for a secretary, she is allowed to deduct that from her earnings as well.

I hope that my right hon Friend the Chancellor will pay a great deal more attention in the next Budget to the special needs of women. They are wanted back in the labour force as well as being expected to continue their domestic role of supporting their husbands and families and creating comfortable and reasonably organised homes.

8.55 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I welcome this cautious, sensible and responsible Budget, the effect of which will be to reduce inflation, improve currency stability and reassure the financial markets. My right hon. Friend is correct to emphasise further improvements in the supply side of the economy by ensuring that the lower rate bands for corporation tax for small businesses move from £100,000 to £150,000. He is also correct to reform the national insurance system and to improve the operation of the earnings rule, so that pensioners are not penalised for working to supplement their pensions.

However, the Budget will be judged primarily by its success in reducing inflation to the targeted 4·5 per cent. in the second half of next year, thereby reducing retail expenditure, which takes 75 per cent. of our imports. The balance to be achieved is to reduce aggregate demand without damaging investment, which will fuel the 2·5 per cent. growth rate expected in the economy next year.

The measures taken by my right hon. Friend will work more quickly and effectively than anticipated, for three reasons. First, we hear much about the savings ratio being only 1·3 per cent. of disposable income in the consumer sector, but historical trends show that, when there is higher price inflation, the savings ratio in the consumer sector has been offset by a higher savings ratio in the public sector, which is now 3·3 per cent. of GDP against 1·5 per cent. in 1980, and in the industrial sector, where savings as a proportion of output are 12·1 per cent. against only 8·9 per cent. in 1980. The overall effect is that national savings, as a percentage of nominal GDP, are 23·1 per cent. Despite what we hear about the savings ratio in the consumer sector, it is the highest it has been since 1981.

Consumer spending will come down for the simple reason that, as the FSBR shows, it has been boosted by high asset values as people have had confidence that house values are rising and so have maintained their consumer spending. Now that the property market is flat, and is declining in some areas, such as London, it will have a significant effect on consumption. It is important to ensure that that fall in aggregate demand does not have an adverse effect on industrial profits. That is why the Confederation of British Industry urged a reduction of corporation tax to 25 per cent.

It should be remembered that, although there have been huge increases in productivity—ours has grown faster than that of any other industrialised country since 1980—although there was a large increase in output and exports last year and although manufacturing productivity is rising fast, a higher proportion of GDP—3·9 per cent.—goes in corporation tax, which is 2 per cent. in France, Germany and the United States. To that extent, I can see some justification for the CBI arguing for cuts in corporation tax, but I believe that until we can see how fast aggregate demand falls as a result of the increase in the savings ratios, such a policy would be premature and I believe that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor was right to resist it.

I should like to make one plea in terms of improving the savings ratio over the longer term and to urge my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to consider better treatment for friendly societies which increase self-reliance, enterprise and charitable works among lower income groups. Although I am pleased that share ownership, personal pensions and employee share schemes have been boosted by tax exemptions rising to £4,800 per year for personal equity plans and £2,000 per year for employee share schemes, I should like to know why the tax exemptions for saving plans with friendly societies still remain at a £100-per-year annual premium level.

I should like to know why the Revenue did not like the innovation of baby bonds that the friendly societies wanted to introduce recently, and I should also like to know why friendly societies, which represent 7 million people, were not allowed to widen their commercial activities as they wanted in the past few years. I understand that they made representations to the Chancellor and to the Economic Secretary in July and November last year, and I believe that they are worthy of consideration.

9.1 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Today's Budget debate has been distinguished by many excellent speeches, from a former Prime Minister and from three former Treasury Ministers, two from the Opposition and one who is the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service.

Perhaps most of all, the debate has been graced by a distinguished, memorable and much applauded maiden speech from the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr.

Hague), the youngest Conservative Member. In making one theme of his speech the interests of the elderly and in putting the case of pensioners so eloquently when he closed his speech he, least of all, could be accused of self-interest, and he found an echo for his sentiments among hon. Members of all parties. I must tell him that when I arrived here as a young Member of Parliament I was described in *The Times* as being 58 years old and a Labour party veteran. The hon. Gentleman has come here with a great reputation, having given advice to the Prime Minister at the age of 16, and no doubt he has a great future ahead of him. I noticed from his curriculum vitae that he has been a former speech writer for the Foreign Secretary. I can only say that his speech shows that his humour and content have improved immeasurably over the years. We look forward to many distinguished speeches from him as he speaks up, as he did today, so eloquently on behalf of the needs of his constituents.

This is a Budget at the end of which, by common consent, hon. Members of all parties have said that the biggest beneficiaries are not home owners struggling with high mortgage payments, not mothers facing price rises having witnessed the freezing of child benefit, not pensioners on basic pensions—despite the welcome changes in the earnings rules and the age additions—and not working mothers who have lost out because the Chancellor has refused to remove the tax on workplace nurseries. Despite the welcome changes in national insurance, most of all the beneficiaries are not the low paid because as a result of the combination of the tax and national insurance changes, sombody on £70 per week will receive only about 21p per week extra. As the Chancellor well knows, the biggest beneficiaries are those couples in BUPA, who have private medical insurance and who are over 60, who can receive tax benefits of up to £800 or £900 per year if they use the system properly when one small part of the Finance Bill is passed after we debate it later. The benefit will be £18 or £19 per week for a couple in BUPA, £3 per week for those paying national insurance through those reductions and, as the Chancellor well knows, only £1·50 per week for those earning less than £100 per week, and there will be nothing for many part-time workers. When the choice is between helping the low paid of this country and the rest, it is perfectly clear, as this Budget shows, that the Tories will not help the low paid; they will help those most well off most of the time.

However, our complaint about the Budget goes deeper than that. The Budget is wrong because it reflects and exposes an economic strategy that is wrong. It is a Budget that does nothing to meet the problems of the present, such as the high interest rates and high mortgage rates that many families and many industries face. It is a Budget that has done nothing to meet the challenges that we must face in the future, such as the skills shortages, the technology bottlenecks, the regional imbalances and the problems that we face as we move towards 1992. Most of all, it is a Budget that will do nothing for the problems of the present and nothing to meet the challenges of the future because it is the Budget of a Chancellor who is imprisoned and haunted by the mistakes of his past.

Before the Budget we had the highest inflation, the highest interest rates and the highest trade deficit of all our major competitors in Europe. After the Budget, with the Chancellor's new forecasts, we still have the highest inflation, the highest interest rates and the worst trade deficit of our major competitors in Europe. I shall tell Conservative Members what the position in Europe really is. Inflation is at 3·3 per cent. in France; 2·6 per cent. in West Germany; and, outside Europe, it is 1·4 per cent. in Japan and 4·7 in America, but inflation will move to 8 per cent. in the next few weeks in Britain. Interest rates are 10·75 per cent. in America, less than 7 per cent. in West Germany and less than 5 per cent. in Japan, but they are 13 per cent. here—twice the level of the interest rates in both Japan and West Germany.

We also have a trade deficit that is unparalleled in our history, yet this is the Chancellor who came to the House last March and told us at the end of the Budget debate that he was presiding over an economic miracle. He told us that our prospects had never been better and that we were experiencing an economic transformation, an industrial resurgence, a British renaissance and a miracle that he compared to that of Japan. Even in the past 10 years, the economic performance of Britain has been so unlike that of Japan that Japan has grown at twice the rate of Britain. Japan's rate of investment growth has been twice as high as ours; its growth in industrial production has been four times as high and its growth in manufacturing output has been five times as high. The great achievement of the past 10 years is not that we have managed to rival Japan or West Germany, but that having fallen below France, we have now fallen below Italy on almost every indicator.

The Britain that the Chancellor tells us will enter the 1990s—*[Interruption.]* If the Chancellor does not think that that is true, I shall give way to him now—*[Interruption.]* Yes, the Chancellor will speak later and I hope that he will answer the point because the Common Market's own forecasts not only show that Italy has surpassed us in national income, in growth rate and in the growth of exports, but that over the next year and into 1991 the growth rate of our economy will be slower than that of almost every other economy in the European Community.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that, in terms of investment, Britain's rate of growth is faster than that of any other member of the European Community and that this country in the 1980s compares extremely well with the position when the Labour party was in power in the 1970s?

Mr. Brown: I shall have to give the hon. Gentleman my statistics because he fails to appreciate what hon. Members of other parties seem to know—that the real value of manufacturing investment is still below that of 1979 when this Government came to power. That is what the latest figures confirm. As for the share of investment in our national income, it is well known that it is lower in Britain than in almost any other European country, with the exception of countries such as Belgium, and I advise the hon. Gentleman that Japan has been investing 30 per cent. of its national income while we have reached the figure of 18 or 19 per cent.

Not only have we the highest interest rates, the highest inflation and the worst trade deficit of our competitors now, but on the Common Market's predictions our growth rate over the next two years will be lower than that of France and Italy, lower than that of Belgium, the Netherlands and Eire and even lower than in Greece, Spain and Portugal. Those are the facts produced by the European Commission.

[Mr. Brown]

The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) might also be interested in the facts on investment. For 1990 and in the run-up to 1992, it is expected that investment in Spain, Portugal and Greece will grow at roughly three times the rate of investment in the United Kingdom, at 10 per cent. in Portugal, 9 per cent. in Spain, but at about a third of that in Britain, according to the figures that the Chancellor has produced for Britain in his Budget statement.

Our case against the Chancellor is not only that he engineered a consumer boom based on credit and tax cuts which, without a proper, sustained and adequate increase in investment, was bound to lead to the problems that have been created and was bound to be unsustainable, but that he has failed to learn from his mistakes. Having failed to learn from his mistakes, he now intends to repeat them, and nowhere is that more obvious than in his attitude to what is to happen to the Budget surplus.

It is a surplus that he did not forecast. It is a surplus that he acquired by selling our national assets and by breaking the link between pensions and earnings. It is a surplus that he admits he cannot use now but which he is to use this year only to pay off the national debt. The worst thing about the surplus—the Chancellor made it absolutely clear in his Budget speech, and perhaps the Prime Minister made it even clearer when she spoke to the Conservative council on Saturday—is that, even when we know that we have 1 million schoolchildren in classrooms that were built before 1914—*[Interruption.]* Many classrooms have been declared by the Audit Commission to be unsafe and should be closed down.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Two schools in my constituency are over 300 years old. One could not find more delightful schools than those.

Mr. Brown: If the hon. Lady is satisfied with the condition of the schools in her constituency, that is one thing, but the implications in the report by the Audit Commission about the safety risk of old schools being kept open without investment in them are very clear. They worry many Opposition Members.

It is not only schools that are affected. Two thirds of hospital wards were built in the days of voluntary and charity hospitals. Many of our roads have a life of less than 10 years without proper new investment. We know what must be spent to deal with the problems of pollution and the environment. Most of all, we know that if we do not invest in training and in the supply side of the economy in this decade, the money that we refuse to invest will have to be spent on unemployment and redundancies in the next decade.

The worrying thing about the Chancellor's surplus is not only that most of the surplus will not be used for public investment now, but that he has absolutely no intention of later using it for proper investment in the economy. As we now know and as was made clear on page 7 of the Red Book, public spending fell in real terms last year. It was £300 million less on the railways alone, when people are concerned about safety. But the answer that the Chancellor gave in his Budget statement is clear. His first priority is not the reduction of the national debt, the reduction of pollution, congestion or the risk to safety on the roads or on the railways, or the reduction of the waiting lists for health services or housing; it is the reduction of taxes for those people who are already wealthy. To discharge the Tory party's historic mission to the very rich of our country, the Chancellor is less interested in paying off the national debt. In future years he will be more interested in paying off his political debts to those who support the Conservative party.

The 1989 Budget is an interlude between act I of the Chancellor's top rate tax cuts and act II. He is not a Chancellor who has learnt from his mistakes—he is merely giving himself a pause between them. Any other Government would make investment in this country the priority both now and in the future.

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): How does the Labour party propose to contain the inflationary consequences of a major increase in capital investment demand for an over-pressed building industry on top of the large increases already proposed by the Government?

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. The House will remember his famous statement about this time last year, suggesting that £5 billion to £6 billion in additional public money might be spent. I will not take the hon. Gentleman's lectures on whether public spending is inflationary. The CBI has made it clear that the neglect of investment in this country, skill shortages, congestion and the overheating in the south-east are responsible for much of the inflation. That inflation was not created directly by the Chancellor. I refer to electricity and water price rises and everything else. The neglect of investment in our country is not the only issue in this debate. The issue is the Government's unfair and unjust policies.

Even after the national insurance changes, 2·4 million of the lowest paid workers will get no benefit at all. Four million will receive anything between nothing and £1·51. For many of them, their national insurance gain will be taken away by losses in family credit and housing benefit. The "tax-cutting" Chancellor ends a Budget by actually putting another 160,000 of our low paid into income tax when, for the low-income people in this country, the share of the bottom 10 per cent. from the Budget gains is only 3 per cent., while for the top 20 per cent. it is about 30 per cent. this year alone. Last year, the Chancellor could give £3 billion to the rich, and give it in March. This year, he can give less than £1 billion to the poor, and give it only in October. With his colleague, he is to remove wage protection for millions of our workers under wages councils in the next few months. This Budget does not correct the errors of last year—it compounds them.

Is it not typical of the Conservative party that, even when a Budget is advertised as a Budget for the low paid, the higher paid in the country do best out of it at the end of the day? It completes a decade when the gap between rich and poor has been growing at a faster rate than at any time since the war—the rich getting richer while many of our citizens are seeing their living standards fall in real terms. Slowly but surely, the two nations that the Government have created are drifting apart as a result of the Chancellor's policies.

Just as the Budget does little for low-income Britain, it will do little for any part of Britain. The Chancellor still promises us zero inflation. In the next few weeks, we shall see rates rise by 8 per cent. and electricity charges rise by 6 per cent., making 15 per cent. over a year and a bit. We shall see water costs rise by anything from 10 per cent. to

30 per cent. We shall see gas prices rise, television licence fees rise, prescription costs rise, and new health charges introduced.

By one measure in this Budget alone, we shall see bus fares increase again. What does the Chancellor say to that? I remind him of what he said in his Budget statement last March. When he spoke to the House on that Tuesday, with his usual modesty, he said:

"it is a testimony to the soundness of our policies that the present strong and sustained upswing, unlike almost all of its predecessors, has not led to any resurgence of inflation."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1988, Vol. 129, c. 994.]

Yet our inflation is above the European average for the fourth year running, twice what it was at this time last year, and higher than when the right hon. Gentleman first proclaimed to the House that he would eliminate it. As he tells us in his Budget forecast, while France's inflation will be 3 per cent., Germany's less than 3 per cent., and Japan's 2 per cent., his great success will be to have brought inflation to 5·5 per cent.

Every forecast that the Chancellor has made has gone wrong. His forecast about prices, the deficit, the money supply, savings—all were wrong. Even his prediction that this would be the first Budget to be televised was wrong, and how fortunate he is in that respect. Perhaps his worst forecast of all is that by staying on for a year as Chancellor after the Budget last March, when he finally goes to the City his market value will somehow be enhanced. One test of a successful Tory Budget was laid down by no less an authority than the Prime Minister herself a few years ago. She said:

"The markets have already given their verdict. Already there has been a welcome fall in interest rates and mortgage rates."

On top of price rises, home owners in this country are facing mortgage payments that have risen on average by £40 per month, by £50 for young home owners, and for home owners in the south-east they have risen by £70 since the Chancellor's last Budget. The Governor of the Bank of England, who wrote that celebrated letter to the Chancellor a few weeks ago, in a public speech only a few days ago said that the mortgage and credit card debts that we face in the 1980s remind him of the problems with Third-world debt in the 1970s.

When the Governor talks about the further squeeze on household finances, no wonder the Prime Minister is no longer talking about a Chancellor who is brilliant and marvellous and wonderful; no wonder she now appears hardly able to bear to mention his name. A quarter of a million people are estimated to be in arrears, and 500,000 are having to turn to the citizens advice bureaux for advice about their mortgages. There have been 20,000 repossessions—a figure that the Governor of the Bank of England, in his speech, said would undoubtedly rise. Perhaps the one repossession with anything to offer the nation—the eviction of the Chancellor from 11 Downing street—cannot be expected immediately, not because he has been doing well but because his potential successors, the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Energy, have been doing so badly.

Let me tell the Chancellor something about the current thinking of his friend Sir Alan Walters. I understand that at a meeting at the Mansion house—about 300 people were charged £100 a time—Sir Alan gave his verdict on the Budget. I understand that he praised what he called the architect of Britain's economic revival—the Prime Minister. The Chancellor will be pleased to know that Sir Alan welcomed the Budget too. But let me tell the Chancellor that Sir Alan praised the Budget not because interest rates would come down but because they would stay up, because he believed that recessions should not be avoided; they can be good for the economy. No doubt the Chancellor cannot wait to have the benefit of Sir Alan's full-time advice.

What of the trade deficit? Predicted to be £4 billion last year, it was £11 billion by the time of the Autumn Statement, and is now £15 billion. I suppose the good news is that it has stabilised; the bad news is that it has stabilised at £15 billion. The Chancellor still calls this a problem of success—freak figures caused by an investment boom. It is a second-grade problem, self-correcting, he tells us, but it is a problem big enough now for him to seek to doctor the statistics. All that is needed to convince us that a real problem exists is a multi-million-pound advertising campaign, led by Lord Young, telling us that it has been solved, or an announcement from 10 Downing Street that the Prime Minister is about to take personal charge.

If the Chancellor does not think that the trade deficit is a problem, what of other Ministers? I have here a press release from the tourism Minister. Entitled "Your Country Needs You", it says:

"Hopefully the British public will increasingly appreciate that holiday taking in the United Kingdom is not only a stimulating and enjoyable experience but will help our balance of payments as well.

With the cumulative tourism deficit of nearly £1·8 billion, compared with £1 billion for the same period last year, perhaps the time has come to say to the British holidaymaker "*Your country needs you.*"

A problem not serious enough to delay the Chancellor is sufficiently worrying to the tourism Minister to prompt him to tell millions of holidaymakers that their country needs them—not in Majorca but in Margate, not in Benidorm but in Blackpool—with all the impact that that would have on his £15 billion deficit.

Perhaps the Chancellor remembers what the Foreign Secretary, who was then Chancellor, said in the first Budget of this Government 10 years ago. No one supported the then Chancellor more strongly than the current Chancellor. No one was as great an advocate of his policies as the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson). What did the now Foreign Secretary tell us in that Budget speech? He said:

"Progress internationally . . . will not cure the deep-seated weaknesses of own domestic economy. Nor will North Sea oil."

He went on to say that North Sea oil

"must not be allowed to conceal the grim truth about what has been happening to the balance of our own trade, particularly in manufactured goods." [*Official Report*, 12 June 1979; Vol. 968, c. 238.]

A problem that the current Chancellor says is unimportant was one of the themes of the Budget of 1979. Should we now conceal what the present Foreign Secretary called the grim truth when we have a trade deficit of £15 billion—a £15 billion deficit in manufactured goods? The truth is that the Chancellor has no policy to sort out the problems of the trade deficit. The truth is that the trade deficit will be with us for many years to come if his policies continue. No industry is better off as a result of the high interest rates and the high exchange rate that the Chancellor is pursuing. No community is better protected. No family feels at the moment that it is doing better.

But is it not the saddest of all commentary on this Government that Ministers could complete a National

[Mr. Brown]

Health Service review—could look at the needs of the service; could look at the 130,000 people on the waiting lists for hip joint and other orthopaedic operations; could look at the 70,000, mainly pensioners, on the waiting lists for cataract and other eye operations; could look at the shortage of nurses and doctors and at the huge repair bills we face—and decide that the first priority for this Budget, the consideration above all others, should be the needs of those who are already wealthy enough to afford private medical insurance in the first place?

The death grant for pensioners has been abolished to save £18 million, housing benefit has been cut, eyesight test charges introduced, dental charges for pensioners introduced, the link with earnings not restored, but somehow £40 million is available to give private medical insurance tax relief to those who are already rich enough to afford such insurance. No wonder BUPA ran an advertising campaign last week. I understand that the Chancellor is well within his rights to complain to the Advertising Standards Authority, not because the photograph gives a false impression of him, but because the advertisement gives a false impression of who was the author of the Budget proposal. It is a proposal which the Chancellor did not originate, which he does not support, which he could barely mention when he made his Budget speech last Tuesday, and which he knows will cost a lot in 1990, and a lot more in the years to come. It is the policy not of the Second Lord of the Treasury but of the First Lord of the Treasury.

Last year the Chancellor was overruled by the Prime Minister on the question of the exchange rate. Later he was overruled on interest rates. This year he has been overruled on the most controversial item—the £40 million for private medical insurance. Perhaps next year, on the morning of Budget day—in the interests of accountability, if for no other reason—the press should be invited to a photo opportunity in which the Prime Minister will take her Chancellor for a short walk in St. James's park. This proposal is the ultimate in redistribution. It is not the rich supporting the poor, but now the poor compelled to support the rich. The more one buys the more subsidy one receives: "The richer you are, the more you can get. If you are rich, you will be treated, while others have to wait." In fact, this tax relief is a unique and indefensible device whereby the queue is compelled to subsidise the queue jumper.

We now know what the Prime Minister meant when she talked at the general election about private medical care. She wanted the doctor of her choice, the hospital of her choice, the time of her choice and the tax relief of her choice—not for our health care to be safe in her hands, but for her private health care to be save in ours. In a civilised society, the £40 milion going to those who do not need it should go to those who do. That is what the Labour party stands for and that is what the whole country supports.

The only role that the Government are now enthusiastic about for public spending is that it should be used not to extend the rights of the many but to shower privileges on the few—business expansion subsidies from public funds to create top-rate tax shelters for owners of private rented property, PEP subsidies from public funds to create tax shelters for those who already have considerable shares and BUPA-style subsidies from public funds to create tax shelters for owners of private medical policies.

Does the Prime Minister not realise that no matter how many private schools, private hospitals and private roads she creates, there will still be a need in the public sector for decent schools, proper hospitals and adequately-funded community services for the vast majority of the people?

After 10 years during which our growth rate has been half that of Japan, we have been manufacturing and producing less than Italy, our economy has invested less of our national income in ourselves than even Spain and Portugal, we are investing less of our national income in innovation than Taiwan and we are investing a smaller share of our national income in education and training than Korea. After 10 years, there is more and worse poverty throughout the country. Even in the past 12 months, housing benefit has been cut, child benefit frozen, new charges introduced, the poll tax imposed in Scotland and thousands of teenagers have been denied any help.

In 10 years, to make a few individuals richer, the Prime Minister and her Ministers have been prepared to make all our communities poor. It is not just our Health Service, our roads and our railways that are unsafe in their hands; it is not just our environment, our water and even our food that is unsafe in their hands; it is not just our children's education that is unsafe in their hands; the whole government of this country is unsafe in their hands. A Budget that should have been preparing us for the challenges of the 1990s leaves us paying the price for the problems that the Chancellor created in the 1980s. We need a Budget for Britain—a Budget for fairness, efficiency and investment. For that, the people of this country will have to look to Labour.

9.31 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I should like to begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) on an outstanding maiden speech. It was no surprise to those of us who were present when, at the age of 16, he made that remarkable and precocious speech in the economic debate at the Conservative party conference of 1977. As he generously pointed out, he follows a distinguished predecessor at Richmond. I am sure that his future career will be equally distinguished and we greatly look forward to hearing him again.

We do not greatly look forward to hearing again the sort of exhibition that we heard from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who displayed a degree of economic illiteracy which even he has not plumbed before. He went on about the need for increased public expenditure from a surplus which, if his policies had been in operation, would never have existed in the first place. When asked, in the only intervention on his speech, by my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) the clear and simple question of how much extra public expenditure he was advocating, he was wholly unable to answer. He confirmed by his speech that the Opposition have a complete policy vacuum. It was clear from the latter part of his remarks, as his side recognises, that he is living in a fantasy world entirely of his own.

We also had a speech from the leader of the Social and Liberal Democrats. I am glad that he is in his place. He told us—I took this down—that "People want to be

brought together." It was, alas, a wasted plea, because the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) was not in the Chamber to hear it.

We also had a thoughtful contribution from my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery). My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark), in a powerful speech, mentioned the further help that this Budget provides for charities and charitable giving. It is a striking fact that, over the past 10 years, giving to charity has more than doubled in real terms. That is not the hallmark of a selfish society.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South also asked about the relative growth of imports of capital and consumer goods. I can tell him that, in each of the past two years, imports of capital goods have risen considerably faster than imports of consumer goods. This is, of course, closely related to the huge investment boom that we have been enjoying, to which I will turn later.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) also welcomed the Budget, as did many other of my hon. Friends, and he followed this up with a number of more or less technical questions about life the other side of the looking glass as it were, with a substantial public sector debt repayment in place of a substantial public sector borrowing requirement. I look forward to discussing these matters with the Select Committee which he chairs with such distinction.

It is a remarkable fact that, after four days of debate on a Budget containing so many measures that the Finance Bill is likely to be the longest ever, all that the Opposition have found to criticise is the provision of tax relief for medical insurance premiums for the elderly. That was all that they were able to go on and on and on about—and that was, of course, something that had already been announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, a couple of months ago, in the context of the Government's plans for the National Health Service. It accounts in 1990-91 for some £40 million out of total remissions of £3,500 million in that year.

I shall not tonight detain the House with a list of all the many other measures in the 1989 Budget, but I do propose to draw attention to some of them.

Foremost among them is the major reform and reduction of employees' national insurance contributions. This was supported by such unlikely bedfellows as the Institute of Directors and the TUC, and it will achieve two important objectives. First, it will either remove altogether or greatly reduce the present serious work disincentive of ultra-high marginal rates at particular points at the very lowest end of the earnings scale. Secondly, it will mean that, from October, some 15 million employees earning over £115 a week—which is well below half average earnings—will be £3 a week better off. This is a substantial measure by any standards, as its cost shows—some £2¾ billion in a full year.

Then there is the abolition of the earnings rule for pensioners. This has been widely welcomed on all sides. It, too, is a reform which will remove not merely an injustice, but also a major work disincentive, at a time when, for demographic reasons, the demand for older workers to stay on beyond retirement age is likely to become steadily greater.

Then there is the major reshaping of the tax relief for pensions, designed in particular to place for the first time a limit, albeit a generous one, on the amount of tax relief any pension can attract, and at the same time to encourage still further the provision of personal pensions, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment spoke about in his speech at the opening of the debate today. The new pensions package will not only be more equitable, but it will also encourage both greater flexibility and greater personal responsibility in private provision for retirement.

All this has to be seen in the context of the important further package of measures to encourage wider share ownership. It is clear from the response already that the new and improved rules for personal equity plans, in particular, will ensure their future success and the steadily growing importance of PEPs as a home for the savings of the people.

Wider share ownership will, in time, reverse the steady drift to ever greater institutional ownership of British industry; it enables the people of the country to secure a direct stake in the success of British business; it provides the best form of worker participation; and it sounds the death knell of Socialism.

But I would add just this. It is important that the growing public desire to own shares, and the further assistance provided in this Budget, are supported by the stock exchange as it moves to a paperless trading system. I call upon the stock exchange tonight to ensure that the needs of the small investor are fully met in the new system.

Meanwhile, these Budget changes—and there are many others too: reforming the taxation of life assurance, simplifying the taxation of close companies, and reducing the burden of corporation taxes for smaller firms—add up to our eighth successive tax-cutting Budget.

What a contrast with Labour, when Budget day was approached with dread and apprehension. The question that everyone was asking then was what tax was going to go up, would it be income tax or something else, and what new taxes would be introduced. Would it be capital transfer tax, the national insurance surcharge or what else? That was the question then.

Moreover, we have achieved our eighth successive tax-cutting Budget while securing a massive improvement in the public finances, with a surplus, or debt repayment, this year of no less than £14 billion and a further £14 billion repayment in prospect for the year ahead. As a share of GDP, debt interest in the coming year is set to be at its lowest since 1915.

So, unable to attack this year's Budget, the party opposite—we heard more about it tonight—has spent much of its time attacking last year's Budget. Well, I know the Opposition did not like it—they made that abundantly clear at the time—but they will have to grit their teeth and live with it because that Budget has happened and every one of the reforms and reductions it introduced remain on the statute book and will continue on the statute book. Nothing in it has been rescinded or reversed, nor will it be. As a result, the benefits of that Budget will continue to flow in the years that lie ahead.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): The Chancellor will know that, this week, one of the Scottish newspapers spoke about how many people were getting into serious debt because of the Chancellor's policies and were going to bankruptcy court to be declared bankrupt. They are probably taking the advice of the Prime Minister: when the letter comes through the door

[Mr. Thomas Graham]

they "bag it and bin it" as that is the only way they will win it. The Chancellor has introduced mad policies that have not helped the Scottish people.

Mr. Lawson: I clearly should not have given way.

I know there are some who seek to attribute to last year's Budget responsibility for the increase in inflation that subsequently emerged. That wholly misunderstands both the role of fiscal policy and the time lag between cause and effect in economic affairs. Let us just look at what the OECD, an international organisation frequently quoted by the Opposition, and which does assign a rather greater short-term importance to fiscal changes than I would do, has to say. After studying fiscal policy in all the major industrial nations comprising the G7, and making what it considers the proper cyclical adjustments, the OECD has concluded that the United Kingdom, in 1988, tightened its fiscal policy more than any other country, and has the tightest fiscal stance in the entire G7.

The Opposition really cannot have it both ways. They cannot say at one and the same time that last year's Budget, which produced a surplus of £14 billion, was reckless, and that this year's Budget, which is set to achieve an identical surplus, is too cautious. No. The plain fact is that the temporary re-emergence of rising inflation has nothing whatever to do with last year's Budget. It has a great deal more to do with the worldwide loosening of monetary policy in the wake of the stock market crash of October 1987. That perhaps is why the rise in inflation is a worldwide phenomenon, and it is worth noting in this context that commodity prices too have been rising, with metal prices twice what they were two years ago.

Meanwhile, the remedy, a sharp rise in interest rates to tighten monetary policy, has duly been applied. Yet despite the fact that the Opposition Front Bench dimly recognise the monetary nature of the inflationary threat —at least, that, I take it, accounts for the constant references of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) to the credit boom—despite that dim recognition, all they have to offer on this front is a call for lower interest rates and indeed a lower exchange rate. How they imagine lower interest rates would deter borrowing beggars belief. The truth is that what they put forward is an inflationists' charter, for the simple reason that the Labour party is the party of inflation, just as it is the party of high taxation—it always has been and always will be. *[Interruption.]* They do not like this. Let them just look once again at their record when they were last in power. Theirs was an inflation rate which averaged more than 15 per cent. for the whole of their term of office, so I am certainly not going to take any lessons from them about inflation.

Ten years ago next week, this House debated a motion of no confidence in the then Labour Government, whose passage brought about the then Government's downfall. In that debate, in a desperate attempt to save himself, the then Prime Minister, the noble Lord Callaghan, pledged himself to do better in future in these terms:

"There is a bold and ambitious target, to which we have set our hands, of working to get inflation below 5 per cent. in the next three years. That is the objective."—[*Official Report*, 28 March 1979; Vol. 965, c. 477.]

During the whole of the time that I have been Chancellor, a period slightly longer than the full term of the last Labour Government, inflation has indeed averaged below 5 per cent.—Labour's "bold and ambitious target" which they never got within a million miles of achieving, nor would they have done, as the people of Britain well understood. Even now, when inflation has temporarily risen above that mark, its underlying level is well below the underlying level of inflation in the best month that Labour ever achieved.

Nor has our success been secured at the price of slower economic growth. Nothing could be further from the truth. During the whole of my period as Chancellor so far, economic growth in Britain has been well over half as much again as what it was under Labour, which, as I have already pointed out, was a roughly comparable period of years.

Indeed, it is worth looking, for an overall picture, at the amount by which the rate of inflation exceeded the rate of growth over the two periods. Under Labour, the rate of inflation exceeded the rate of growth by 13½ per cent. During my time as Chancellor, the difference has come down to 1½ per cent. That is a measure of the difference. Admittedly, economic growth is now set to slow down for a year or two, but the lower growth now projected over the next couple of years—1989 and 1990—is still higher than the average rate of growth under Labour. Labour certainly had many crises to grapple with. In fact, there was hardly a moment when they did not have a crisis. But I have to admit that one problem it never had to worry about was rapid economic growth. Indeed, during the 1970s Britain was the slowest growing economy of all the main European nations. During the 1980s we have had the fastest growing economy of all the main European nations.

This transformation has seen unemployment fall by a million in less than two years since the last general election, and the number of people in work the highest in our history. There was a time when the Opposition professed to care about unemployment. It is quite clear from their lack of enthusiasm when unemployment comes down that they could not care a fig.

Of course the dramatic improvement in the performance of the British economy has been based on an equally dramatic improvement in productivity. In 1980, the Brookings Institute in Washington produced a gloomy report on the British economy, which concluded with these words:

"The studies in this volume indicate that Britain's malaise stems largely from its productivity problem, whose origins lie deep in the social system."

It was not the social system which was at fault, but the Socialist system. With the jettisoning of the culture of Socialism in favour of the enterprise culture, we have seen Britain leap from the bottom of the manufacturing productivity growth league in the 1970s to the top in the 1980s.

There has been a similar transformation in investment, about which Opposition Members prate so much. Nothing provides clearer evidence of the way in which the Labour party is completely out of touch with what is really happening in Britain today than its failure to comprehend the truth about investment. That was shown, once again, by the response made by the Leader of the Opposition to the Budget itself last Tuesday, when he said:

"After 10 years . . . the proportion of total investment in GDP is lower than during any year under the last Labour Government."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 313.]

That is what he said. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Opposition Members cheer. In fact, at almost 21¾ per

cent., the truth is that the proportion of total investment in GDP is higher than during any year under the last Labour Government. Those are the facts.

Nor is that all. Business investment—public and private sector combined—is now at its highest proportion of GDP ever—the highest ever. Whereas under Labour total investment grew scarcely at all, and well below the growth of consumption, over the past seven years investment in this country has grown more than twice as fast as consumption—something that only Japan among the major nations even so much as approaches. And not only is investment in Britain at an all-time record high and growing fast. Its quality has improved immeasurably, as evidenced by the dramatic improvement in the return on capital.

What about public sector investment, about which the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East waxed so lyrical, and with such hypocrisy? Take investment in the railways. Under Labour, a rise of only 8 per cent. in real terms. Under this Government, four times as much—up 32 per cent. Or major roads: under Labour, a cut of 41 per cent. —that is the truth; under this Government, up by 30 per cent. Or water: under Labour, a cut of 25 per cent.; under this Government, up by 50 per cent. Or hospitals: under Labour, a cut of 30 per cent.—a cut; under this Government, up 31 per cent. in real terms. And of course private sector investment is at its highest level ever—not merely in absolute terms, but as a share of GDP. So much for Labour's humbug, hypocrisy and sheer ignorance about investment.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I am grateful to the Chancellor for giving way at the point where he talks about humbug and hypocrisy. Why is it that poor old-age pensioners have to be put through invidious means tests as to income and capital for income support and housing benefit, while well-off people will be subjected to no test whatsoever and will be subsidised by the poor for private medical insurance? Why does the right hon. Gentleman defend that?

Mr. Lawson: Here we are again—this complete obsession with tax relief for private medical insurance, and no answer at all about investment, which is at the heart of our economic success.

I urge Opposition Members, if they really wish to understand what is happening in Britain today, to listen to the informed voice of the CBI. I refer to their chief economic adviser Professor McWilliams, who recently gave a lecture under the auspices of the CBI entitled "The Renaissance of British Management". Needless to say, it was barely reported, but I warmly commend it to the House—not least to the party opposite, whose need for economic education is palpable. Let me quote a few extracts.

"United Kingdom growth in the 1980s can now be seen to have been faster"—

[Interruption.] Oh no, they do not like anything about the success of the British economy. The cannot stand the success of the British economy. I will start again:

"United Kingdom growth in the 1980s can now be seen to have been faster than in any other recent decade and the comparison with other countries now shows a fairly substantial outperformance by the United Kingdom in the latest decade, with the United Kingdom growing over a fifth faster than the average of the other economies."

He went on:

"In the first half of the 1980s, the proportion of United Kingdom investment in plant and machinery devoted to computers rose from 10 per cent. to 20 per cent.—a rise on a much faster scale than anywhere else in the world."

He continued, after this thorough study:

"The United Kingdom has been an economic success. . . and I believe that the success will continue."

Mr. John Smith: The Chancellor, as he well knows, is responsible for everything in his Budget, whether he likes it or not. Will he please tell us the public policy justification for the absence of a means test for private medical insurance for the rich, and tell us why the rest of us should pay the Prime Minister's bills?

Mr. Lawson: Is the—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman suggesting that tax relief should be subjected to a means test? Is he going to suggest that mortgage interest relief should be subjected to a means test? Is he? Is he? Answer that. Perhaps he can answer that.

Mr. Smith: I asked a perfectly simple question. We have been lectured about the targeting of benefit. Why is this benefit not targeted? All the poor are targeted. Why are the Conservative party's clients not targeted?

Mr. Lawson: Not only was the right hon. and learned Gentleman totally unable to answer my question, but he was also totally unable to distinguish between the remission of taxation and an increase in public expenditure. He was quite unable to understand the difference between them.

Let me return to the Budget. It has above all been a prudent and cautious Budget. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Lawson: They cannot take it, Mr. Speaker. That is the trouble—they cannot take it.

It has above all been a prudent and cautious Budget —perhaps even more prudent and cautious than was strictly necessary, but economics is an inexact science at the best of times and that was clearly the right direction in which to err.

It certainly appears to have struck terror into the Opposition. This could not have been made clearer than in the intervention by the Leader of the Opposition right at the end of the speech by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary last Wednesday. The Leader of the Opposition, with desperation manifest in his voice, said this:

"The right hon. Gentleman has referred several times to the great virtue of using the Budget surplus to repay the national debt. Can he confirm that that will continue to be an objective of the Government, should they have surpluses, and that it will continue until the next general election and not be impeded by any desire that the Government may have to make a tax cut before the next general election?"—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 435.]

Well, I have given the right hon. Gentleman's question the most careful consideration. It would not, of course, have occurred to me to think in terms of the next general election, but since the right hon. Gentleman has raised the matter, I have to inform him that I regret I cannot rule out the future use of the current surplus to reduce the burden of taxation. Indeed, it is the Government's policy to do just that.

In short, this Budget is a Budget which, in the firm support it gives to the defeat of inflation by monetary policy, provides a solid base for further economic success,

[Mr. Lawson]

including progress to a basic rate of income tax of 20p in the pound, in the years that lie ahead. Once again, I commend it to the House.

Question put:—

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply;
(b) for refunding any amount of tax, otherwise than in a case where the amount has been paid by reason of a mistake;
(c) for varying the rate of that tax otherwise than in relation to all supplies and importations; or
(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.

The House divided: Ayes 341, Noes 222.

Division No. 122] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Killedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom

Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Fred Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: I am now required, under Standing Order No. 50(3), to put successively without further debate the

[Mr. Speaker]

Question on each of the ways and means motions. With the leave of the House, I will put together motions Nos. 2 to 50.

2. Hydrocarbon oil

Resolved,

That, as from 6 o'clock in the evening of 14th March 1989, the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979 shall have effect with the amendments set out below.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

(1) In section 6—

(a) in subsection (1), after "(2)" there shall be inserted ", (2A)", and

(b) the following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (2)—

"(2A) The rate of duty for petrol which—

(a) has an anti-knock value below that specified as the minimum for 4 star petrol in the British Standard Specification BS 4040: 1988, and

(b) is neither unleaded petrol (within the meaning of section 13A below) nor aviation gasoline,

shall be £0·2122 a litre."

(2) In section 13A, for "£0·0202" there shall be substituted "£0·0272".

(3) In Part I of Schedule 3, in paragraph 10A, after the word "Amending" there shall be inserted the words "the description of petrol falling within subsection (2A) of section 6 of this Act or" and for the words "section 6 of this Act" there shall be substituted the words "that section".—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

3. Beer (original gravity)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 3(5) of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

4. Production of made-wine

Resolved,

That section 55 of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 may be amended by provisions relating to the blending or other mixing of made-wines or of made-wines and wines.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

5. Vehicles excise duty (rates)

Resolved,

That the Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971 ("the 1971 Act") and the Vehicles (Excise) Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 ("the 1972 Act") shall have effect, in relation to licences taken out after 14th March 1989, with the amendments set out below.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

(1) For the words—

(a) "in the second column of" in paragraph 1 of Schedule 2 to the 1971 Act (rates of duty on hackney carriages), and

(b) "in column 2 of" in paragraph 1 of Schedule 2 to the 1972 Act,

there shall be substituted the words "in relation to its seating capacity in the Table in"; and for the Table in Part II of each of those Schedules there shall be substituted the Table set out below.

Rates of Duty on Hackney Carriages

Seating capacity	Rate of duty
	£
Under 9	100
9 to 16	130
17 to 35	200
36 to 60	300
Over 60	450

(2) In Part II of Schedule 4 to the 1971 Act for Tables A, A(1) and A(2) (rates for rigid goods vehicles having plated gross weight exceeding 12 tonnes) there shall be substituted the Tables set out below.

Table A

Rates of Duty on Rigid Goods Vehicles Exceeding 12 Tonnes Plated Gross Weight

General Rates

Plated gross weight of vehicle		Rate of duty		
(1) Exceeding	(2) Not exceeding	(3) Two axle vehicle	(4) Three axle vehicle	(5) Four or more axle vehicle
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	13	450	340	340
13	14	630	340	340
14	15	810	340	340
15	17	1,230	340	340
17	19	—	600	340
19	21	—	800	340
21	23	—	1,100	490
23	25	—	1,980	760
25	27	—	—	1,220
27	29	—	—	1,790
29	30·49	—	—	2,780

TABLE A(1)

RATES OF DUTY ON RIGID GOODS VEHICLES EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED GROSS WEIGHT

RATES FOR FARMERS' GOODS VEHICLES

Plated gross weight of vehicle		Rate of duty		
(1) Exceeding	(2) Not exceeding	(3) Two axle vehicle	(4) Three axle vehicle	(5) Four or more axle vehicle
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	13	270	205	205
13	14	380	205	205
14	15	490	205	205
15	17	740	205	205
17	19	—	360	205
19	21	—	480	205
21	23	—	660	295
23	25	—	1,190	460
25	27	—	—	735
27	29	—	—	1,075
29	30-49	—	—	1,670

TABLE A(2)

RATES OF DUTY ON RIGID GOODS VEHICLES EXCEEDING 12 TONNES PLATED GROSS WEIGHT

RATES FOR SHOWMEN'S GOODS VEHICLES

Plated gross weight of vehicle		Rate of duty		
(1) Exceeding	(2) Not exceeding	(3) Two axle vehicle	(4) Three axle vehicle	(5) Four or more axle vehicle
tonnes	tonnes	£	£	£
12	13	115	90	90
13	14	160	90	90
14	15	205	90	90
15	17	310	90	90
17	19	—	150	90
19	21	—	200	90
21	23	—	275	125
23	25	—	495	190
25	27	—	—	305
27	29	—	—	450
29	30-49	—	—	695

(3) The Tables set out above shall also be substituted for Tables A, A(1) and A(2) in Part II of the Schedule 4 to the 1972 Act, but modified for that purpose by the substitution for any reference to a plated gross weight of a reference to a relevant maximum weight.

(4) In paragraph 2 of Schedule 4A to the 1971 Act and the 1972 Act (rates of duty for vehicles carrying or drawing exceptional loads) for "£1,600" there shall be substituted "£3,100".

(5) In—

(a) subsection (5) of section 16 of the 1971 Act (rates of duty for trade licences), including that subsection as set out in paragraph 12 of Part I of Schedule 7 to that Act, and

(b) subsection (6) of section 16 of the 1972 Act, including that subsection as set out in paragraph 12 of Part I of Schedule 9 to that Act,

for "£85" and "£17" there shall be substituted "£100" and "£20" respectively.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

6. VEHICLES EXCISE DUTY (ASSIGNMENT OF REGISTRATION MARKS)

Resolved,

That provision may be made—

(a) for the payment of sums, payable into the Consolidated Fund, in respect of the acquisition of rights relating to the assignment of registration marks under the Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971 or the Vehicles (Excise) Act (Northern Ireland) 1972; and

(b) for the payment of charges under section 12(1) of the Finance Act 1976 in connection with the assignment of registration marks in pursuance of rights so relating.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

7. SPECIAL MACHINES (VEHICLES EXCISE DUTY AND HYDROCARBON OIL)

Resolved,

That the Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971 ("the 1971 Act") and the Vehicles (Excise) Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 ("the 1972 Act") shall have effect, in relation to licences taken out after 14th March 1989, with the amendments set out in paragraphs (1) to (3) below; and the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979 ("the 1979 Act") shall have effect, as from 15th March 1989, with the amendment set out in paragraph (4) below.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

(1) In Part I of Schedule 3 to the 1971 Act and the 1972 Act (annual rates of duty on tractors etc.)—

(a) after paragraph 1 there shall be inserted—

"1A. In this Schedule "special machine" means—

(a) a tractor;

(b) an agricultural engine;

(c) a digging machine;

(d) a mobile crane;

(e) a works truck; or

(f) a mowing machine.";

(b) for paragraph 2 there shall be substituted—

"2. In this Schedule "tractor" means a vehicle which is either—

(a) an agricultural tractor, or

(b) a tractor (other than an agricultural tractor) that is—

(i) designed and constructed primarily for use otherwise than on roads, and

(ii) incapable by reason of its construction of exceeding a speed of twenty-five miles per hour on the level under its own power.";

(c) in paragraph 3(b), for the words "neither carries nor hauls any load than" there shall be substituted the words "does not carry any load except";

(d) in paragraph 4(b), for the words "neither carries nor hauls any load than" there shall be substituted the words "does not carry any load except";

(e) paragraph 5A shall be omitted; and

(f) in paragraph 6, for the words from "(other than" to "8 below)" there shall be substituted the words "(other than a special machine, a recovery vehicle or a vehicle to which Schedule 4A to this Act applies)".

(2) In Part II of Schedule 3 to the 1971 Act and the 1972 Act, in column 1, for paragraph 1 there shall be substituted—

"1. Special machines."

(3) In Part I of Schedule 4 to the 1971 Act and the 1972 Act (annual rates of duty on goods vehicles)—

(a) in paragraph 11, for paragraphs (b) and (c) there shall be substituted—

"(b) a special machine within the meaning of Schedule 3 to this Act;

(c) a recovery vehicle within the meaning of that Schedule; or";

(b) paragraphs 12 and 13 shall be omitted; and

(c) in paragraph 15(1), the definitions of "agricultural machine", "fisherman's tractor", "mobile crane", "recovery vehicle" and "works truck" shall be omitted.

(4) In paragraph 2 of Schedule 1 to the 1979 Act (vehicles which are not road vehicles within the meaning of that Act), for sub-paragraph (b) there shall be substituted—

"(b) a special machine within the meaning of Schedule 3 to that Act;".—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

8. VALUE ADDED TAX (BUILDINGS AND LAND: ZERO-RATING AND EXEMPTION ETC.)

Resolved,

That—

(1) For Group 8 of Schedule 5 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983 there shall be substituted—

"GROUP 8—CONSTRUCTION OF DWELLINGS, ETC.

Item No.

1. The grant by a person constructing a building—

(a) designed as a dwelling or number of dwellings; or

(b) intended for use solely for a relevant residential purpose or a relevant charitable purpose,

of a major interest in, or in any part of, the building or its site.

2. The supply in the course of the construction of—

(a) a building designed as a dwelling or number of dwellings or intended for use solely for a relevant residential purpose or a relevant charitable purpose; or

(b) any civil engineering work necessary for the development of a permanent park for residential caravans,

of any services other than the services of an architect, surveyor or any person acting as consultant or in a supervisory capacity.

3. The supply to a person of—

(a) materials; or

(b) builder's hardware, sanitary ware or other articles of a kind ordinarily installed by builders as fixtures,

by a supplier who also makes to the same person supplies within item 2 of this Group or Group 8A below of services which include the use of the materials or the installation of the articles.

Notes:

(1) "Grant" includes assignment.

(2) "Dwelling" includes a garage constructed at the same time as a dwelling for occupation together with it.

(3) Use for a relevant residential purpose means use as—

(a) a home or other institution providing residential accommodation for children;

(b) a home or other institution providing residential accommodation with personal care for persons in need of personal care by reason of old age, disablement, past or present dependence on alcohol or drugs or past or present mental disorder;

(c) a hospice;

(d) residential accommodation for students or school pupils;

(e) residential accommodation for members of any of the armed forces;

(f) a monastery, nunnery or similar establishment; or

(g) an institution which is the sole or main residence of at least 90 per cent. of its residents,

except use as a hospital, a prison or similar institution or an hotel, inn or similar establishment.

(4) Use for a relevant charitable purpose means use by a charity otherwise than in the course or furtherance of a business.

(5) Where part of a building is designed as a dwelling or number of dwellings or intended for use solely for a relevant residential purpose or a relevant charitable purpose (and part is not)—

(a) a grant or other supply relating only to the part so designed or intended for such use (or its site) shall be treated as relating to a building so designed or intended for such use;

(b) a grant or other supply relating only to the part neither so designed nor intended for such use (or its site) shall not be so treated; and

(c) in the case of any other grant or other supply relating to, or to any part of, the building (or its site), an apportionment shall be made to determine the extent to which it is to be so treated.

(6) Where all or part of a building is intended for use solely for a relevant residential purpose or a relevant charitable purpose—

(a) a supply relating to the building (or any part of it) shall not be taken for the purposes of item 2

or 3 as relating to a building intended for such use unless it is made to a person who intends to use the building (or part) for such a purpose; and

(b) a grant or other supply relating to the building (or any part of it) shall not be taken as relating to a building intended for such use unless before it is made the person to whom it is made has given to the person making it a certificate in such form as may be specified in a notice published by the Commissioners stating that the grant or other supply (or a specified part of it) so relates.

(7) The grant of an interest in, or in part of, a building designed as a dwelling or number of dwellings is not within item 1 if—

(a) the interest granted is such that the grantee will not be entitled to reside in the building, or part, throughout the year; or

(b) residence there throughout the year will be prevented by the terms of a covenant, statutory planning consent or similar permission.

(8) Where the major interest referred to in item 1 is a tenancy or lease—

(a) if a premium is payable, the grant falls within that item only to the extent that it is made for consideration in the form of the premium; and

(b) if a premium is not payable, the grant falls within that item only to the extent that it is made for consideration in the form of the first payment of rent due under the tenancy or lease.

(9) Where the benefit of the consideration for the grant of a major interest as described in item 1 accrues to the person constructing the building but that person is not the person making the grant, he shall for the purposes of that item be treated as the person making the grant.

(10) The reference in item 2 to the construction of a building or work does not include a reference to—

(a) the conversion, reconstuction, alteration or enlargement of an existing building or work; or

(b) any extension or annexation to an existing building which provides for internal access to the existing building or of which the separate use, letting or disposal is prevented by the terms of any convenant, statutory planning consent or similar permission;

and the reference in item 1 to a person constructing a building shall be construed accordingly.

(11) A caravan is not a residential caravan if residence in it throughout the year is prevented by the terms of a covenant, statutory planning consent or similar permission.

(12) Item 2 does not include the supply of services described in paragraph 1(1) or 5(3) of Schedule 2 to this Act.

(13) The goods referred to in item 3 do not include—

(a) finished of prefabricated furniture, other than furniture designed to be fitted in kitchens;

(b) materials for the construction of fitted furniture, other than kitchen furniture;

(c) domestic electrical or gas appliances, other than those designed to provide space heating or water heating or both; or

(d) carpets or carpeting material.

(14) Section 16(3) of this Act does not apply to goods forming part of a description of supply in this Group."

(2) In item 1 of Group 8A of that Schedule, for the word "granting" there shall be substituted the word "grant".

(3) In Note (1) to that Group, for the words "a building which" there shall be substituted the words "a building which is designed to remain as or become a dwelling or number of dwellings or is intended for use solely for a relevant residential purpose or a relevant charitable purpose after the reconstruction or alteration and which, in either case,".

(4) After that Note there shall be inserted—

"(1A) Notes (1) to (8) above apply in relation to this Group as they apply in relation to that Group."

(5) After Note (6) to that Group there shall be inserted—

"(6A) For the purposes of item 2 the construction of a building separate from, but in the curtilage of, a protected building does not constitute an alteration of the protected building."

(6) The following Note shall be substituted for Note (7) to that Group—

"(7) Item 2 does not include the supply of services described in paragraph 1(1) or 5(3) of Schedule 2 to this Act."

(7) In Group 11 of that Schedule, for paragraph *(b)* of the Note there shall be substituted—

"*(b)* the supply of accommodation in a caravan or houseboat."

(8) For Group 1 of Schedule 6 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983 there shall be substituted—

"GROUP 1—LAND

Item No.

1. The grant of any interest in or right over land or of any licence to occupy land, other than—

(a) the grant of the fee simple in—

(i) a building which has not been completed and which is neither designed as a dwelling or number of dwellings nor intended for use solely for a relevant residential purpose or a relevant charitable purpose;

(ii) a new building which is neither designed as a dwelling or number of dwellings nor intended for use solely for a relevant residential purpose or a relevant charitable purpose after the grant;

(iii) a civil engineering work which has not been completed;

(iv) a new civil engineering work;

(b) the grant of any interest, right or licence consisting of a right to take game or fish;

(c) the provision in an hotel, inn, boarding house or similar establishment of sleeping accommodation or of accommodation in rooms which are provided in conjunction with sleeping accommodation or for the purpose of a supply of catering;

(d) the provision of holiday accommodation in a house, flat, caravan, houseboat or tent;

(e) the provision of seasonal pitches for caravans, and the grant of facilities at caravan parks to persons for whom such pitches are provided;

(f) the provision of pitches for tents or of camping facilities;

(g) the grant of facilities for parking a vehicle;

(h) the grant of any right to fell and remove standing timber;

(i) the grant of facilities for housing, or storage of, an aircraft or for mooring, or storage of, a ship, boat or other vessel;

(j) the grant of any right to occupy a box, seat or other accommodation at a sports ground, theatre, concert hall or other place of entertainment; and

(k) the grant of facilities for playing any sport or participating in any physical recreation.

Notes:

(1) "Grant" includes an assignment, other than an assignment of an interest made to the person to whom a surrender of the interest could be made.

(2) A building shall be taken to be completed when an architect issues a certificate of practical completion in relation to it or it is first fully occupied, whichever happens first; and a civil engineering work shall be taken to be completed when an engineer issues a certificate of completion in relation to it or it is first fully used, whichever happens first.

(3) Notes (2) to (6) to Group 8 of Schedule 5 to this Act apply in relation to this Group as they apply in relation to that Group.

(4) A building or civil engineering work is new if it was completed less than three years before the grant.

(5) Subject to Note (6), the grant of the fee simple in a building or work completed before 1st April 1989 is not excluded from this Group by paragraph *(a)*(ii) or (iv).

(6) Note (5) does not apply where the grant is the first grant of the fee simple made on or after 1st April 1989 and the building was not fully occupied, or the work not fully used, before that date.

(7) Where a grant of an interest in, right over or licence to occupy land includes a valuable right to take game or fish, an apportionment shall be made to determine the supply falling outside this Group by virtue of paragraph *(b)*.

(8) "Similar establishment" includes premises in which there is provided furnished sleeping accommodation, whether with or without the provision of board or facilities for the preparation of food, which are used by or held out as being suitable for use by visitors or travellers.

(9) "Houseboat" includes a houseboat within the meaning of Group 11 of Schedule 5 to this Act.

(10) "Holiday accommodation" includes any accommodation advertised or held out as such.

(11) A seasonal pitch is a pitch—

(a) which is provided for a period less than a year; or

(b) which is provided for a year or a period longer than a year but which the person to whom it is provided is prevented by the terms of any covenant, statutory planning consent or similar permission from occupying by living in a caravan at all times throughout the period for which the pitch is provided.

(12) "Mooring" includes anchoring or berthing.

(13) Paragraph (k) shall not apply where the grant of the facilities is for—

(a) a continuous period of use exceeding twenty-four hours; or

(b) a series of ten or more periods, whether or not exceeding twenty-four hours in total, where the following conditions are satisfied—

(i) each period is in respect of the same activity carried on at the same place;

(ii) the interval between each period is not less than one day and not more than fourteen days;

(iii) consideration is payable by reference to the whole series and is evidenced by written agreement;

(iv) the grantee has exclusive use of the facilities; and

(v) the grantee is a school, a club, an association or an organisation representing affiliated clubs or constituent associations."

(9) In consequence of the amendment made by paragraph (8) of this Resolution, in paragraph 9(1) of Schedule 4 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983 for "(a)" there shall be substituted "(c)".

(10) The following section shall be inserted in the Value Added Tax Act 1983 after section 35—

"Buildings and land.

35A. Schedule 6A to this Act shall have effect with respect to buildings and land."

(11) The following Schedule shall be inserted in the Value Added Tax Act 1983 after Schedule 6—

"SCHEDULE 6A

BUILDINGS AND LAND

1.—(1) In this paragraph "relevant zero-rated supply" means a grant or other supply taking place on or after 1st April 1989 which—

(a) relates to a building intended for use solely for a relevant residential purpose or a relevant charitable purpose or part of such a building; and

(b) is zero-rated, in whole or in part, by virtue of Group 8 of Schedule 5 to this Act.

(2) Sub-paragraph (3) below applies where—

(a) one or more relevant zero-rated supplies relating to a building (or part of a building) have been made to any person;

(b) within the period of ten years beginning with the day on which the building is completed, the person grants an interest in, right over or licence to occupy the building or any part of it (or the building or any part of it including, consisting of or forming part of the part to which the relevant zero-rated supply or supplies related); and

(c) after the grant the whole or any part of the building, or of the part to which the grant relates, (or the whole of the building or of the part to which the grant relates, or any part of it including, consisting of or forming part of the part to which the relevant zero-rated supply or supplies related) is not intended for use solely for a relevant residential purpose or a relevant charitable purpose.

(3) Where this sub-paragraph applies, to the extent that the grant relates to so much of the building as—

(a) by reason of its intended use gave rise to the relevant zero-rated supply or supplies; and

(b) is not intended for use solely for a relevant residential purpose or a relevant charitable purpose after the grant,

it shall be taken to be a taxable supply in the course or furtherance of a business which is not zero-rated by virtue of Group 8 of Schedule 5 to this Act (if it would not otherwise be such a supply).

(4) Sub-paragraph (5) below applies where—

(a) one or more relevant zero-rated supplies relating to a building (or part of a building) have been made to any person; and

(b) within the period of ten years beginning with the day on which the building is completed, the person uses the building or any part of it (or the building or any part of it including, consisting of or forming part of the part to which the relevant zero-rated supply or supplies related) for a purpose which is neither a relevant residential purpose nor a relevant charitable purpose.

(5) Where this sub-paragraph applies, his interest in, right over or licence to occupy so much of the building as—

(a) by reason of its intended use gave rise to the relevant zero-rated supply or supplies; and

(b) is used otherwise than for a relevant residential purpose or a relevant charitable purpose,

shall be treated for the purposes of this Act as supplied to him for the purpose of a business carried on by him and supplied by him in the course or furtherance of the business when he first uses it for a purpose which is neither a relevant residential purpose nor a relevant charitable purpose.

(6) Where sub-paragraph (5) above applies—

(a) the supply shall be taken to be a taxable supply which is not zero-rated by virtue of Group 8 of schedule 5 to this Act (if it would not otherwise be such a supply); and

(b) the value of the supply shall be such that the amount of tax chargeable on it is equal to the amount of the tax which would have been chargeable on the relevant zero-rated supply (or, where there was more than one such supply, the aggregate amount which would have been chargeable on them) had so much of the building as is mentioned in sub-paragraph (5) above not been intended for use solely for a relevant residential purpose or a relevant charitable purpose.

2. The Notes to Group 8 of Schedule 5 to this Act apply in relation to this Schedule as they apply in relation to that Group but subject to any appropriate modifications."

(12) In section 48 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983, after the definition of "Commissioners" there shall be inserted—

" "fee simple", in relation to Scotland, means—

(a) the estate or interest of the proprietor of the dominium utile, or

(b) in the case of land not held on feudal tenure, the estate or interest of the owner;".

(13) In Schedule 1 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983—

(a) in paragraph 1 there shall be added at the end—

"(6) Where, apart from this sub-paragraph, an interest in, right over or licence to occupy any land would under sub-paragraph (5) above be disregarded

for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above, it shall not be if it is supplied on a taxable supply which is not zero-rated." and

(b) in paragraph 2 there shall be added at the end—

"(4) Where, apart from this sub-paragraph, an interest in, right over or licence to occupy any land would under sub-paragraph (3) above be disregarded for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above, it shall not be if it is supplied on a taxable supply which is not zero-rated."

(14) Subject to paragraphs (16) to (19) of this Resolution, the amendments made by paragraphs (1) to (9) of this Resolution shall have effect in relation to grants, assignments and other supplies made on or after 1st April 1989.

(15) The remainder of this Resolution shall come into force on 1st April 1989.

(16) Subject to paragraph (18) of this Resolution, the amendments made by paragraphs (1) to (6) of this Resolution shall not have effect in relation to a grant, assignment or other supply where—

(a) it is made in pursuance of a legally binding obligation to make it which was incurred before 21st June 1988, and

(b) if the Commissioners so require (whether before or after it is made), it is proved to their satisfaction by the production of documents made before that date that it is so made.

(17) Subject to paragraph (18) of this Resolution, the amendments made by paragraphs (1) to (6) of this Resolution shall not have effect in relation to a grant or assignment of an interest in, or in any part of, a building or its site where—

(a) the person making the grant or assignment was under a legally binding obligation incurred before 21st June 1988 to construct (or reconstruct) the building or to construct any development of which it forms part (other than an obligation to receive services or goods in the course of the construction or reconstruction),

(b) if the Commissioners so require (whether before or after the grant or assignment is made), it is proved to their satisfaction by the production of documents made before that date that he was under that obligation, and

(c) planning permission for the construction (or reconstruction) of the building was granted before 21st June 1988.

(18) Where the grant or assignment is of a tenancy or lease—

(a) if a premium is payable, paragraph (16) or (17) of this Resolution shall apply only to the extent that it is made for consideration in the form of the premium; and

(b) if a premium is not payable, paragraph (16) or (17) of this Resolution shall apply only to the extent that it is made for consideration in the form of the first payment of rent due under the tenancy or lease.

(19) The amendments made by paragraphs (1) to (6) of this Resolution shall not not have effect in relation to a supply relating to a building or civil engineering work where—

(a) the supply is made to the person constructing the building or work (or reconstructing the building),

(b) that person was under a legally binding obligation incurred before 21st June 1988 to construct the building or work (or to reconstruct the building) or to construct any development of which it forms part (other than an obligation to receive services or goods in the course of the construction or reconstruction),

(c) if the Commissioners so require (whether before or after the supply is made), it is proved to their satisfaction by the production of documents made before that date that he was under that obligation,

(d) planning permission for the construction of the building or work (or the reconstruction of the building) was granted before 21st June 1988, and

(e) before the supply takes place the person constructing the building or work (or reconstructing the building) has given to the person making the supply a certificate in such form as may be specified in a notice published by the Commissioners stating that the supply is zero-rated (in whole or to the extent specified in the certificate) by virtue of this paragraph.

(20) Where a grant, assignment or other supply is zero-rated by virtue of paragraph (16), (17) or (19) of this Resolution, it is not a relevant zero-rated supply for the purposes of paragraph 1 of Schedule 6A to the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

(21) This Resolution shall be construed as one with the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

This Resolution shall not authorise the making of amendments that would make value added tax chargeable at a rate other than either nil or the rate specified in section 9 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

9. VALUE ADDED TAX (ZERO-RATING: SEWERAGE SERVICES, WATER, FUEL AND POWER)

Resolved,

That provision may be made restricting Groups 2 and 7 of Schedule 5 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

This Resolution shall not authorise the making of amendments that would make value added tax chargeable at a rate other than either nil or the rate specified in section 9 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

10. VALUE ADDED TAX (ZERO-RATING: NEWS SERVICES)

Resolved,

That, in relation to supplies made on or after 1st April 1989, Schedule 5 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983 shall have effect with the omission of Group 6.

This Resolution shall not authorise the making of amendments that would make value added tax chargeable at a rate other than either nil or the rate specified in section 9 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

11. VALUE ADDED TAX (ZERO-RATING: PROTECTIVE BOOTS AND HELMETS)

Resolved,

That—

(1) In relation to supplies made on or after 1st April 1989, Group 17 of Schedule 5 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983 shall have effect with the amendments mentioned in paragraphs (2) and (3) of this Resolution.

(2) In item 2 there shall be inserted at the beginning the words "The supply to a person for use otherwise than by employees of his of".

(3) In Note (5) there shall be inserted at the end the words ", but, in the case of goods comprised in item 2, only if the goods are for use otherwise than by employees of the person to whom the services are supplied."

This Resolution shall not authorise the making of amendments that would make value added tax chargeable at a rate other than either nil or the rate specified in section 9 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

12. VALUE ADDED TAX (BUILDINGS AND LAND: GENERAL)

Resolved,

That the enactments relating to value added tax may be amended by provisions about buildings and land.

This Resolution shall not authorise the making of amendments that would make value added tax chargeable at a rate other than either nil or the rate specified in section 9 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

13. VALUE ADDED TAX (SELF-SUPPLIES)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending the Value Added Tax Act 1983 in relation to input tax on supplies which, under or by virtue of that Act, a person is treated as making to himself.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

14. CAR TAX (RELIEF FOR VEHICLES LEASED TO HANDICAPPED)

Resolved,

After section 5 of the Car Tax Act 1983 there shall be inserted, as from 1st April 1989, the following section—

"Relief where vehicle leased to the handicapped.

5A.—(1) This section applies where—

(a) a person registered under this Act sends out from any premises of his in the United Kingdom a chargeable vehicle made or imported by him, and,

(b) at the time when he sends it out he holds a certificate of the person to whom it is sent ("the lessor") that the lessor intends to supply the vehicle to another in such circumstances that the supply will be a zero-rated supply by virtue of item 12 of Group 14 (letting on hire of motor vehicles to the handicapped) of Schedule 5 to the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

(2) Tax on the vehicle—

(a) shall not be payable by the registered person, but

(b) if, within the period of three years beginning with that time, the lessor supplies the vehicle in any circumstances other than those mentioned in subsection (1)(b) above, shall be payable by the lessor and shall become due and payable at the time of the supply.

(3) In this section—

"certificate" means a certificate in a form for the time being approved by the Commissioners, and

"supply" has the same meaning as in the Value Added Tax Act 1983."

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

15. CUSTOMS AND EXCISE DUTIES, VALUE ADDED TAX AND CAR TAX (DIPLOMATS, MEMBERS OF VISITING FORCES, INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS ETC.)

Resolved,

That provision may be made, in connection with duties of customs and excise, value added tax and car tax, about—

(a) any person who, for the purposes of any provision of the Visiting Forces Act 1952 or the International Headquarters and Defence Organisations Act 1964 is—

(i) a member of a visiting force or of a civilian component of such a force or a dependant of such a member, or

(ii) a headquarters, a member of a headquarters or a dependant of such a member,

(b) any person enjoying any privileges or immunities under or by virtue of—

(i) the Diplomatic Privileges Act 1964,

(ii) the Commonwealth Secretariat Act 1966,

(iii) the Consular Relations Act 1968,

(iv) the International Organisations Act 1968, or

(v) the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980,

(c) any person enjoying any privileges or immunities similar to those enjoyed under or by virtue of those enactments.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

16. INCOME TAX (CHARGE AND RATES FOR 1989-90)

Resolved,

That income tax shall be charged for the year 1989-90, and—

(a) the basic rate of tax shall be 25 per cent, and

(b) the higher rate at which tax is charged in respect of so much of an individual's total income as exceeds the basic rate limit (£20,700) shall be 40 per cent.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

17. INCOME TAX (AGE ALLOWANCE)

Resolved,

That—

(1) For the year 1989-90, section 257 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall have effect with the following amendments—

(a) in subsection (3) (increased allowance for those aged 80 and over) for "80", wherever occurring, there shall be substituted "75", and

(b) in subsection (5) (age allowance withdrawn by two-thirds of amount by which income exceeds a specified limit) for "two-thirds" there shall be substituted "one half".

(2) This Resolution shall not require any change to be made in the amounts deductible or repayable under section 203 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 (pay as you earn) before 18th May 1989.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

18. INCOME TAX (OPERATIVE DATE OF INDEXATION FOR PAYE)

Resolved,

That, for the year 1989-90, sections 1(5) and 257(10) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 (which specify the date from which indexed changes in the basic rate limit and in allowances are to be brought into account for the purposes of PAYE) shall have effect as if for the reference to 5th May there were substituted a reference to 18th May.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

19. RELIEF FOR INTEREST (LIMIT FOR 1989-90)

Resolved,

That, for the year 1989-90, the qualifying maximum defined in section 367(5) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 (limit on relief for interest on certain loans) shall be £30,000.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

20. CORPORATION TAX (CHARGE AND RATE FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 1989)

Resolved,

That corporation tax shall be charged for the financial year 1989 at the rate of 35 per cent.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

21. Corporation tax (small companies)

Resolved,

That for the financial year 1989—

(a) the small companies rate shall be 25 per cent.

(b) the fraction mentioned in section 13(2) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall be one-fortieth.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

22. Schedule E

Resolved,

That charges to income tax may be imposed by provisions relating to Schedule E.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

23. Benefits in kind (cars)

Resolved,

That—

(1) For the year 1989-90 and subsequent years of assessment, Schedule 6 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 (taxation of directors and others in respect of cars) shall have effect with the substitution for Part I (tables of flat rate cash equivalents) of the following—

Part I

Tables of Flat Rate Cash Equivalents

Table A

Cars with an original market value up to £19,250 and having a cylinder capacity

Cylinder capacity of car in cubic centimetres	Age of car at end of relevant year of assessment	
	Under 4 years	4 years or more
1400 or less	£1,400	£950
More than 1400 but not more than 2000	£1,850	£1,250
More than 2000	£2,950	£1,950

Table B

Cars with an original market value up to £19,250 and having a cylinder capacity

Original market value of car	Age of car at end of relevant year of assessment	
	Under 4 years	4 years or more
Less than £6,000	£1,400	£950
£6,000 or more but less than £8,500	£1,850	£1,250
£8,500 or more but not more than £19,250	£2,950	£1,950

Table C

Cars with an original market value of more than £19,250

Original market value of car	Age of car at end of relevant year of assessment	
	Under 4 years	4 years or more
More than £19,250 but not more than £29,000	£3,850	£2,600
More than £29,000	£6,150	£4,100

(2) This Resolution shall not require any change to be made in the amounts deductible or repayable under section 203 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 (pay as you earn) before 18th May 1989.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

24. Calculation of profits or gains

Resolved,

That provision may be made as to the calculation of profits or gains—

(a) for the purposes of Schedule D;

(b) for the purposes of corporation tax.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

25. Charities

Resolved,

That, for the year 1989-90 and subsequent years of assessment, section 202(7) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 (which limits to £240 the payroll deductions attracting relief) shall have effect with the substitution of "£480" for "£240".

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

26. PROFIT-RELATED PAY

Resolved,

That further provision may be made about profit-related pay.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

27. PROFIT SHARING SCHEMES (INCREASE OF MAXIMUM SHARE APPROPRIATION)

Resolved.

That section 187(2) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall have effect for the year of assessment 1989-90 as if in the definition of "relevant amount" for the words "not less than £1,250 and not more than £5,000" there were substituted the words "not less than £2,000 and not more than £6,000".

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

28. RETIREMENT BENEFITS SCHEMES

Resolved,

That provision may be made about retirement benefits schemes.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

29. PERSONAL PENSION SCHEMES

Resolved,

That provision may be made about personal pension schemes.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

30. COLLECTIVE INVESTMENT SCHEMES

Resolved,

That charges to income tax, corporation tax and capital gains tax may be imposed by provisions relating to collective investment schemes (including unit trusts) and investors in them.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

31. OFFSHORE FUNDS

Resolved,

That charges to income tax and corporation tax may be imposed by provisions relating to investors in offshore funds.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

32. INSURANCE COMPANIES AND FRIENDLY SOCIETIES

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the taxation of insurance companies and friendly societies, and about policies of life insurance, contracts for life annuities and capital redemption policies.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

33. PREMIUMS TRUST FUNDS

Resolved,

That provision may be made about stock lending by the trustees of premiums trust funds.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

34. REGULATIONS ABOUT UNDERWRITERS ETC.

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 451 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 and section 142A of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

35. SECURITIES

Resolved,

That charges to income tax, capital gains tax and corporation tax may be imposed by provisions about securities.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

36. GROUPS OF COMPANIES AND CHANGES IN THE OWNERSHIP OF COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision may be made—

(a) in relation to advance corporation tax in connection with groups of companies and changes in the ownership of companies; and

(b) amending sections 247 and 769 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

37. CLOSE COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision may be made in relation to close companies.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

38. SETTLEMENTS

Resolved,

That provision may be made about income arising under settlements—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

39. DOUBLE TAXATION (TAX CREDITS)

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made as to the amount of tax credits paid to persons resident outside the United Kingdom.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

40. CAPITAL ALLOWANCES

Resolved,

That provision may be made about capital allowances.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

41. CAPITAL GAINS (ANNUAL EXEMPT AMOUNT)

Resolved,

That provision may be made as to the operation of section 5 of the Capital Gains Tax Act 1979 for the year 1989-90.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

42. CAPITAL GAINS (GIFTS ETC.)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about capital gains tax on gifts and other disposals not made under a bargain at arm's length.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

43. NON-RESIDENTS

Resolved,

That charges to capital gains tax and corporation tax may be imposed by provisions relating to persons not resident and not ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom but carrying on or ceasing to carry on an activity in the United Kingdom through a branch or agency.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

44. DUAL RESIDENT COMPANIES

Resolved,

That charges to corporation tax may be imposed by provisions relating to companies resident in the United Kingdom and falling to be regarded for the purposes of double taxation relief arrangements as resident in a territory outside the United Kingdom.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

45. NON-RESIDENT COMPANIES (NON-PAYMENT OF TAX)

Resolved,

That, in relation to corporation tax payable by a non-resident company on chargeable gains, provision may be made with respect to the payment by other persons of tax not paid by the company.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

46. EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION ASSETS

Resolved,

That charges to capital gains tax and corporation tax may be imposed by provisions relating to exploration or exploitation assets.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

47. CAPITAL GAINS (RE-BASING TO 1982 ETC.)

Resolved,

That further provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about capital gains and losses accruing on, or attributable to, disposals of assets acquired before 1st April 1982.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

48. INHERITANCE TAX

Resolved,

That charges to inheritance tax may be imposed—

(a) by provisions relating to the variation of dispositions taking effect on death; and

(b) by provisions relating to the settlement by recipients of exempt gifts of claims against the estates of deceased persons.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

49. BROADCASTING: ADDITIONAL PAYMENTS BY PROGRAMME CONTRACTORS

Resolved,

That provision be made with respect to additional payments payable under section 32 of the Broadcasting Act 1981.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

50. RELIEF FROM TAX (INCIDENTAL AND CONSEQUENTIAL CHARGES)

Resolved,

That it is expedient to authorise any incidental or consequential charges to any duty or tax (including charges having retrospective effect) which may arise from provisions designed in general to afford relief from taxation.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

PROCEDURE RESOLUTIONS

PROCEDURE (SUB-CONTRACTORS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to matters which may be included in Finance Bills, and Finance Bill of the present Session may make provision for the application, in discharging liability for social security contributions, of sums required to be deducted from payments of any description made by way of remuneration for labour used or to be used in construction operations.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

PROCEDURE (FUTURE TAXATION)

Question put,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to matters which may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain the following provisions taking effect in a future year—

(a) provisions about value added tax restricting the zero-rating of supplies of sewerage services, water, fuel and power;

(b) provisions about contracts of private medical insurance;

(c) provisions about persons who are or have been married;

(d) provisions about the management of tax.

The House divided: Ayes 337, Noes 221.

Division No. 123] **[10·15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine. Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tony Durant.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*

Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

FINANCE BILL *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Finance Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of the National Loans Fund of any expenses incurred by the Treasury in connection with the redemption before maturity of securities held in the Issue Department of the Bank of England;

(b) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of the surplus standing to the credit of the Redemption Annuities Account immediately before that account is wound up.—*[Mr. Lawson.]*

Ordered,

That a Bill be brought in upon the foregoing resolutions: And that the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Fowler, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Secretary Channon, Mr. Secretary Moore, Mr. Secretary Parkinson, Mr. John Major, Mr. Tony Newton, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Peter Brooke, and Mr. Peter Lilley do prepare and bring it in.

FINANCE BILL

Mr. Norman Lamont accordingly presented a Bill to grant certain duties, to alter other duties, and to amend the law relating to the national debt and the public revenue, and to make further provision in connection with finance: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 102.]

Water Bill *[Money]* (No. 2)

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Water Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to members of the committee established and maintained for advising the Secretary of State with respect to matters affecting or otherwise connected with the carrying out in Wales of the functions of the National Rivers Authority; and

(b) sums required by a Minister of the Crown for making loans to the National Rivers Authority for capital purposes in connection with the carrying out of its flood defence functions, so long as the aggregate amount outstanding in respect of the principal of sums borrowed by the Authority shall not exceed £160 million.—*[Mr. Norman Lamont.]*

10.29 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I shall raise several questions on this money resolution. I spoke on the Water Bill [Money] (No. 1) resolution. I am concerned, because the first money resolution—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would hon. Members who are not staying for this important debate please leave quietly?

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. After all, the hon. Members who are moving out of the Chamber in such a noisy fashion belong to the party that continually complains about looking after the taxpayer's money. We are discussing a money resolution that authorises the spending of at least £160 million, and Conservative Members are leaving the Chamber in a noisy and indifferent fashion.

The first section of the resolution deals with

"any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to members of the committee established and maintained for advising the Secretary of State with respect to matters affecting or otherwise connected with the carrying out in Wales of the functions of the National Rivers Authority".

The National Rivers Authority is part of the hierarchy which is established by this wretched bit of legislation—it is hardly a bit of legislation; it is one of the biggest Bills ever brought before the House—yet hon. Members were not informed that extra money would be required for a committee established by the Secretary of State to advise him about the NRA. We were told that the NRA would be a free-standing body able to operate on its own, and that grant aid would be provided for it. The Minister responded to me in that way on 8 December when we discussed the first resolution. He said:

"The hon. Member for Bradford, South rightly referred to the National Rivers Authority and the grants to it by the Secretary of State. Paragraph 17 to schedule 1 enables the Secretary of State, with the approval of the Treasury, to make grants to the NRA of such amounts, and on such terms, as he considers appropriate. He must, of course, provide the Comptroller and Auditor General with an account for each financial year of any grant paid and the Comptroller and Auditor General must then certify and report on that account. As the hon. Gentleman knows, copies of the Comptroller and Auditor General's report must be laid before both Houses of Parliament."

I should like the Minister to confirm that that safeguard will apply to the expenditure sought—they may be minor amounts—for the committee which is being established to advise the Secretary of State on matters concerning the functions of the NRA in Wales.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Do not ask him too many questions, Bob, he has been busy.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is referring to the extra-curricular activities of the Minister. I want him to be bright and alert and not feeling too weak and worn out, for whatever reason, to answer the debate.

The second part of the money resolution refers to

"sums required by a Minister of the Crown for making loans to the National Rivers Authority for capital purposes in connection with . . . flood defence functions".

On 8 December, I raised the issue of the grant-making power. The Minister said:

"The grant-making power will enable grant-in-aid to meet the deficit on the NRA's operations. Although the NRA will be encouraged to maximise its income from direct charges, a deficit will arise largely because the environmental service charge will not be levied after 1989-90. Grant-in-aid is considered a more appropriate method of paying for services which are of benefit to the whole community."—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1989; Vol. 143, c. 539.]

Clearly, flood defence arrangements are of benefit to the whole community. Why did the Minister tell me on 8 December that the benefits that would be enjoyed by the entire community would be paid for by grant in aid, to meet any deficits, when now, a few weeks later, the Government find it necessary to make loans? Is the wretched Bill so complex and so difficult to follow that Ministers could not produce a money resolution to cater for every contingency for which the Bill provides, as the contingencies were discovered in Committee? If so, that is not a good process of legislation. The Bill is complicated, but surely Ministers should have made provision at the beginning of the legislative programme, not when we are halfway through it.

Indeed, tomorrow the House will be debating the Water Bill on Report. It is a bit late in the day for the Government to produce a second money resolution. It is clear that they have discovered oversights in the past few weeks. It is clear that there has been a lack of planning and understanding in the construction and progress of the Bill. There has been a serious miscalculation, bearing in mind that the original money resolution was, to all intents and purposes, massively comprehensive. The first section contained 12 parts, the first of which provided for grants by the Secretary of State to the National Rivers Authority. It seems that grants are not enough. Loans are required for a specific purpose. Why were grants authorised in the previous resolution for the generality of community purposes with loans being authorised only for flood defence purposes? Why was there that differentiation? I hope that the Minister who is to reply will provide an adequate response.

As I have said, the first resolution was comprehensive. Are the Government considering the introduction of further money resolutions? We know from our experience that the Government's calculations are often so incompetent that sometimes three resolutions have been required. It seems that they have no idea of making adequate provision. For example, they introduced two further money resolutions following the Second Reading of the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, as it then was, and the original resolution.

I hope that the Minister will be able to provide the assurances that I seek. I am surprised that an explanation was not provided in the first instance. It is outrageous that the House should be asked for £160 million, with a few

extra million pounds, I suppose, for the expenses of the committee that is advising the Secretary of State for the Environment on the NRA. I suppose that the extras are too trivial to bother about. Approval is sought for the expenditure of £160 million, yet no explanation is vouchsafed to the House. In other words, a Minister has had to be forced to his feet. We are talking of a Government who are supposed to be concerned about the taxpayers' interests. It seems that if they think that they can get away with pushing expenditure of £160 million through the House on the nod, they will try to do so. That is a disgraceful attitude for any Government to take.

10.38 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I was surprised to find at 2.30 pm that the resolution was on the Order Paper. There was no announcement last week that any such measure would appear before us. I understand, however, that that is the normal way in which such business is handled. I suggest that in future there should be reference to a resolution such as that which is now before us when the business of the House is discussed on a Thursday. If not, the allegation of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that something is being slipped through will have additional credence. Nothing was said last week to the effect that a second money resolution would be on the agenda this week, whether on the nod or otherwise.

I was a member of the Committee which considered the Water Bill and I do not oppose the provisions contained in the resolution. In some respects, they meet some of the arguments that I and other Opposition Members raised in Committee over several weeks. First, the resolution will facilitate the acknowledgement in legislation that the advisory committee on rivers in Wales will have money made available to it to enable it to do its work. We had a long argument in Committee about whether the advisory committee in Wales would be a statutory one. For a long period the Government appeared not to be too keen on making it a statutory body. I am glad that we have won the argument and that the Government have conceded that. I hope that the statutory committee will feel that it has an important function to carry out and that the Secretary of State will take account of the weight of its opinion.

I hope that the sums made available to the Committee will enable it to undertake a professional job and that it will not be a committee of people who have retired or have independent incomes and are thus able to undertake do-gooding work for the Secretary of State. It must consist of people who do ordinary everyday jobs, and the scale of the allowances and costs must be adequate to recompense those who do not have private means or a retirement income. It is important to strike the right balance. I welcome paragraph (a) as a concession to the points that I made in Committee, as did the hon. Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey).

I should be grateful for clarification of how the second paragraph will work. Although I welcome any source of additional publicly originated finance available to undertake important works that should be undertaken in the public sector, such as flood defence mechanisms, it is important to know how the charging for that will be affected by the money resolution. Will there be additional charges to service the loans? They are loans, not grants. If there are additional charges, will they go through to communities which suffer from floods and need defence mechanisms? I should be grateful if the Minister, in responding to this brief debate, would give some indication of the additional implications that this part of the resolution may have for those who are to benefit from the work undertaken.

My other slight misgiving is whether £160 million is enough and about the mechanism for increasing the figure, if more is needed. Presumably it will not be necessary to go back to primary legislation and the money may be provided by an order on an annual basis or by some similar arrangement.

In introducing this money resolution the Government are providing a prelude to the debate on the Bill that we shall have in the next two days and on the first day after the recess, when they will have to introduce many amendments and proposals to meet the points of weakness that we pointed out to them in Committee. The Bill has been fully opposed in Committee because Tory Back Benchers, Opposition Members and people outside do not believe that it is coherent legislation. It will need considerably more than this money resolution to overcome the basic fallacies in the Bill, not least the financial ones.

10.43 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): It is a little surprising to see the scrappy way in which the Government are beginning to backtrack on this curious Bill. In view of the criticism that the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister made of the Ministers' handling of the Water Bill, it should be said in fairness that they have done their job throughout the Committee stage and given way on nothing. Now we see a little room for manoeuvre creeping in. Besides this money resolution are we to see more money resolutions about the writing off of debt or the suggestions made by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) to give grants to the privatised water companies?

I should like to make it clear that we will not oppose these proposals because they mark concessions wrung from reluctant Ministers who have taken a pounding. One has rarely seen Ministers in such disarray as we saw in Committee.

Paragraph (b) reflects a response to one element of the muddle through which Ministers have tried to find their way. That is certainly welcome as an important step by the Government in recognising the need for a loan facility, which Ministers, of course, failed to recognise throughout the Committee stage. The Secretary of State is obviously not aware of the difficulties that his junior Ministers have been suffering over recent weeks and months. Our response to paragraph (b) is that at last perhaps the Secretary of State has recognised—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Mr. Michael.

Mr. Michael: I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is obvious that the Secretary of State is somewhat needled on this matter.

Paragraph (a) will give the financial requirements for a committee that will at last be written into the Bill. Of course, the Minister of State at the Welsh Office continually refused our request to write this into the Bill

[Mr. Michael]

during the Committee stage. I am glad to see that it will be in the Bill and that the money resolution is before the House.

Tomorrow's debate will be about the committee's composition and what it will do. Our welcome, therefore, for paragraph (a) depends on the debate tomorrow. The Government are, in effect, accepting the amendment that we pressed on them in Committee that the advisory committee should be written into the Bill. Our amendments will give teeth to the committee, but they will require the same provisions as are given tonight. However, the purpose of our amendments—which also require the money resolution—are to protect the Welsh people from the worst effects of the Water Bill. Our plea is for a watchdog with real teeth. Our amendments will give real teeth without which the body would be completely meaningless.

The amendments will go further than simply to say that there will need to be a committee to advise the Secretary of State for Wales. They will seek to give proper weight to that committee by appointing to it representatives of local authorities in Wales, the chairman of the fisheries drainage and recreation committees and representatives of consumer, environmental and recreational organisations to be named by the Secretary of State. That will provide a meaningful committee and will give some purpose to the payments to be made under the resolution.

There will also be the possibility of the Secretary of State giving that committee some real work, by enabling it to carry out any function exercisible by him by virtue of the Bill. I refer to Wales because, of course, the first part of the resolution refers to Wales. It appears that the Secretary of State for the Environment does not require those functions for England.

It is important that there is an environmental oversight by a proper body. We believe that that should be carried out by a Welsh rivers authority and we have tabled an amendment to that effect. However, failing such an authority, there is a need for a Secretary of State's committee that is not just a nominal cipher, but has some power and responsibilities and can be seen to exercise functions within Wales.

During the Committee stage we won from a reluctant Minister of State the concession of a special committee for Wales, which has led to the money resolution. After fresh controversy, the Minister has tabled an amendment to write the committee into the Bill. However, unless the committee is given proper authority by our amendments, it will be a toothless corgi.

We propose further changes to make the body effective and representative of Welsh interests. As the paragraph now stands, the Secretary of State could use the money resolution simply to pay for three or four members of the Conservative party to meet in a hotel somewhere near the Welsh border, or even in London, for half an hour once a year and to offer him private advice that he could then ignore. That would be completely meaningless, but I suspect that that is what the concession means as it stands. If the amendments debated tomorrow are accepted, however, the money resolution will enable proper payment to a proper committee that will consist of proper representation from environmental groups, fishermen as well as local authorities and the chairman of the committees to which I referred earlier.

If the sell off of our water goes ahead information will be vital, but it will not be available to the public in Wales unless we have the powers that are allowed for in our amendments to the Government's new clause. Our amendments will empower the committee to require information from the water companies and from the rivers authority. In that event, the payment called for in the money resolution will be money well spent. Without such expenditure it is difficult to see how the public in Wales will be properly protected.

The Secretary of State for Wales will be able to delegate any of his powers under the Bill to the committee and give it a real job to do. That will also give some purpose to the financial provisions that we are debating.

We believe that the privatisation of water will do nothing positive for the environment or for the consumer in Wales. The minimum that we shall seek tomorrow is the establishment of a Welsh rivers authority and a consumers' charter of measures to be included in the Bill. Failing that, the Secretary of State for Wales should recognise that the amendments that we shall debate tomorrow and the financial provisions before us tonight are modest, constructive and positive proposals which would be welcomed in Wales and which the Secretary of State should accept if he has the slightest desire to protect Welsh interests.

We hope that the money resolution will pave the way for the Secretary of State for Wales to accept our amendments to the new clause tomorrow so that there will be something in the Bill that means something to the Welsh people.

To a great extent, tonight's debate is meaningless until we have tomorrow's debate. The way in which the Government have sought to rush through such an amendment by putting it on the Order Paper in such an extraordinary fashion leads to us having to refer to tomorrow's business while we debate that of tonight. That is a nonsensical way in which to deal with business but that is the way in which the Government operate. They have got themselves in a complete mess, but, because of that, we welcome what we think today's money resolution may mean and look forward to the substantive debate tomorrow.

10.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): By the tenor of the laboriously scribed responses of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) in Committee, I often thought that his mind was not even on the same Committee. Tonight is no exception. We have won the argument, we have won the debate and tonight the hon. Gentleman has stood at the Dispatch Box to agree with us on the money resolution.

The first part of the money resolution relates to the establishment of the advisory committee for Wales, which the Secretary of State for Wales will be able to appoint if new clause 8 is approved by the House. The advisory committee's role is to ensure that the Secretary of State for Wales is kept fully informed, and obtains a Welsh view, of

National Rivers Authority policies which affect Wales and of the needs of the NRA if Welsh requirements are to be met.

The clause provides for the Secretary of State to pay —with the consent of the Treasury, out of money provided by Parliament—to the members of the committee sums reimbursing them for loss of remuneration, for travelling expenses and for other out-of-pocket expenses. The costs are not likely to be "a few million pounds", to quote the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). We expect them to be about £25,000 per year.

Paragraph (b) of the resolution provides for the payment of loans to the NRA in connection with its flood defence function, and sets a limit to the amount that the NRA could borrow for this purpose. The resolution is necessary because we have tabled amendments to the Water Bill to provide for such arrangements. Paragraph 18 of schedule 1 already allows the NRA, with the consent of the Secretary of State or the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the approval of the Treasury, to undertake temporary borrowing. That power is intended to enable the NRA to overcome any problems that may arise with short-term cash flow.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South wanted to know why we should have to discuss these details now when we have already debated a money resolution. He would be the first to accept that we should listen very carefully to points raised in Committee by his hon. Friends and also by our own hon. Friends, and that is what we did. Concern was expressed that a power for the NRA to borrow temporarily was not sufficient on its own and that the NRA should also be able to undertake long-term borrowing to fund its flood defence work.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): We debated the issue of temporary borrowing in Committee. I argued then that temporary borrowing was unnecessary because all borrowing is temporary if the intention is to repay it. Why has the Minister produced a proposal after all this time when he refused to accept in Committee that there was any need for additional provision in the Bill? If money is borrowed, the intention must be to pay it back.

Mr. Moynihan: In Committee, the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends put the case for long-term borrowing powers, to which we are responding positively now. We have taken account of the hon. Gentleman's views and of the admirable views expressed by my hon. Friends on this point in the debate in Committee.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Minister noted the point made by the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) that money which is borrowed is intended to be paid back. I do not know where the hon. Member for Burnley was while the Labour party was in government, but the Labour Government did not pay back a penny piece. The Conservative Government are paying money back, whereas the Labour Government just kept on borrowing, leaving the burden to the next generation.

Mr. Moynihan: If we ever wanted living proof of the fact that we won the argument in Committee, it exists in the form of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt).

We do not believe that it is necessary to provide the NRA with long-term borrowing powers for situations other than emergencies. It should be possible for the NRA to plan a balanced budget for the normal run of its flood defence work without recourse to borrowing. Indeed, water authorities have generally managed without significant and new borrowings in recent years.

I confirm that the report that Ministers are required to make to both Houses of Parliament under paragraph 21(3) of schedule 1 will include a reference to money expended on the Welsh committee. This money resolution is necessary because of the amendment to provide borrowing powers following the strong views expressed in Committee which I reflected in my earlier comments.

In response to the points raised by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), the money resolution provides for loans to the NRA to finance emergency flood defence work. The cost of servicing the loans will come from the land drainage precepts. The effect of that is to spread the costs of major emergency works over a number of years. I hope that in a spirit of harmony and agreement between hon. Members on both sides of the House about the great benefits and wisdom of this money resolution the House will accept the motion without a Division.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Water Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any travelling or other allowances payable under the Act to members of the committee established and maintained for advising the Secretary of State with respect to matters affecting or otherwise connected with the carrying out in Wales of the functions of the National Rivers Authority; and

(b) sums required by a Minister of the Crown for making loans to the National Rivers Authority for capital purposes in connection with the carrying out of its flood defence functions, so long as the aggregate amount outstanding in respect of the principal of sums borrowed by the Authority shall not exceed £160 million.

Grant-Maintained Schools

10.58 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 165), dated 8th February 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 10th February, be annulled.

This debate is about an abuse of powers, and the Government's double standards. It is about the arrogance of power of a Government, who in the words of one of their leading members, Lord Hailsham, have now become an elective dictatorship and effectively accountable to no one but themselves.

This debate is also about a simple question of morality: whether taxpayers should fund a body which is palpably a party political front organisation, but which has sought to hide its true nature by falsely claiming that it was a charitable trust, when at no stage in its existence has it ever had that status.

The regulations empower the Secretary of State to grant-aid Grant-Maintained Schools Limited for a variety of activities. Speaking on the radio this morning, the Secretary of State said that those activities would comprise mainly training for grant-maintained schools already established. However, paragraph 2(1) of the regulations goes very much wider than that, allowing

"expenditure incurred or to be incurred by it for the purposes of, or in connection with, the provision (or proposed provision) of educational services in grant-maintained schools (or proposed grant-maintained schools), which expenditure is for the time being approved by the Secretary of State."

Despite questioning by me, the Secretary of State says that he cannot put a figure on the sum that he is likely to grant. However, the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust has applied for the purposes specified by the regulations for £25,000 for the 11 remaining days of the current financial year and for £150,000 for the next financial year.

A Department of Education and Science grant of £150,000 is very large indeed, by comparison with the moneys made available to other organisations. The Pre-School Playgroups Association, which has a worthier function than the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust and provides services for hundreds of thousands of children, receives the princely sum of £153,000. If the trust's application is granted in full, it will receive more in total grant than the Church of England Board of Education, the National Association of Governors and Managers, the National Children's Bureau, the Family Welfare Association and the Girls Brigade combined.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): The hon. Gentleman says that £150,000 is a lot of money. If a Labour-controlled local education authority were to run up £75,000 in legal fees on its own account, and another £75,000 on the account of the governors, over an attempt to frustrate the governors' wishes to turn their school into a grant-maintained school, would not the hon. Gentleman agree that that was a misuse of public money? That is exactly what happened in at least one case.

Mr. Straw: As usual, the hon. Gentleman does not mention which authority. [HON. MEMBERS: "ILEA."] If the school in question is Haberdashers' Aske's, that case concerns an application to become not a grant-maintained school but a city technology college. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that ILEA won in court in the first instance, and that it now has leave to appeal to the House of Lords. Citizens and local authorities have a right to go to court and have their rights established, not have them crushed by Conservative Members. *[Interruption.]* It is understandable that Conservative Members do not want to debate the matter of the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust being a Conservative front organisation, the abuse of power that there has been in funding it, and why the trust has so falsely misrepresented its position.

The trust is a Conservative front organisation. When the Prime Minister gave an interview to *The Independent* in September 1987, speaking of opting out, she said—and she used the first person plural—

"We are very much aware that we have got to form some kind of organisation to help people to do it"—

that is, opt out.

"And we have got to get the people who already run schools and say to them 'Now look! This is the way to go about it'."

The trust was established at the Prime Minister's behest. All the main trustees are Conservative party activists. The chairman is the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), and its director is Mr. Andrew Turner, formerly of Conservative Central Office research department and a Conservative city councillor for Oxford. One of the trustees is Judith Chaplin, a former Conservative councillor and head of the Institute of Directors policy unit. Another trustee is Mr. Ronald Baird, group director of Saatchi and Saatchi and a former Conservative party public relations manager. So the trust is a Conservative front.

Secondly, it has acted as such. The organisation's first act—even before the Education Reform Act was passed—was to write not to all councillors, but to all Conservative councillors, asking them whether they could identify schools that might opt out and concluding:

"Needless to say the Trust would treat any such information in the strictest confidence".

That, I suggest, is not the behaviour of an above-board, respectable charitable organisation.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that one Labour organisation wrote to all Labour councillors in Birmingham before one election—which the hon. Gentleman may well remember—telling them to oppose grammar schools because they taught the children of working-class families to vote Conservative?

Mr. Straw: I was not aware of that. As ever, I am deeply grateful to the Lady, but that is not the subject that we are discussing.

The third point is that, even if training were needed—as the Secretary of State says it is—it would be quite wrong for it to be provided by this organisation. There are resources and skills enough within the Department of Education and Science, and within respectable, established educational charities, to provide training—if it is training, and not indoctrination of those running grant-maintained schools, that is needed.

What of the resources of the DES? We do not have a unit for grant-maintained schools, or even a branch; a whole division of the Department is devoted to nothing but grant-maintained schools, costing £150,000 a year in salaries alone. Are those people not capable of providing the training? Can the inspectorate—whose costs are added to that £150,000—not provide it?

The fourth and last point is this: we should not pay the organisation because it has wilfully misled parents and the

public about its true nature. The first major pamphlet sent out by the trust—I understand that it was sent to all eligible schools—was called "A New Choice of Schools". I have a photocopy here. It is very cleverly put together, with pictures of children on beaches and in school libraries, and it talks in tendentious terms about the problems that schools have faced in the past. Turning to page 10, we read as follows—[HON MEMBERS: "We?"] Yes, I assumed that Conservative Members could also read—

"The Grant-Maintained Schools Trust has been set up to promote and assist in the development of Grant-Maintained Schools. As a registered charity it is independent of, but fully briefed by, the Department of Education and Science".

That statement—that the trust was and is a registered charity—is a simple, straightforward, bare-faced lie. The Charity Commissioners wrote to me as recently as 28 February this year, saying:

"As you know, the current activities of the Trust are carried on through a non-charitable company and that a charity has yet to be constituted."

Yet the statement that it was a charity was made nine months before that letter was written.

Whoever wrote that, and whoever allowed it to go out, must have known that it was not true. I suspect that someone will stand up tonight and say that it was all a mistake, but to suggest that that was a mistake is to ask us to suspend our judgment and our experience of the wholly unscrupulous operation of the present Government over the past 10 years. I will accuse the trustees—including the hon. Member for Epping Forest—of many things, but incompetence is not one of them. Nor is that an accusation that I bring against Field Fisher and Martineau, one of the country's leading firms of solicitors and the solicitors to the trust.

There was no mistake when that claim was made; just arrogance—an arrogance that led the trust to believe that it was above the law and could get away with making a claim that it probably knew to be untrue. What is more, it was not a mistake. Mr. Andrew Turner, Conservative city councillor and director of the trust, has damned himself out of his own mouth. He was the man who, last summer, issued the document that used the words "As a registered charity". In *The Observer* yesterday, he said:

"We never thought that all our activities were charitable."

That is interesting. The Secretary of State and Mr. Turner must know that one cannot have a charitable trust if parts of its activities are not charitable. That makes the operation of such a trust wholly impossible and bogus. It means that Mr. Turner was party to wilfully misleading the public and parents about the nature of the trust and that it was done for a purpose: that the trust could be presented as independent—to use its word—of the Department of Education and Science and the Conservative party when it was not.

Further evidence of the wilful intent to mislead is that, once a fuss was made about it, initially in the education press, no apology was sent by the Department of Education and Science to the thousands of schools that had received the document. It did not say, "We have been referring to this as a trust. By the way, it is not a charitable trust; it is a political front organisation." All the Department did was to change the word "charity" for "non-profit". There is still the insinuation, with the use of the word "trust", which is customarily associated in people's minds with charity, that this body is a charity.

I asked the Secretary of State twice on the radio this morning, and twice he refused to answer, this question; perhaps he will do so now: does he approve of a body of this kind wilfully misleading the public and parents about its nature? I asked him whether he was aware that those who make false representations that a body is a charity and who collect funds from the public might find themselves in the criminal courts. Is the Secretary of State seriously suggesting that a body such as this, which has fraudulently misrepresented its position, is a proper recipient of public funds?

Opting out has flopped. Only a handful of schools have balloted to become nationalised, state-controlled institutions. Most of them are threatened with closure and reorganisation. Most of them are not in Labour-controlled areas. Four weeks ago the Secretary of State tried to revive opting out by some cheap and grubby accusations against Labour authorities and against some of my hon. Friends. He has failed, despite repeated requests, to justify them. Tonight he seeks to breathe life into a flagging campaign by involuntarily invoking the taxpayers' assistance.

This is the Secretary of State who is only too ready to lecture others about morality. We remember his lecture to the General Synod of the Church of England on 1 February about the need for the Church to maintain moral values. Before he next examines the mote in the eye of his brother, or in the eye of local authorities, hon. Members, or the Church, let him examine the beam in his own eye. Let him practise what he preaches, for once. The regulations are an abuse of power. We shall oppose them in the Lobby.

11.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Baker): He got a bit worked up, didn't he? I welcome this opportunity to explain to the House the merits of the Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989. I find it richly comic to be lectured by the Opposition about the proper and prudent use of public money. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) certainly overreached himself this time.

The hon. Gentleman said at the end of his speech that the grant-maintained schools movement had flopped, but the debate is not just about the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust—it is also about the position of grant-maintained schools. The regulations cannot be discussed without grant-maintained schools also being discussed. Behind the hon. Gentleman's self-righteous pose is the unmistakable sound of wailing and gnashing of teeth. The debate is about the Opposition's rage and frustration that yet another of the Government's policies has proved both popular and successful. That success leads directly to these regulations and to the Opposition's mingled pain and grief.

The speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn has only illustrated his penchant for what I might describe as the Billy Bunter school of oratory. Hon. Members will recall Bunter's words:

"I didn't eat your . . . jam, you rotter; and anyway, it tasted awful".

The hon. Gentleman's version is that grant-maintained schools will ruin the state education system, but that no school will want to be grant maintained. He is wrong on both counts. The hon. Gentleman said that the whole system has flopped, but I have already approved four schools for grant-maintained status from September this year. Eighteen more have published formal applications to

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

me, which I shall consider and determine as soon as possible. Parents at 12 more schools have voted yes in secret postal ballots, and will publish proposals in due course. Eleven more schools are committed to holding ballots shortly, and another three have just embarked on the statutory procedures. I should add that a further 12 have held ballots and voted no to pursuing grant-maintained status. I have no trouble with that at all. If parents are given choice, they can choose not to change.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of the schools to which he has just referred is in Chesterfield? We can imagine how embarrassing it would be for the Labour party if a school in Chesterfield opted out. Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a lot of jiggery-pokery going on and that the county council allocated money to teachers to campaign against opting out? Is my right hon. Friend aware of any other local authorities which have used public money to obstruct parents' democratic choice?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend raises a case about which we have documentary evidence. [HON. MEMBERS: "Publish it."] It has already been published by Derbyshire county council, which voted £500 to be given to teachers to campaign against opting out. That is not fair because it is money for one side only.

Mr. Straw: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: In a moment. The money that has been used for that campaigning is public money. [HON. MEMBERS: "So is this."] The money that we are debating in the regulations will not be used for campaigning. Not a penny of public money has been spent by the Government on campaigning for grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Straw: That may be so, but £22,700 has been spent on 100,000 pamphlets, copies of which have been sent to every school governor asking them to opt out. Was that not campaigning?

Mr. Baker: It did not ask them to opt out. The leaflets that we sent out were an explanation of the law relating to grant-maintained schools. I am always being asked to explain the law. That is perfectly legitimate. Derbyshire county council produced the leaflet that I am holding up now at ratepayers' expense. I believe that 50,000 copies were produced.

The hon. Member for Blackburn alleges that grant-maintained schools have flopped. More than 60 schools——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) has just walked into the Chamber and is now accusing my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of being the biggest hypocrite in politics. Will you ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw that comment?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I am listening to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Baker: I was trying to remind the House that the Labour party cannot stomach the order because, so far, 60 schools have opted out. That is a confirmation of the importance of parental choice, which the Labour party does not like and will not have.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Opposition's approach tonight has been motivated by their fear of the success of the Government's policy? Does he further agree that within a few months the Opposition will probably reincarnate the policy and claim it as their own? They may even go so far as to claim that they invented it in the first place.

Mr. Baker: I hope that there will be such a conversion, but I am not optimistic. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that our policy has proved popular. Last year, during the long proceedings on the Education Reform Bill in Committee and in the Chamber, I was told that there would be a low turnout in the ballots, that parents would take no interest and that small handfuls of parents would take schools away from local education authorities. What actually happened? In the 46 ballots so far, the average turn out has been 71 per cent. of those eligible to vote, some schools have had turnouts of more than 80 per cent., and the average vote in favour has been 68 per cent.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The Secretary of State seems to be having some difficulty with his statistics. He told us that 60 schools had opted out, then he said that four had been approved, and now he is saying that 46 schools have held ballots. Which is the correct figure?

Mr. Baker: I said that four schools had completed the process. So far, 46 of the 60 schools have reached the ballot. I remind the hon. Gentleman, who likes these figures, that in the 46 ballots so far, 71 per cent. of those eligible have voted, so the measure is proving very popular with parents.

Mr. Fatchett: Whether by mistake or deliberately, the Secretary of State has misled the House. His original claim was that 60 schools had opted out. The right hon. Gentleman must come clean. Although 60 schools may have approval by resolution of their governors to hold a ballot, they have not opted out. Will the Secretary of State now correct the record?

Mr. Baker: I have no wish to mislead the House, but 61 schools are in the process of opting out—*[Interruption.]* The number has increased since I have been in the Chamber——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the Secretary of State that the scope of the debate is very narrow. It relates to the desirability of paying grant to the company for the specified purpose. I hope that we shall contain the debate within its scope.

Mr. Baker: May I clear up the point that I was asked to clarify? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I require the Secretary of State to adhere to his responsibilities and to talk within the scope of the debate.

Mr. Baker: I am delighted to do that.

With regard to the purpose of the regulations, the governors and senior staff of a school approved for grant-maintained status will obviously need to prepare for their new and important responsibilities. Particularly in the early days, grant-maintained schools may well wish to

have access to sources of expertise and advice in a number of areas—for example, on financial matters, such as proper budgeting and accounting practices, on effective use of computer hardware and software to collect, store, retrieve and use management information on the purchase of goods and services, on the making of contracts with staff and suppliers and on legal, architectural, health and safety and other matters.

The Grant-Maintained Schools Trust has submitted a proposal to my Department to make advice on each of these areas available to schools approved for grant-maintained status. It also intends to provide training for governors and staff. In the longer term, it will seek to build up a group ethos in this new sector of maintained schools and to ensure that they share good practice.

These are all worthwhile objectives, the pursuit of which it is entirely right and proper for my Department to finance. The regulations empower me to do so. The trust has made a good case. It has thought hard about what its potential customers' needs will be and how it can best help to meet them. I have therefore concluded that my Department should make a pump-priming grant of £25,000 to the trust for the remainder of the 1988-89 financial year and a further sum of the order of £150,000 in 1989-90.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: I must finish this point as it is germane to the issues that have been raised.

Let me make it absolutely clear. I shall make grants to the trust, in the words of regulation 2(1),

"in respect of expenditure incurred or to be incurred by it for the purposes of, or in connection with, the provision (or proposed provision) of educational services in grant-maintained schools (or proposed grant-maintained schools)".

The hon. Member for Blackburn raised this point.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State has talked about the need for good practice. What about the issue that I raised in relation to sharp practice on the part of the trust? It has said that it is a registered charity when it is not. When will the Secretary of State say whether he regards that as acceptable conduct by a public body?

Mr. Baker: I shall come to that.

I shall continue with the point that I was making because the hon. Member for Blackburn asked me about the important phrase, "proposed provision". He suggested that money will be made available by the trust in the future for schools contemplating opting out as opposed to those whose applications have been approved. It is important to realise that only four schools have gone through the process of being approved. The hon. Gentleman found it hard to grasp the fact—he made the same mistake on radio this morning—that my intention is to provide grant only to support the trust's educational services to schools which have gone all the way through the procedures and been approved for grant-maintained status. That is a clear statement. The phrase "proposed provision" applies only to schools which have gone right through the process. I wish to make it clear to the House that no money will be provided by the trust for schools which are applying for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Secretary of State might consider altering the wording of the regulations to prevent that happening. If the Secretary of State is claiming that the justification for the trust is to provide expertise, why is it that it neither employs nor has as trustees people with recognised educational expertise but instead has Tory party nominees and known Tory party activists?

Mr. Baker: I shall deal with the political nature of the trust shortly. I must finish the important point that I was making. As I have said, I wish to make it clear that the money will be provided only for the educational services of schools that have opted out.

The trust will be subject to the same sort of financial controls as other bodies grant-aided by my Department. In particular, it will be required to set up a bank account solely for the handling of grant from my Department, to ensure that grant is used solely for the purposes for which it is payable, and to publish annual, audited accounts and make such other returns as I request demonstrating that all grant has been spent for the purposes for which it was intended. My Department's accounting officer, the permanent secretary, is satisfied that those conditions of grant can be met by the trust and checked by the Department. I shall be accountable to Parliament in the usual way for the public funds expended, which means that the National Audit Office or the Public Accounts Committee will be able to examine the spending of every penny of the money for which I am asking the House.

On charitable status, I have seen the document to which the hon. Member for Blackburn referred and I have also seen the amended document. I understand that the trust believed that it would receive charitable status for its activities and advertised itself on that basis. I agree that that was regrettable. However, within one month of the facts being drawn to the trust's attention, the revised document was printed with the amendment. The trust took steps to correct the impression made by its literature. The trust tells me that it is now discussing with the Charity Commission charitable status for the educational services that I have described, which are the only activities for which I shall pay it grant.

Mr. Straw: It is more than regrettable—it is reprehensible. How could the trust have believed that it would receive charitable status when, according to the Charity Commissioners, a charity has yet to be constituted, even at this date, and no charity or charitable trust was in existence at the time when the trust wrote those words?

Mr. Baker: I said that I considered it to be most regrettable. However, the trust corrected the mistake within a month.

The question is whether money for educational services should be passed to a body which does not have charitable status. I have checked carefully the various bodies for which I provide grants for educational services. The majority are charities, but a large minority are not charitable bodies. Money is provided to them for the educational services that they provide, which we consider worth purchasing.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State says that the mistake —not to say complete inaccuracy—was corrected. Did the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust send to all recipients of the original document a correction pointing out that the trust was not a charity?

Mr. Baker: I am not aware that a correction was sent out to every recipient. The trust showed the corrected

[Mr. Baker]

document to schools that approached it. That is the important point. I should make it clear that it is legitimate for my Department to provide money for educational services to bodies which are not charities. I looked carefully through the list and I found that one of the largest grants for educational services given to a body that is not a charity is to the Trades Union Congress, which has received more than £750,000 in the current year. There are many other bodies in that position.

The accusation has been made that the trust will receive public money for campaigning. I emphasise that the trust will not receive money for campaigning in favour of grant-maintained schools. So far, not a penny has been provided to the trust out of public money for any purpose. In future, the trust will not receive money for public campaigning, but only for the substantial provision of educational services.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As I am sure my right hon. Friend is aware, the regulations say that he may pay grants for

"the provision (or proposed provision) of educational services in grant-maintained schools".

The regulations say, "in grant-maintained schools". When schools are going through the process, they are not grant-maintained schools, so my right hon. Friend cannot pay the money until a school is a grant-maintained school. What the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) has said is either a red herring or he cannot understand plain English.

Mr. Baker: I am delighted to have the support of my hon. Friend. He has confirmed the advice that I received from the Clerks of the House this morning. The fact that the hon. Member for Blackburn cannot understand plain English is no surprise to me.

We shall not provide money for campaigning purposes —it will be for educational services. On that basis, I am perfectly entitled to be concerned at the heavy expenditure which some local authorities have apparently used in campaigning, or in enabling others to campaign, against grant-maintained status. That was the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin). We know that substantial sums have been made available by certain local authorities. An article in *The Guardian*—the hon. Member for Blackburn must agree that it is true if it has appeared in *The Guardian*—states:

"Rochdale Council spent £5,414 on its campaign to persuade parents at Queen Elizabeth High School to vote against opting out."

The article also refers to Rochdale spending

"£6,165 on a similar campaign at Siddal Moore high school".

Whether or not that money has been properly spent is not a matter for me, but reference has already been made to the money that Derbyshire county council has approved for campaigning. That is a direct use of public money for campaigning. Tonight the hon. Member for Blackburn has again accused the Government of using such money for party political purposes. Does he not realise that grant-maintained schools are nothing to do with party politics? If he does not agree with that, perhaps he will recognise that 24 schools in Labour areas have asked to opt out, compared with only 21 schools in Conservative areas. That shows clearly that a great many Labour parents and councillors are in favour of opting out.

The hon. Member for Blackburn has referred to political pressure, so I shall remind him of what happened to a Labour councillor in Bolton——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret that the Secretary of State is going wide of the debate. I remind the House that this is a short debate and will finish at 12.28 am. Short speeches will be welcome and speeches that go beyond the scope of the debate are out of order.

Mr. Baker: The Government have been accused of using public money for party political purposes, so surely I am allowed to answer that point——

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe) *rose*——

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Baker: None of the money that will be provided under these regulations will be used for campaigning purposes, although other money has been used for such purposes by LEAs. Indeed, pressure has been put on Labour councillors. The hon. Member for Blackburn knows of a Labour councillor in Bolton who has had to resign the whip because he is in favour of grant-maintained schools.

In conclusion—I know that other hon. Members wish to speak—we know that the hon. Member for Blackburn is implacably opposed to grant-maintained schools. [HON. MEMBERS: "This week."] If that is so, perhaps the hon. Member for Blackburn will come to the Dispatch Box and tell us what he intends to say in the next Labour manifesto about grant-maintained schools. Will he keep them or abolish them?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This debate is not about grant-maintained schools. I ask the Secretary of State to keep to the scope of the debate.

Mr. Baker: I shall, of course, observe your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall not press the hon. Member for Blackburn to answer that question tonight.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not concerned about that. I am concerned that the Secretary of State should keep within the scope of the debate.

Mr. Baker: I conclude by repeating the point that I have already made. The money that we are asking the House to approve today is not for campaigning or for party political purposes—it is to provide educational services to grant-maintained schools, which have proved popular. I am sure that the Opposition are opposing this regulation not because of its terms but because they are fundamentally opposed to the concept of grant-maintained schools. I ask the House to approve the regulations.

11.38 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): We have heard a sordid speech that matches the sordid proposals before the House. It is a disgrace——

Mr. Dunn: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you please direct the right hon. Gentleman to confine himself to the regulations before the House?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The debate must remain in order. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will refer to the scope of the debate. If he does not do so, I shall call him to order.

Mr. Howell: In all my years of refereeing football matches—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I clearly heard a Labour Member make a disgraceful comment and I suggest that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) be brought to book.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Howell.

Mr. Howell: I shall of course do my best to comply with your injunction, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I am bound to say that in all my years of refereeing football, this is the first time that I have been told to observe the laws before I have even taken to the field of play.

This is a sordid business. In accordance with your line of thought, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to illustrate the activities of a trust in Small Heath school in my constituency. It is a disgraceful state of affairs. From day one, the trust, whether or not it has yet received money from the Government, has been involved in a collusion between the head teacher, certain governors and Conservative councillors. Two judicial reviews have now been granted by the courts. It would be wrong for the House to discuss them. All those activities——

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order Madam Deputy Speaker. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The right hon. Gentleman's speech is not within the terms of the order. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have no intention of naming any hon. Member. I can deal with the matter without naming the right hon. Member. Does the right hon. Member understand that the scope of the debate relates to the desirability of paying grants to the company for specified purposes? I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman, who is a considerable parliamentarian, will confine himself to the guidelines that I have laid down.

Mr. Howell: I assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that every word of my speech will deal with the activities of grant-maintained schools and the company. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that Madam Deputy Speaker will tell me if I am out of order. She does not need any assistance from the rabble on the Conservative Benches.

I wish to deal with the activities of the trust in that school in my constituency. An unfortunate situation arose. Of the governors who were elected as a result of the Secretary of State's activities in a Labour constituency, only one Conservative governor attended once in 10 years. That is what happened. Suddenly, and in spite of their record——

Mr. Harry Greenway *rose*——

Mr. Howell: The hon. Gentleman should keep quiet and not get upset. There is no need to get excessively agitated.

I make it clear that, suddenly, and under the influence of that trust in an area in which, in 10 years, not one Tory governor had ever attended a meeting, because of the Secretary of State's activities, the governors were transformed and a multiplicity of Tories appeared. It would be out of order——

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. If the Secretary of State has said that the money under this Bill will be provided to an organisation only for the purpose of helping schools which have already opted out, how can it be in order to deal with schools which are contemplating opting out?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) should read the order before he raises with me points of order of that nature.

Mr. Howell: I am dealing with proposed grant-maintained schools, which are mentioned in the order. That should be in order. In all my time in this place, any self-respecting Minister who said that he wished not to deal with proposed school trusts but only with those that are already formed, out of courtesy to the House, would have withdrawn his order. That is not what this Secretary of State has done. He is going on hell-fire with his order, which has no relevance to his speech. However, hon. Members must put up with such discourtesies.

As a result of the company—the grant trust—the people on the board of parent governors——

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene because I intend to make my own contribution to the debate. On the assumption that he is making a spurious attempt to raise matters that are not within the scope of the regulations, will he agree that no member of the grant maintained schools trust had any discussion on the composition of any governing body, whether in Birmingham or in any other education authority? To imply otherwise is to lie to the House.

Mr. Howell: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell us why the secretary of the trust attended the meeting of governors at which co-option was discussed.

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for allowing me to clarify the position. In Birmingham, the trust has discussed with interested parents and governors the concept of grant maintenance. That is what it should do, and that is what it has done. It is the elected Labour councillors of Birmingham who have so far spent over £20,000 of ratepayers' money on spurious legal actions to try to frustrate the wishes of parents and governors in Birmingham.

Mr. Howell: If the trust is behaving as a trust, why has it not had one minute's consultation with the chairman of the governors, who happens to be a distinguished former lord mayor and Labour councillor? Why are representatives of the trust seen going into the Conservative room at the Birmingham city council with Conservative governors? If it is a trust, it has an obligation in law to be even-handed in all the advice that it gives. It has an obligation in law to speak to the governors as a whole, which it has not yet done. It is conniving in a

[Mr. Howell]

hole-in-the-corner method by meeting certain governors only. For that reason, the Secretary of State should not give it a penny. It is not behaving properly.

Mr. Norris: As long as the right hon. Gentleman makes statements that are wildly inaccurate and accuses me of involvement, he must expect me to interrupt him. He has said that the trust has an obligation in law to consult every governor. For my edification, will he draw the attention of the House to that specific law? Where does he find it? Where does the obligation arise? I know of no such law.

Mr. Howell: If that obligation does not exist and the trust—*[Interruption.]* I assert that as the trust is a charity the obligation does exist because a charity cannot be partial in its activities. It cannot be party political. If the obligation does not exist, the Secretary of State is showing a monumental abuse of his powers by allowing the trust to behave as it is. May I add——

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: If no one else wishes to speak, I shall continue to give way.

Mr. Coombs: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is a monumental abuse of power for the Birmingham city council to make available confidential names and addresses of parents so that they can be lobbied and canvassed in their own homes by supporters of the council against the opting-out proposal?

Mr. Howell: I am delighted to deal with that intervention because it echoes an argument that has been advanced by the Secretary of State, as reported in *Education*. The right hon. Gentleman asserted that it was wrong for members of the city council and others, such as my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and myself, to have access to the names and addresses of parents for the purpose of writing to them. The headmaster of the school in question has used the register to write five, six or seven letters——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is straying into territory beyond the scope of the debate.

Mr. Howell: With the greatest respect—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will adhere to my guidelines and stay within the scope of the debate.

Mr. Howell: It is typical of the Tory rabble that I have only to address you, Madam Deputy Speaker, with the greatest respect, which is the phrase that I used, to bring them off their seats. With the greatest respect, I made the error of replying to the question put to me and I should not have done so.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman and hon. Members should not respond to interventions. They should stay within the scope of the debate; it is a narrow one and I intend to keep the House to it.

Mr. Howell: You are right, Madam Deputy Speaker, but nobody interrupted the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs), so I thought that it would be in order to reply to him.

To return to the trust, it is advising on the gerrymandering of boards of governors. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Gerrymandering and boards of governors do not come within the scope of the regulations.

Mr. Howell: With the greatest respect—*[Laughter.]* I am dealing with the activities of the trust. It is behaving in a disgraceful way. I am perfectly entitled to express that to the House. What has happened in Small Heath is wholly——

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): How did the parents vote?

Mr. Howell: I will tell the hon. Gentleman how they voted. They voted in a way which has been challenged, rightly, in the courts, therefore—*[Interruption.]* I will tell the House what happened. The trust was advising the headmaster who called a special school assembly of pupils of 11 to 15, distributed leaflets and told them to go home and vote no. That matter is before the courts.

Mr. Dunn: The right hon. Gentleman is making an interesting case and I understand his difficulties. Can he please tell the House what his opinion is of his constituents who as parents exercised their democratic right and voted to opt out?

Mr. Howell *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will not stray down that familiar route. The debate has nothing to do with opting out.

Mr. Howell: Done again. I am sorry that we are put in this position and I shall not follow that route.

The body has been advising the headmaster and governors who now face two judicial reviews, neither of which was acknowledged by the Secretary of State at Question Time, nor in his disgraceful speech to the Young Conservatives when he was dealing with the trust and the legislation. Instead he attacked those who were ensuring that the legality of what was going on was properly reviewed in the courts.

We shall have other opportunities to talk about the sort of literature that has gone out and certainly to defend the charges made against us. It does not equate with the concept of any democratic process that I have ever been brought up in to understand that, on the one hand, parents could be written to six or eight times and, on the other, people are pilloried by the Secretary of State for writing one single letter to parents advising them of the case against opting out.

The regulations are a disgrace to the British democratic process. It is an absolute disgrace to the Secretary of State for Education and Science, who, if he had an ounce of decency left in him, would take them away and rectify them.

11.54 pm

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I had no idea until tonight just how successful the principle of opting out obviously is with education authorities. I do not believe

that I have ever heard such an appalling display of self-righteous humbug in all my years in the House. During my recent sabbatical, when I had the pleasure of reading these debates as one removed, I was just as excited by the concept of grant maintenance—the idea of allowing schools to operate as independent schools free from the sort of political chicanery that we have heard about in the examples that my hon. Friends and even Opposition Members have given. It was a marvellous concept, which we had to follow through as vigorously as possible.

I shall first of all dispel what I see as possibly the only valid point that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) made. He is right that on page 10 of one of the early documents published by the trust the words "As a registered charity" appeared. Those words were written in the context of what we expected at that time would be a successful application for charitable status, bearing in mind the trust's three objectives, which I shall later outline.

As it happens, by the time that that publication was issued, charitable status had not been obtained. Any decision——

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Norris: When I have finished my sentence, I will give way.

As it happened, at the time that that document was published, charitable status had not been obtained. At that time, it was still being sought for the trust as a whole. We have been advised that, because of the nature of the political debate surrounding grant maintenance—whereas the objectives of the trust were perfectly clear and not concerned with the debate in the House on the Education Reform Bill—charitable status would not follow automatically. It was therefore brought to our attention that the document was in error. Immediately that that document was shown to us to be in error, the—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Win Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Norris: I must say that, in a fairly lengthy document of 15 pages, the only correction that was required was to four words.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) *rose*——

Mr. Win Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Norris: I shall finish my sentence, then the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) or any one of his army of hon. Friends may intervene.

A correction to four words was made in a quite complex document, copies of which I am more than happy to allow my hon. Friends and, indeed, Opposition Members to see. We ensured that the education press, especially *The Times Educational Supplement*, *The Guardian* and other interested journals, had full details of the change that we had made. We were very keen that, if there was any suggestion that any of the work of the trust was not charitable—in the sense that it involved the discussion of any principle that might be defined as political—the trust should not seek grant-maintained status in that regard.

An important consideration was the belief of all those associated with the trust that it was reprehensible to use public money to make a political point. The irony is that in that regard the trust accepted——

Mr. Win Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Norris: We have a short time and others want to speak. When I have finished, I shall give way to the hon. Member for Bridgend.

In that regard, the trust was clear that it had three main functions. They were first——

Mr. Win Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman must contain himself —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is clear that, for the moment, the hon. Gentleman is not giving way. In that case, I must ask hon. Members not to persist in seeking to intervene.

Mr. Norris: If hon. Members will contain themselves, we shall get through much more quickly.

The trust has three objectives. The first is to advise schools that inquire of the trust about what grant-maintained status means. Earlier, figures were tossed around about the popularity of the concept of grant-maintaned status. There are 6,300 schools eligible for grant-maintained status, and the House will be interested to know that of those more than 10 per cent. have now inquired of the trust as to how they might seek grant-maintained status. Therefore, more than 600 schools have expressed interest in the principle.

The second purpose for which the trust was established was to assist those schools that have balloted their parents and have decided that they will make an application for grant-maintained status. Those schools would need two kinds of technical information about the issues to be decided upon while the balloting takes place and about the process for preparing an application to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State were the ballot successful. My right hon. Friend acts in a quasi-judicial capacity in determining any application to him for grant-maintained status, but he could not, of course, offer advice on the preparation of an individual application.

I shall now give way to the hon. Member for Bridgend. The hon. Gentleman has not risen and, having given him every opportunity, I see no reason to detain further—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) has the Floor.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is well known for his chicanery—*[Interruption.]* He gave way to my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) and you should now rule that my hon. Friend has the Floor because the hon. Gentleman gave way.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Norris has the Floor.

Mr. Norris: The third function——

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Norris: As my hon. Friend is kind enough to elevate me to the Privy Council, the least I can do is give way.

Mrs. Hicks: Does my hon. Friend agree that grant-maintained schools are about parental choice? Does it come as any surprise to my colleague that the Opposition, who are totally opposed to choice——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady probably was not present earlier when I insisted that we keep to the scope of the regulations.

Mr. Norris: Perhaps it would assist my hon. Friend and the general debate to make one point clear in answer to a serious allegation by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell). At no time has the trust had any discussions with any member of my right hon. Friend's ministerial team or with any local authority about the composition of governing bodies. That is entirely a matter for the appropriate authorities and it is absolutely nothing to do with the trust. I assure the House that the trust has plenty of work on its hands without engaging in matters that are entirely outside its purview.

Mr. Norris *rose*——

Mr. Denis Howell: My accusation was crystal clear. It was not that the trust was negotiating with officers or with the city council as a whole, but that at every stage it was advising a Conservative group on Birmingham council's education committee. The trust members attended meetings in Conservative members' rooms and acted in a quasi-party political way.

Mr. Norris: The right hon. Gentleman raises a very interesting point. The trust had embarked on its work in a spirit of explaining the concept of grant maintenance to interested parents and governors. Perhaps the trust was naive to believe that it could do that without encountering the sheer distortion which the Opposition seem to regard as their everyday stock in trade.

I have a copy of a document which was issued at public expense by Rochdale council during its "Think Twice" campaign. The document is headed:

"If you are thinking about grant maintained schools, Think Twice: it's your child's future."

That document describes in fairly lurid terms a version of grant-maintained status which a reader would find incomprehensible. In those circumstances, the trust was obliged——

Mr. Flannery: Give way. Go on, give way now.

Mr. Norris: It was obliged to explain in the clearest possible terms the true principle of grant-maintained status so that all parents would understand what grant-maintained status actually means when they take that important decision about a school's future. If parents were left to the tender mercies of the Labour party, they would never be able to avail themselves of that information.

Mr. Maples: If a school governing body was deciding whether to opt out, would it be possible for my hon. Friend's organisation to use any of the money that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State could award under the regulations to finance a lawsuit to attempt to remove two of the governors who were against the school's opting out and therefore run up a legal bill of £75,000 and force the other side to run up a similar bill? That is exactly what the Inner London education authority has done with a school in my constituency.

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend has made his point extremely well. It would be entirely improper for the trust or any other body charged with a proper discharge of educational responsibility to act in the way that he has described. It saddens me and it must sadden my hon. Friend and all Conservative Members that so often Labour councillors use public funds and ratepayers' money to gerrymander and engineer without any regard for the political consequences. It is becoming clearer through this bad-tempered debate that the Opposition are scared stiff of giving parents the right to control their own schools.

Having in the 1960s and 1970s destroyed so many of our great schools which actually delivered the best education without replacing them, the Opposition now want to get their greasy hands on the rest of the education system. They want to deny parents the right to make their own decisions.

With regard to the matter before the House this evening, Madam Deputy Speaker, you were entirely correct to draw the attention of the House to the limited scope of the measure, although I am sure that you do not need my reassurances about that. This measure enables my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make grants, under the most stringent conditions, to the trust in the discharge of one of its stated purposes—to research and provide facilities for grant-maintained schools, which the Opposition are the first to point out are not provided by a local education authority once the school becomes grant-maintained. Once it becomes grant-maintained, in addition to its per capita funding it receives an amount in recognition of the LEA's share of the administrative costs of the school. The school must then find its bursar, accounting system, advice on property maintenance, grants maintenance and in-service training for teaching and non-teaching staff.

Many schools may decide that, rather than appoint another racial awareness adviser or send half the staff on sexual orientation courses during teaching time, it might be better to use some of the money available to enhance teaching levels and salaries in the school. That decision is one that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends would applaud. In so far as any of the schools need services that the ILEA previously provided, it is clearly necessary that they should continue to be available, and that schools may know where those services can be found.

The purpose of the trust in that regard is specific—to determine where those services can be provided and on what basis, to cost them, to endeavour to determine which of them is appropriate for a particular type of school, and to offer free advice to schools accordingly. In that, the trust will do a job that previously has been done by the Department of Education and Science and by local education authorities, and therefore it is entirely appropriate that my right hon. Friend's Department should fund that work. That work will be accounted for separately and appear in separate bank accounts in the trust's accounts.

Mr. Flannery: The hon. Gentleman departs from the fundamental point made earlier, that the organisation of which he is chairman—he ought to declare that interest —sent out a pamphlet containing a direct lie in claiming that the trust was a charity. Why does not the hon.

Gentleman put that right in a proper manner by sending out a pamphlet correcting that earlier statement? The trust is not a charity, yet the pamphlet claimed that it was.

Mr. Norris: I am sorry that the House was detained by that intervention, because the hon. Gentleman could not have listened to a word I said earlier, when I fully answered that point. As the hon. Gentleman may or may not have observed, I am, I think, the only speaker in this debate —with the exception of my right hon. Friend, I hurriedly add—who has stayed in order. I do so because the motion's purpose is very clear. I reiterate that the trust is in no doubt as to the limitations placed on its powers, or about the heavy responsibility borne by any non-profit-making body such as the trust—a company limited by guarantee—in the discharge of public funds.

I give this unequivocal undertaking to the House. As to the trust, there is no question whatsoever but that any funds received by the trust on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will be used exclusively and totally to provide those services that were previously provided by local education authorities, under the specific terms of the regulations.

I was privileged to attend a great grammar school in Liverpool, the Liverpool Institute high school. I used to say that I went to school with the Beatles, but these days I say that I went to school with my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) because more people know who one means. That school provided the best possible education for children, regardless of their families' incomes. If a child had the ability, he was able to utilise it fully, go to university and make a career—which he could not possibly have done in any other way in a system that did not provide that excellent start.

The tragedy of education in the 1980s is that, thanks to Labour intervention over 20 years, those schools——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Mr. Simon Hughes.

12.8 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Methinks the Conservatives do protest too much. The questions so far asked about the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust have not been answered. The reality of this debate is that there are regulations before the House— *[Interruption.]* Yes, this is my speech. Conservative Members have had plenty of time.

Mr. Norris *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) had completed his speech as far as the Chair was concerned. He was moving widely away from the scope of the debate. Mr. Simon Hughes.

Mr. Norris: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. If I strayed I apologise, but I submit that to infer from that straying that I had completed my speech was, perhaps less than charitable of you. You might at least permit me to conclude my peroration.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman had a superb peroration, but it went on for a very long time. Mr. Simon Hughes.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) has done his cause no service by taking a long time to say very little about the trust and its origins. The Secretary of State was equally evasive, as he was on the radio this morning and as his colleagues up and down the land know him and his hon. Friends to be.

This matter was debated by the Association of County Councils last Thursday. Not only had the association in February condemned the Secretary of State's action in laying regulations giving him powers to pay Grant-Maintained Schools Ltd., but—so embarrassed were its Conservative members—not a word did they utter about the issue in last week's ACC debate. The questions about why the trust had been described as a charity were not answered for some time; moreover, at no time has the question been answered whether an application had even then been made—and it is believed, on firm evidence, that it had not.

At no time have the Secretary of State and his colleagues described how leaflets came to be circulated which give the game away very clearly. One of them—printed on blue paper—reads as follows:

"Schools making this choice need independent advice. Not every school will qualify; there will be strict checks and safeguards to ensure that only well-run schools obtain GM status. The Trust can offer advice on whether GM status is right for your school. It will also be able to offer specialist advice on and assistance with the completion and submission of applications."

That is not advice to schools that have already become grant-maintained, have voted to become grant-maintained or even have started the procedure to become grant-maintained.

I have here the company's memorandum of association, lodged I believe with Companies house on 18 July last year. They clearly include in the company's objects:

"To assist governors and headmasters in acquiring GM status".

There was never any prospect of the organisation's being a charity. The Secretary of State and his colleagues know that, and they have been dishonest to the House—as they have been dishonest throughout the debate. The reality is that a Tory front organisation has been set up. It has been campaigning for grant-maintained status, although so far without Government money. Where has the money come from so far? We have not been told, but the organisation has been active, and people have been evasive about explaining its activities. I phoned one of the trust company's directors today. He refused to answer any questions about the trust's activities. The trust's telephone number, indeed, was unobtainable today, so willing is it to give advice.

The Secretary of State's tawdry defence of this Tory front organisation might be that he appointed the hon. Member for Epping Forest when he was not a Member of Parliament. He should now make it clear that the hon. Gentleman should no longer be in that position, because it is prejudicial to the independence of the organisation, as it is for Tory activists, known former Tory party employees and Tory councillors to be its backbone and only political appointees.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Give us the reason why.

Mr. Hughes: Because the Government assert that this is an independent, non-campaigning organisation, whereas the reality is that it is urging people, directly and indirectly, to seek grant-maintained status. I hold no brief for Rochdale or for any other authority that spends public money——

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: I shall not give way. Hon. Members have had plenty of time to argue the case, and Conservative Members have not argued it successfully.

I hold no brief for local authorities that spend public money in this sort of campaigning. However, it is equally unacceptable for the Government to set up an organisation improperly and prematurely and to ignore advice, or fail to take proper advice. There has been no explanation of the Secretary of State's mistakes, or those of his officials.

The Government ask the House to approve regulations that allow the funding not only of grant-maintained schools but also of proposed grant-maintained schools, which is not provided for in the Act. The criteria here relate to schools with a good reputation, able staff and the support of the community and that is not provided for in the Act either. They will therefore be unable in future to come to the House and say that other public bodies should not spend public money on campaigns. The Secretary of State has done his career, credibility and integrity a great disservice. I ask him to reconsider his position; and if the hon. Member for Epping Forest has any honour, he ought to resign his post before the end of the debate tonight.

12.20 am

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): It is clear that the debate is not about the grant-maintained schools principle, the desirability of grant-maintained schools, or the holding of ballots. It is about one important principle: that the Secretary of State and the Government want to use taxpayers' money to fund a Conservative party front organisation.

No evidence has been produced in the debate to counter that accusation. The chairman of the organisation earned his meal ticket back into the House of Commons by running that organisation. The director of the organisation is a former employee of Conservative central office. He is a Conservative member of Oxford city council. So keen is that individual to look after public funds that recently he was thrown out of the members' room of Oxfordshire county council for using the telephone on grant-maintained schools trust business.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): That is petty.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman says that that is petty. Mr. Turner is the gentleman to whom we are to entrust taxpayers' money. When he behaves in that way, he is not worthy of that trust. Every other member of the trust is a paid-up, card-carrying member of the Conservative party. The House is being asked for a blank cheque to support the Conservative party. Taxpayers, without their knowledge, are being asked to fund a blank cheque because the Conservative party does not have the courage to campaign throughout the country on behalf of opting out and grant-maintained schools. That blank cheque should have been underwritten by the Conservative party. It should have been paid for by Conservative party funds.

When the Secretary of State says that the money will be used in a particular way, what greater nonsense could he offer? We know that when that money is used in a particular way, other money will be released for straightforward party political purposes. The trust has deliberately misled the public and parents. The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) said that there had been a mistake. It took the organisation a month to find out that there had been a mistake. During that time that information was sent to headteachers, parents and teachers.

Mr. Norris *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman is making unjustified allegations about me and he ought to give way.

Mr. Fatchett: I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman spoke for more than 25 minutes. His speech was a disgrace and an embarrassment.

Mr. Hayes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member has made serious allegations against the honour of my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris)——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Fatchett: I am perfectly prepared to talk on for the next four minutes. We saw that the hon. Member for Epping Forest had no supporters on his side of the House. He had to speak for more than 20 minutes to fill in the time. If the Conservative party wants to behave in that way, two of us can play at that game.

I want to ask the Minister a question—maybe we can have a response. We know that the trust has misled parents and that because of that——

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: No. The hon. Gentleman is wasting the Minister's time.

We know that parents have been misled by the trust. Where ballots have taken place, I would advise parents to examine their legal rights closely to see whether they can challenge in court the conduct of ballots because of the misrepresentation that has taken place.

It took the trust one month to change the word "charity". We need to know when the Department of Education and Science found out and what advice it gave the charity and what advice it gave the trust. I think that the answer is that they were in collusion and that the Department knew exactly what was going on.

I will leave the Minister time to wind up. This measure is one of arrogance. It tries to use taxpayers' money for party-political purposes. If local government behaved in this way, the Government would use legislation to stop it. The Secretary of State says that that is right. This Secretary of State has no principles. He will move the goal posts whenever it is convenient to him to move them. That is why the regulations are flawed.

We believe in consistency and in principle. We shall vote against the regulations because we believe in good law and because we do not believe in using taxpayers' money for party-political purposes.

12.27 am

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): Such a lot of huffing and puffing, such a lot of pompous, holier-than-thou sentiments and sanctimonious rubbish have been spoken tonight.

No money from the public purse has been spent by the Grant-Maintained Schools Trust, but money to campaign against parents exercising their rights under the law has been spent by public authorities, and that is totally unacceptable.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) has honourably acknowledged the mistake that was made by his trust, and I hope that the House will have the grace to accept what he said. I believe that he was right in every respect, especially that the purpose of the trust is to advise governors——

It being one and half hours after commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [17th March].*

The House divided: Ayes 193, Noes 255.

Division No.124] **[12.28 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Llin Golding and
Mr. Nigel Griffiths.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John

Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory.

Question accordingly negatived.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ordered,

That Dr. Lewis Moonie be discharged from the Social Services Committee and Mr. Andrew F. Bennett be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

TREASURY AND CIVIL SERVICE

Ordered,

That Ms. Joyce Quin be discharged from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee and Dr. Lewis Moonie be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Mr. Paul Murphy be discharged from the Welsh Affairs Committee and Dr. Kim Howells be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

PETITION

Ripon Hospital (Maternity Unit)

12.40 am

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): I beg leave to present a petition, containing 7,000 signatures collected in the ancient city of Ripon, seeking the intervention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health to prevent the closure of the maternity unit at the hospital in Ripon. The Friends of Ripon Hospital are seeking that intervention on the following grounds.

There will be severe hardship to families in a very rural constituency if a local facility is closed. There will be special hardship to the 500 service families already in Ripon and to a further 500 who will be there when Dishforth base is fully developed. The unit has an essential role for lying in, even when births have taken place in Harrogate. Finally, although a new hospital is promised to Ripon and figures in the plans, it has no funding whatsoever attached to it.

To lie upon the Table.

Cot Deaths

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

12.43 am

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): Each year in Britain more than 2,000 babies between the ages of one week and two years die suddenly and unexpectedly. Ninety per cent. of those deaths occur before those babies reach the age of eight months. In about 1,500 of those cases, no adequate cause of death is ever found. As the House is aware, such cases are described as the sudden infant death syndrome. There are between four and five such deaths a day.

When it was publicised that my Adjournment debate tonight would deal especially with cot deaths, I received a great amount of literature from many organisations working in the area, and some heart-breaking letters from parents who have been thus bereaved. The plea from all of them is for more research into the subject. As I am sure we are all aware, there can be nothing worse than losing a child except, perhaps, losing a child and never knowing why that child died. Few parents do not fear this appalling tragedy and it is the responsibility of us all to ensure that no reasonably researched pilot scheme goes unfunded or is dismissed because it appears far-fetched. As long as we do not know the reason for such deaths, we must explore every possibility.

I have never been a scaremonger or prone to react favourably to every claim in medicine—or any other area—that a cure has been found for some particular ill. But having been interested and concerned for years about the infant mortality rate and cot deaths in particular, I was startled when I read of the research into the possible connection between those sad, unexplained deaths of babies and the possibility that they are caused—or partly caused—by the growth in our environment of electromagnetic fields.

The Minister will no doubt be aware of the recent publicity given to the work of Roger Coghill of Coghill Research Associates and I assume that it was that research to which he was referring on 20 February when, in a written answer to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) about whether his Department had investigated the studies into the electromagnetic wave theory and the possible relationship to cot deaths, he replied that neither his Department nor the National Radiological Protection Board, which has a responsibility to advise on hazards from electromagnetic fields, was aware of any authoritative, peer-reviewed studies that had demonstrated an association between sudden infant deaths and exposure to those fields at any frequency. In the list of areas under study given in the written answer, that area was not included. Of course, much depends on what is meant by "authoritative study", which was the phrase used in the written answer.

I have come across other work on the same subject and, as I understand it, research has been going on since as far back as 1976. In that year a German doctor, Dr. Eckert, published research into cot deaths and the proximity of electromagnetic waves from tube trains, electric railways and similar things. It was widely discussed by the medical profession at the time and as recently as 1988 a Swedish researcher, Mr. Hansson, carried out experiments with small mammals exposed to such rays, using a method of high-powered cables of high voltage. The results seemed to demonstrate at least the necessity to research further, as the reaction of the mammals was similar to those of babies dying unexplained deaths for which there appeared to be no medical cause. The work was edited by Connor and Lovely and published by Alan R. Liss.

If the Department is not aware of those works, that should be rectified at once, as they add a little weight to the research that I mentioned earlier. If it is aware of them, perhaps the Minister will tell me why, apparently, that circumstantial evidence and research appears to have been dismissed. We all know that, although the research into cot deaths has produced various explanations, which could be termed individual explanations, it is far from conclusive and we are already looking at a variety of substances, areas and causes.

I am sure that the Minister is aware of the research that has been carried out by Roger Coghill in a pilot study in this area. I am asking that those results should be researched further by the Department when it researches this whole subject. There is not enough evidence, in my view—I am no doctor—to be dogmatic, but on the other hand there is enough evidence to warrant further investigation and not simply dismiss that other research.

The main argument is based on the massive rise in the use of artificially created electromagnetic energy. At the beginning of the century, few houses were centrally heated or lit by electricity. There were no commercial radio stations until 1920, no radar surveillance until 1939 and no widespread television until 1951, but all our homes are now electrified to an enormous degree. In the past 30 years the use of electricity in Britain has trebled. There has been a massive rise in the use of electrical appliances, from electric blankets to satellite dishes and car telephones.

As the research points out, so filled is the air with radiated electromagnetic transmissions that only with the greatest difficulty can space be found for new radio stations. As the research states:

"We have, in the space of one lifetime, bathed ourselves in an ocean of electromagnetic energy waves."

As we are all aware, it took more than a quarter of a century before the regulations curtailing the use of X-rays were introduced, despite research of many years standing showing how organic tissue could be damaged by too much exposure. How many people died as a result of that ignorance of X-rays and how many were damaged we shall never know, but I have always been impressed by the fact that that knowledge was around for many years and was discussed long before the regulations were introduced. Many people, eminent in many areas, dismissed the evidence and argued that that connection was not possible and that much of the damage to tissue was caused by other things.

One could enlarge that view into other areas, considering X-rays alone and the safeguards that we now have, the nervousness with which we approach them, and the fact that, the moment that a young woman enters a hospital to be X-rayed, the first question asked is, "Are you pregnant?" We must remember that those rays are dangerous, and then question some of the research, which has not been confined to one individual but has already been highlighted in other parts of the world and has not been investigated enough.

In November last year, the Select Committee on Social Services published its report on infant mortality. The report is awaiting a response. I do not in any way criticise the Department for that. These things take time, and it is

[Miss Joan Lestor]

important that, when we get a response, it is the correct one. Since that report was published, the electromagnetic theory has achieved some prominence in this country. I hope that, when they respond to the report, the Government will take on board the recommendation about cot deaths and the stated concern in the report that little progress has been made, particularly since a report in 1980 asked that there should be a general introduction of confidential inquiries into all health districts. I understand that special attention is being placed on one or two areas —Wolverhampton is one—because of certain incidents.

Bearing in mind the criticisms of the report, that not enough work has been done on cot deaths and that more research generally needs to be done and notice taken of a report that was published nine years ago, the electromagnetic waves theory should be given more serious consideration in any future research and work than it is at present.

I cannot refer to all the experiments that have led me to stand here tonight and make this plea. It would take too long, and none of us is expert in the matter and able to give a proper analysis. But I make this plea on behalf of all parents who have seen their children inexplicably die. On behalf of the people, many of whom work on the subject in various ways, it is in our interests that no research is left unlooked at and that proper credence is given to people who may have come up with at least something that bears a causal relationship to cot deaths, if it is not entirely the cause.

12.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) on being successful in the ballot for the Adjournment debate. This is a very important issue and one about which the Government are deeply concerned. In addition to the number of deaths attributed to sudden infant death syndrome, we are concerned about the devastating effect that such tragic losses have on the families involved. My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) also is interested in the subject.

It might be helpful if I commence by explaining that the terms "cot death" and "sudden infant death syndrome" are not synonymous. The term "cot death" was first introduced by Dr. A. M. Barrett in 1954 to describe the unexpected death during sleep of an apparently healthy infant. The term "sudden death syndrome" has been defined as "the sudden and unexpected death of any infant or young child which is unexpected by history and in which a thorough postmortem examination fails to demonstrate an adequate cause of death". Thus, whereas the term "cot death" might include an unexpected death for which an explanation is subsequently discovered—for example, an unsuspected congenital anomaly or a respiratory or gastro-intestinal infection—the term "sudden infant death syndrome" should be used only after a thorough postmortem has been unable to identify a cause. It is a diagnosis of exclusion.

Both terms, and other similar phrases, are used in practice to record unexpected infant deaths on death certificates. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has indentified separately since 1971 deaths registered where such terms have been mentioned on death certificates. Of the 4,108 post-neonatal deaths—that is deaths after 28 days but within one year of birth—in England and Wales in the past three years of available statistics, 1985-87, with mention of cot death or a similar term on the death certificate, sudden infant death syndrome was given as the underlying cause in 91 per cent. of cases, a respiratory condition in 5 per cent. and a non-respiratory condition in 4 per cent.

In the 10 years to 1987, the latest year for which figures are available, there has been a significant increase in the number of deaths attributed to sudden infant death syndrome and a similar decrease in deaths attributed to respiratory conditions. The provisional figures for the first nine months of 1988 continue to bear this out. An expert group which prepared a report in 1988 on infant mortality in England for the chief medical officer drew attention to the belief that there is a trend in the pattern of certification towards certifying as sudden infant death syndrome deaths which, hitherto, would probably have been assigned to respiratory disease. The combined post-neonatal mortality rate has remained essentially unchanged over the same period at 2·3-2·4 deaths per 1,000 live births. I should add that the infant mortality rate as a whole in England has fallen from 12·8 per 1,000 live births in 1979 to 9·1 in 1987, the latest year for which figures are available. There have been significant decreases in the perinatal—the first week of life—and neonatal—the first month of life—mortality rates. That is encouraging. The worry is with the post-neonatal period.

Few cases of sudden infant death syndrome occur after one year of age. The peak is between one and four months. I now turn to possible causes. The syndrome is much more common among boys than girls. About 60 per cent. of sudden infant deaths are among boys. There is a clear seasonal pattern to the syndrome. Most deaths occur in winter months. We must not jump to conclusions, however. There is evidence that unintentional overheating may be a factor in some babies, and accidental chilling is likely to be a factor in some others. Similar seasonal patterns occur with deaths due to recognisable respiratory disease.

It would be unwise to believe that we are looking for one common factor among these unexplained deaths. It seems more likely that there is a variety of contributory clinical factors. Numerous theories have been mooted, and they can be classified into four kinds: first, that a previously normal infant succumbs to overwhelming stress —for example, chilling or infection—secondly, that there is a defect in function or anatomy that has been present from birth; thirdly, that infants are especially vulnerable to such events as minor infections, changes in temperature and even domestic upheaval during critical phases of development; fourthly, that there is some failure in the processes of maturation of one or more organ systems.

The hon. Lady has mentioned in particular the theory linking sudden infant death to electromagnetic fields. The advice which I have received from the experts in this subject, the National Radiological Protection Board, is that it is not aware at present—I stress "at present"—of any authoritative study which has demonstrated an association between sudden infant death syndrome and exposure to these fields at any frequency. I shall respond to the hon. Lady's suggestion that research should take place.

The main Government agency for supporting biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council. In the year 1987-88, about £400,000 was spent on projects directly or indirectly related to sudden infant death syndrome and respiratory distress in the new born. We recognise, however, that there is a need to continue such efforts, and in April the Department will be discussing with the Medical Research Council what further avenues of research, including, if necessary, the influence of electromagnetic fields, might next most fruitfully be explored. I can give the hon. Lady an undertaking that I shall draw specifically to the attention of the Medical Research Council this debate and the research that has been cited. Following the discussions, I shall write to the hon. Lady and my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton. I am sure that the hon. Lady will agree that this is essentially a matter for clinical judgment and research judgment. I shall discharge my duty to the House by drawing the attention of the council specifically to the debate.

Sudden infant deaths have been shown to be associated with a number of social, biological and demographic factors, including social class, parents' marital status, mother's age, past pregnancies and low birth weight. Smoking during pregnancy and passive smoking have also been linked with sudden infant death syndrome. There are also regional variations but no common themes. I answered a recent question from my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton on the regional pattern and he will have noted from my reply today, if he has had a chance to study it, that no clear themes seem to emerge from the statistics that I have provided.

While none of those factors has been unequivocally identified as the cause of sudden infant death syndrome, it is important to increase public awareness of the factors that may be influenced by individual actions. We need to continue to encourage good professional practice and sound parenting to ensure that those families whose circumstances are associated with risk to their infant, or whose babies are unwell, have ready access to the advice, support and care that they may need. For example, all new mothers already receive, on their first visit to antenatal clinics, a free copy of the "Health Education Authority's Pregnancy Book" which gives advice on giving up smoking. That is backed up by advice at antenatal clinics and from general practitioners. A new teenage anti-smoking campaign costing £2·2 million a year starts in April and will take special account of the worrying trends in smoking among girls approaching child-bearing age.

The hon. Lady may have seen the reports of the article in last week's British Medical Journal which discussed the relationship between the sleeping position of the infant and sudden infant death. However, I do not believe that clinicians can yet give parents unequivocal advice about the best sleeping position for their baby. I am sure that clinicians and paediatricians will be considering that.

In the voluntary sector the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths plays a significant role in funding and promoting research. At present it is spending about half a million pounds a year. The foundation also provides an extremely valuable support and counselling service for bereaved families. I pay tribute to its work.

Both the Department and the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths are concerned that parents who have already lost a child—the risk for subsequent children is statistically only very slightly higher—or whose child is considered to be at risk of sudden infant death should not be misled by recent media coverage about the use of apnoea monitors. Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that these alarms, which are attached to the chest of an infant, will prevent sudden infant deaths occurring. We support the advice recently issued by the foundation that such monitors should be used only with the knowledge, advice and support of the paediatrician, the general practitioner and health visitor.

As I have said, the Government are concerned about the incidence of sudden infant death syndrome—a concern shared by the Select Committee on Social Services, which, as the hon. Lady is well aware, published its report on perinatal, neonatal and infant mortality in December. The Government welcomed the Select Committee's interest in this area. However, as I am sure the hon. Lady will understand, and as she has already acknowledged, I cannot comment in any detail on our response to the Committee's report, which is currently being prepared and will, I hope, be published shortly after Easter. In our response to the Committee we plan to demonstrate by our proposals the importance which we attach not only to identifying the factors associated with sudden infant death syndrome, but to reducing further the infant mortality rate as a whole.

We believe that the way forward could be to build on the approach of one of the most commonly referred to research studies on sudden infant death syndrome—the multi-centre study of post-neonatal mortality co-ordinated by Professor Knowelden and funded by the Department. This study investigated 988 infant deaths over a three-year period, 1976 to 1979, in eight parts of England and Wales. The aim in each case was to perform a full postmortem, carried out by a paediatric pathologist, to determine how far the death could be explained and, separately, to hold a confidential case conference to determine whether or not signs of the infant's terminal condition had been exhibited before death and whether appropriate action had been taken. The study showed that a number of deaths were partly or wholly explicable. The line of approach pursued by the professor in this study possibly shows the way forward, concentrating as it does on proper pathology and the importance of confidential case conferences to establish exactly the circumstances and factors surrounding each particular tragedy. As I have said, we shall be publishing our conclusions and our response to the Select Committee's report shortly, and I hope that that response will be constructive and will be studied by the whole House.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 21 March 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Doctors

1. **Mr. Blackburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors there were *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in the latest available year.

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Mr. David Mellor): In 1979 there were 60,764 doctors in the hospital and community health and family practitioner services in England. By 1987, the number was 68,777.

Dr. Blackburn: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that in Dudley health authority during that period medical staff increased by 18 per cent. and more than 25 per cent. more patients were treated? Does not that give the lie to allegations made by trade unions and others about our commitment to the Health Service? Does my hon. and learned Friend also agree that, in view of the reduction in population, the figures are enhanced and outstanding?

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing forward the figures for his own health district. What they show is true of so many health districts up and down the country. Public expenditure on the Health Service has risen by two and a half times the increase in public expenditure as a whole. As a result, a number of areas which under previous Governments did not receive a substantial level of funding, now do so. The resources that my hon. Friend quoted give a clear message to the people of Dudley that the National Health Service is safe in our hands.

Mr. Fearn: Following publication of the recent White Paper, does the Minister consider that general practitioners in rural and inner city areas will now decrease as a result of those recommendations? What recommendations has the Minister received from those particular practices?

Mr. Mellor: There is absolutely no reason for the number of GPs to decrease. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the number of GPs in England has increased by nearly 20 per cent. in the past 10 years. There are differences between regions in the United Kingdom which mean that some areas have twice as many people per GP as others. However, we are trying to provide incentives for doctors to go to under-doctored areas. It would not make sense to increase provision if such gross disparities still existed.

Dame Jill Knight: Without pressing my hon. and learned Friend for exact figures, has the increase in other medical experts—such as nurses, midwives, dentists and specialists—been at a fairly similar rate?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend is quite right—the increase in dentists is almost precisely the same as the increase in GPs. The increase in nurses—of about 60,000—is also broadly similar. If, when referring to specialists, my hon. Friend was thinking of consultants, we are committed to achieve a balance and, over the next 10 years, to increase the number of consultants by 5,000. That will dramatically improve the position in most hospitals.

Hospital Trusts

2. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from Shropshire regarding the establishment of National Health Service hospital trusts.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I have received few letters from people considering the possibility of forming NHS hospital trusts for cottage hospitals in Shropshire.

Mr. Gill: Will my right hon. and learned Friend use his best endeavours to enable my constituents to keep their local hospitals, either through an independent trust or through a National Health Service trust? Will he also instruct West Midlands regional health authority to facilitate that process?

Mr. Clarke: I know that, with the opening of the new district general hospital in Telford, Shropshire district health authority faces difficulty in deciding which services the hospital should replace, and what pattern of hospitals is needed for the future. The west midlands region and I want Shropshire to deliver the best possible system of health care within the reasonable resources available. Self-governing hospitals in the National Health Service will have to satisfy the Government that they have good, viable plans, and are likely to attract NHS patients from districts and other GPs. We are looking now for the first candidates to be ready to come into operation probably early in 1991.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Secretary of State confirm that, even after the opening of the new Telford hospital, there will be fewer hospital beds in Shropshire than 10 years ago? Will he have a word with the Chancellor and tell him that the £40 million being handed out as a tax bonus for private medical care is completely irrelevant to the people of Shropshire? What is needed is a mere £2 million—that is the most likely estimate—to prevent any beds or hospitals from being closed.

Mr. Clarke: The number of hospital beds has fallen in just about every advanced medical system in the world over the past 10 years. I trust that the same has been true in every county of England over that period, as I hope that they are all moving towards day care and better use of facilities in line with modern medical practice.

I believe that Shropshire, with its new facilities, is now extremely well provided for. It is a pity to see much-loved cottage hospitals closing, but I approved the recent proposals only when I was satisfied that a better service to patients would result.

Mr. Biffen: Will my right hon. and learned Friend reconsider the judgments that he has been making recently in respect of hospital closures in Shropshire in the light of the latest developments, which cast a shadow over the likely continuation of the orthopaedic hospital at Gobowen?

Mr. Clarke: I will look into the matter, but at present I am familiar and up to date only with the closures that I approved shortly before Christmas. I continue to take a close interest in what is happening in Shropshire, but I am currently waiting for the results of the district health authority meeting which I believe is to take place on Thursday.

I know of my right hon. Friend's great concern for the future of hospital facilities in his constituency. The recent proposals were amended to meet his wishes and those of the inhabitants of Oswestry in part. I have no doubt that the future of the orthopaedic hospital is a matter in which he and I must continue to take a close interest.

Public Sector Laboratory Facilities (NHS)

3. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give an assessment of the results of the increasing use of private sector laboratory facilities within the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: Quality, speed and cost-effectiveness are the vital attributes of laboratory services, and access to private laboratory facilities widens the range of opportunities for health authorities to achieve these.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that facilities made available by private laboratories have greatly speeded up cervical investigations, and that such laboratories play a significant part in improving the opportunities available to patients?

Mr. Mellor: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. There are 385 public sector pathology laboratories in the country, but they have been supplemented substantially by 150 private laboratories and more than 200 private screening centres. There is no doubt that those facilities play a considerable part in health care, and we hope that under the new arrangements in the NHS there will be a much closer interaction between laboratory services in the private and public sectors.

Mr. Loyden: What assurances can the Minister give that tests such as cervical smears will be properly monitored in the hands of private laboratories, and what influence will the Department have on the outcome?

Mr. Mellor: Before the Department or any district health authority allocates work to a laboratory it must satisfy itself that the laboratory is efficient. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that we are funding the national external quality assessment scheme, to which most public and many private laboratories subscribe and which is a way of ensuring appropriate quality.

"Working for Patients"

4. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what weight he attaches to the public comments and reaction he is receiving on the White Paper "Working for Patients" in the context of *(a)* professional groups working within the service and *(b)* others.

9. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has recently received on his White Paper on the Health Service, "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received a number of representations on the White Paper. I have been very pleased by the positive and constructive nature of many of them.

Mr. Dykes: For the sake of those who wish to remain politically deaf—including Opposition Members—will my right hon. and learned Friend repeat that there is no question of privatisation in the proposals, and no question of any disadvantageous effect on the chronically sick or the elderly?

Mr. Clarke: I certainly confirm that. I congratulate the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on having given currency to both those myths before the White Paper appeared as there is nothing in it to support either of them. I assure my hon. Friend and everyone else that we have set our back firmly against any prospect of privatising the Health Service, and that our proposals offer no disadvantages to the elderly and chronically sick.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the White Paper has been subject to a wicked campaign of misinformation, especially as regards the elderly? Will he also confirm that the basic principles of the Health Service remain unaffected, and that the objective of the White Paper is for more patients to be treated by even more doctors?

Mr. Clarke: A wholly predictable string of committees and bodies that I know well have reacted to this as they have to every other reform. People have ignored the fact that the National Association of Health Authorities and the Royal College of Surgeons have reacted favourably to the reforms. The purpose of the reforms is that the interests of patients should be uppermost in mind. We believe that such a change, in addition to all the extra money that we are putting into the Health Service, will produce an improved service to patients which will reflect more closely their choice and preference in the future.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister recognise that while some interest groups may express their own responses, there is unease in many parts of the profession and among patients that the end that the Minister has in mind may not be achieved by his methods?

Mr. Clarke: To take up the hon. Gentleman's last point, the joint consultants council yesterday was the latest medical group to say that it entirely shared the Government's aims of strengthening the service. There are plenty of questions about the means that we propose, but none of our critics has put forward proposals of any substance for reform or improvement. When we continue the prolonged process of discussion with consultants and GPs in practices and hospitals throughout the country and implement the proposals with care, we will demonstrate to the profession and to others that we are strengthening the service through the process of reform on which we have embarked.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Secretary of State accept that extremely caring GPs in Stockport and in Denton in my constituency had not one good word for the

Government's proposals when they met me? Will he answer a specific question from them? If they are to have control of their own budgets as a group practice, will they be able to contract with a variety of hospitals or with just one hospital? How does that square with giving patients choice? Will the patients have free choice, or will it be the doctors who have the choice so as to control their budgets?

Mr. Clarke: If GPs choose to have their own practice budgets, they will be able to place their contracts with as many hospitals as they wish. They will be able to control a large sum of NHS resources to put together a mix of potential care and offer individual patients a choice when that care is needed. That is one of the attractions of practice budgets for many GPs. I know of many GPs who are interested in taking on their own practice budgets. If GPs in Stockport feel that they cannot take on that responsibility, they need not be too troubled as GP practice budgets are available only to practices which want them and can negotiate a satisfactory budget with my Department.

Mr. Watts: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that some of my constituents have been concerned by what they have been told about the proposals by representatives of vested interests but have been reassured when they have read the proposals? Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider taking steps to ensure that more patients have the opportunity to read the proposals rather than having to rely on the distorted views peddled by producers in the Health Service?

Mr. Clarke: We have a short popular leaflet setting out the proposals and we are trying to distribute it as widely as possible through post office counters and GPs' surgeries, where they will carry them, pharmacists' counters, and so on. I agree with my hon. Friend that, while we respect the right of anyone to have a different opinion about the reforms, it is a pity when some people get carried away. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) said, I hope that there will be no outburst of misinformation to patients, telling old ladies that they will be deprived of treatment, as only a fringe few of the medical profession will be inclined to indulge in that.

Mr. Robin Cook: The short answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that the Secretary of State does not intend to attach any weight to the public reaction to the White Paper, as if he were to do so it would sink under the weight of criticism. Does he admit that in the past couple of weeks alone it has been rejected by the Royal College of Nursing, the British Medical Association, nine royal colleges and a meeting in Nottingham attended by 160 GPs, many from his own constituency, who unanimously rejected his proposals? In retrospect, does he agree that the panning that his White Paper received shows how wise he was after the 1982 restructuring when he said:

"Anybody who comes along in any successive Government and talks about yet another restructuring wants his head examined."

Mr. Clarke: I could have told the hon. Gentleman before we started that the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Nursing and the Joint Consultative Council would come out against these or any similar proposals. I understand that the meeting of general practitioners in Nottingham was concerned largely with the GPs' contract, about which there is a later question on the Order Paper. All the information that I have received is that the meeting came to no clear conclusion. That is no doubt a matter that I shall take up with the local medical committee when it comes to its conclusions. In my contacts with consultants and GPs, I have found that many of them are interested in the process of reform. They know that the Health Service has had a 40 per cent. increase in expenditure in real terms and they know that on top of that growth in expenditure improvement is needed in the way in which the Health Service is managed, the way in which it adapts to modern services and the way in which it responds to patients. There is a great deal of goodwill throughout the profession which will put the reform into practice as long as we discuss the detailed implementation carefully with it.

Mr. Allason: Last Saturday morning, I had a meeting with the GP who represents more than 100 GPs in my constituency. My right hon. and learned Friend may be interested to know that, by and large, that GP expressed broad support for the White Paper. He said that many of the items in it were matters for which he had pressed for a number of years. Will my right hon. and learned Friend also accept, however, that there is a widespread anxiety, especially among patients who have expensive complaints such as those who have had colostomies, who are worried that there is no guarantee from the Government about their continued support? Will my right hon. and learned Friend take this opportunity to give that guarantee?

Mr. Clarke: We have sought to address that in the working paper, which makes it clear that for very expensive patients there will have to be a ceiling above which expenditure cannot be carried by any GP's budget. I will bear my hon. Friend's point in mind as we work out the details. I agree with him that we must come up with a system in practice which guarantees that such patients will in no circumstances be deprived of the necessary treatment. It is clear that such a system is perfectly feasible and it will be worked out in discussions with the profession over the coming months.

GPs (Rural Areas)

5. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to meet the British Medical Association to discuss the income of general practitioners in rural areas.

Mr. Clarke: I met the British Medical Association's general medical services council yesterday. We discussed the subject of general practice in rural areas among other issues arising from the discussions that have taken place throughout the past year on proposals to amend regulations for the remuneration of general practitioners.

Mr. Livsey: Is the Secretary of State aware that in the county of Powys, which has the sparsest population in England and Wales, members of the BMA met on Sunday and rejected the NHS proposals as they affected rural areas on the grounds that they abolish choice, reduce income and redistribute money from rural areas to inner cities, without making special provision for inner cities? The proposals will make some rural practices non-viable, so the GPs are unhappy about them as they affect rural areas.

Mr. Clarke: I cannot understand the argument about reducing choice because our new contract proposal is based on a background of making it easier for patients to change and choose their GPs, and GPs will be allowed to advertise to make that choice easier. We are putting forward a new proposal for a rural practice allowance to replace the previous allowance for rural areas. As the hon. Gentleman's constituency is so sparsely populated, I was surprised to hear that his GPs believe that they will lose by the proposal. I will try to ensure that the hon. Gentleman is given further details of our proposals. We have addressed ourselves very much to the fact that in rural areas with a sparse and scattered population it is necessary to weight the basic practice allowance in favour of doctors because they will not have the same opportunity of earning income through patient lists and capitation fees as is possible in more populated areas.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Can my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House what proportion of the rural practitioners who receive the allowance at the moment will be excluded by the new arrangements? Will he reassure general practitioners that the total on which the percentage target for cervical smears is calculated will exclude virgins and those who have been invited to take the test but have refused?

Mr. Clarke: My proposals for a new contract, based on where I say that we have got to after 12 months of negotiations, were issued after the General Medical Services Committee put its version of where we are at the moment to its members. When we met yesterday we exchanged arguments about rural practice. The GMSC prefers the present system whereby doctors qualify for rural practice supplements if they practise in an area which was served by a rural district council before the local government reorganisation in the early 1970s. I prefer a system based on density of population. We are still discussing the matter. When it is resolved, it will be clear whether practitioners in my hon. Friend's rural constituency are advantaged or disadvantaged.

On my hon. Friend's second point, it is right to set targets. It is no good paying for every smear test because they are part of the ordinary routine day-to-day duties of a GP. We are setting targets for good performance so that extra payments are made to those who achieve levels of screening for which we think good practice should aim. However, I agree that we must define the target group carefully. People who have had hysterectomies, people who have moved off the list, nuns and virgins must be taken into account.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Secretary of State aware that most people in my rural constituency cannot even choose their doctor, let alone the hospital to which the doctor sends them? Is he aware that that is why, without any encouragement from me, GPs in Ayrshire have unanimously rejected his proposal, including all the GPs in the marginal constituency of the Secretary of State for Defence? Is it part of the Minister's tactics to remove one of his main competitors for the post of Leader of the Opposition after the next election?

Mr. Clarke: For the past 12 months we have been negotiating changes to a contract which was last changed in the mid-1960s. The local medical committees tend to pass resolutions saying that they prefer the contract that they have rather than any changes. If changes are made to determine who receives more or less than the average, it is inevitable that some will be gainers and some will be losers. I suspect that the losers are running along to the local medical committee meetings with more enthusiasm than the others. We are discussing the matter with the GPs and their representatives. The object of changing the contract, from my point of view and from the patient's point of view, is that we must particularly reward those doctors who do most of the work and those who introduce new services and hit performance targets for key services such as vaccinations and screening. Some doctors will do well because that will benefit them, but others will not do so well and will have to improve their practice. That is what a patient-oriented, consumer-conscious NHS is all about.

Mr. Conway: When I meet the GPs in Shropshire on Tuesday night what message would my right hon. and learned Friend like me to give them to assure them that GPs in rural areas will be treated equally favourably with those in the larger city areas at which many of his proposals are aimed? When my right hon. and learned Friend next meets the BMA, will he remind it that the Labour Government cut spending on the NHS, so there is no point in looking to the Opposition for genuine support?

Mr. Clarke: First, I ask my hon. Friend to point out that the only disagreement between myself and the GMSC is about the form of help for those who live in rural areas —the way in which we weight the capitation payment for rural areas. We agree that all the basic practice allowances need to be added to the capitation fees in rural areas to compensate for the sparsity of population. My hon. Friend can also tell his no doubt excellent practitioners in Shropshire that those who can achieve the performance targets that we have set and introduce the new services will benefit under our contract proposals. He might also point out that many parts of the contract are agreed. For example, a new payment for child surveillance services was first put forward by the practitioners representatives four or five years ago. After my meeting yesterday, I think that it is still generally welcomed by those who represent the doctors and by the doctors themselves.

Mr. Galbraith: Is the Minister aware of the statement made by the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), that capitation fees will be banded? Can the Minister confirm that he is discussing that point with the BMA? Can he also explain the further statement by the hon. Member for Stirling that banding will ensure that, irrespective of the number of patients on a list, the income from capitation fees will be exactly the same in each practice?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) is having separate discussions with the Scottish branch of the GMSC, not about the whole proposition but about certain aspects of it which affect Scotland, and reassurances were given to rural practitioners in Scotland in particular in the White Paper "Working for Patients". I can only ask the hon. Gentleman to refer his question to my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for health in Scotland because I am not party to discussions between him and the GMSC on the subject of the Scottish Health Service or any Scottish variations on the contract that I am negotiating.

Hospitals (Wage and Salary Rates)

6. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the effect on the National Health Service wage bill of allowing individual hospitals to set their own wage and salary rates.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None. In common with other White Paper proposals, the aim of freeing self-governing hospitals from central control over pay is to get the best value for money in terms of patient care from the resources that are made available.

Mr. Ashley: I am not surprised that the Secretary of State should try to dodge that question. Is he aware that these proposals are a recipe for chaos, because the BMA simply will not agree to doctors having variable rates, and because those other workers in the National Health Service who may be forced to accept them will be bitterly and deeply resentful? Why does the Secretary of State always allow ideology to override common sense?

Mr. Clarke: There is nothing ideological about it. There are many towns and cities in this country where the district general hospital is the largest single employer, and if it becomes self-governing and local people are put in charge of it, I can see no earthly reason why it should be said that they are not capable of settling the pay and conditions of their own staff if they want to. There would be advantages if they did, because the present national, centralised system is often too inflexible to enable local management to deal with local shortages of skilled staff.

I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman thinks that the BMA will automatically oppose the proposal. Sometimes I too am guilty of leaping to the conclusion that the BMA will always oppose things. Many doctors and other staff in the hospital concerned will feel loyalty to their own hospital and town, and will not be at all averse to the idea that pay and conditions should be settled more locally.

Dr. Glyn: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that this flexibility will allow us to adjust local conditions, which will probably result in a more efficient service and better pay?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend, and many people in our great hospitals up and down the country will find this possibility one of the more attractive features of self-government.

Ms. Harman: Is the Minister aware that the *Health Service Journal* this week carries an advertisement for a finance director for a London teaching hospital, which it indicates is going to opt out? Will he please name that London teaching hospital or, if he does not know the name of it, will he find out and tell me by the end of today? Is it not reprehensible—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Harman: Is it not reprehensible that the process of opting out should be done in secrecy and by stealth?

Mr. Clarke: I know that the hon. Lady keeps picketing outside a certain hospital in case it becomes self-governing, but I am not going to help her by letting her know whether she is picketing outside the right one. She will have to find out for herself in due course. When proper applications are put in for self-government, of course they will be dealt with openly; we will publicise them all and discuss them fully with any interested members of the general public. I am not responsible for the advertisements, or even the copy that appear in *The Health Service Journal.*

Statistical Information

7. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what categories of statistical information his Department receives on a regular basis from district and regional health authorities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): From 1 April 1987 districts have been collecting a new range of statistical data. From this new data we are producing a set of 350 basic health service indicators. Following consultation and verification with health authorities, these will be published in July. We plan to publish the indicators for 1988-89 in January 1990.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend will know how useful such statistical returns as the performance indicators are in indentifying hard-working health authorities such as my own in Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde. He will also know that in the case of the financial returns of the Health Service it is taking some time to receive this information. Will he tell the House a little more about the steps that he is taking to achieve more timely availability of that information and to find a new set of performance indicators?

Mr. Freeman: After initial problems last year we are now satisfied with the timely receipt of information from districts. The provisional figures for 1987-88 for my hon. Friend's own health district demonstrate that there is a continuation of the excellent trend of treating more patients at relatively low cost. My hon. Friend is to be congratulated, as is his district health authority.

Dr. Moonie: What estimate is being made of the accuracy of the data that are being received?

Mr. Freeman: As I said, we are now circulating provisional data for 1987-88 to the regions and the district health authorities so that, over the next two to three months, the data can be verified. We will publish in July, when the data are verified. In January next year—that is to say, nine months after the end of the financial year which ends this month—we will publish this year's figures.

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority

10. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the average annual increase after inflation in the capital investment programme of the Yorkshire regional health authority between 1979 and 1988; what was the figure for the years 1974 to 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: A direct comparison between 1978-79 and 1987-88 shows an increase in real terms of 15·6 per cent. in the rate of capital expenditure in the Yorkshire region. A similar comparison of 1974-75 with 1978-79 shows a decrease in real terms of 7·9 per cent. measured at 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Riddick: Can my hon. Friend confirm that those excellent figures have led to increased and improved patient care in Yorkshire? Does he agree that, despite the noisy rhetoric of Opposition Members, not least the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), the figures

conclusively demonstrate that Labour cuts hospital building and that the NHS is safe only in Conservative hands?

Mr. Freeman: I am happy to confirm that. The additional capital investment that has gone into the Yorkshire region—indeed, the whole of the National Health Service in England—has manifested itself in greater patient activity. In Yorkshire, over the past 10 years, out-patient cases have gone up from 2·5 million a year to 3 million a year, and in-patient activity over the last five years is up from 450,000 per annum to 550,000 cases per annum.

Mr. Madden: Does the Minister accept that in Bradford the combination of cutting expenditure and creeping privatisation is creating widespread concern among those who depend upon the National Health Service for their health care? Will he nail the rumour that he has it in mind to appoint councillor Eric Pickles as the chair of Bradford district health authority? His appointment would have a devastating effect upon the morale of those who serve in the Health Service in Bradford and would be most unwelcome to the citizens of that city who depend on the service for their health care.

Mr. Freeman: What I can confirm is that, in terms of allocations to the Yorkshire region, as to all regions of England, there is a substantial real increase in resources going to the Health Service in the next financial year. In the case of Yorkshire, the increase is 2·5 per cent. in real terms.

The chairmanship of the district health authority is a matter for consideration and announcement in due course.

Deprivation and Illness

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department is funding or carrying out regarding the relationship between deprivation and illness in general.

Mr. Freeman: The Department and the Medical Research Council are funding a number of research projects into the relationship between social conditions and health. I will place a list in the Library later today.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that there is great concern in my constituency about the Greater Glasgow health board, because of the standardised mortality rate in the age groups 40 to 69 which is 70 per cent. higher than in Sweden, Norway and Switzerland? In the east end of the city the rate is 43 per cent. higher than in any other part of Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is a matter for the Scottish Minister with responsibility for health. The formula for allocating resources in future, the replacement of RAWP—the resources allocation working party—will reflect not only the resident population in each district health authority but morbidity. If social conditions manifest themselves in higher sickness rates, the allocation will be greater.

Mr. Hind: Is my hon. Friend aware that we have a very high level of unemployment in Skelmersdale in west Lancashire, and as a consequence there are certain types of disease that need to be treated? At a recent meeting of the local branch of the British Medical Association, it was said that under the new White Paper there might be a temptation for doctors who work in trust hospitals to overtreat their patients. Will my hon. Friend undertake that the research and detailed information that is available will be used to make sure that throughout the country that does not occur?

Mr. Freeman: The activities of consultants and doctors in all hospitals within the National Health Service, including self-governing hospital trusts which will remain within the NHS, are matters for the very high standards of professional organisations governing the conduct of consultants and doctors.

Mr. Robin Cook: Did the Minister see last week's report by the Health Visitors Association on homeless families and their health? Did he note its findings that, among the children of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, diarrhoea because of poor sanitation, respiratory infection because of dampness, and infestation with lice and fleas, are common? Does he accept those findings, and, if he does, will he minute his colleagues at the Department of the Environment and spell out to them the appalling impact on the health of our children from the sevenfold increase in homelessness under this Government?

Mr. Freeman: The standard of health of the children of this country has consistently improved under this Government. The Department is now undertaking some £18 million of research, including research into various aspects of child health that I referred to earlier. Next year, the amount spent on research by the Medical Research Council, including investigation into child health, will total about £176 million.

Mr. Michael Morris: Has my hon. Friend seen the parliamentary answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on average per capita prescribing, which seems to suggest that the highest prescription expenditure is in the most deprived areas of the United Kingdom? Does that not suggest that indicative budgets should be reconsidered?

Mr. Freeman: There is no question but that some doctors—I stress some—are over-prescribing. The purpose of our proposal for indicative drug budgets is to bring the practice of all doctors up to the best.

Child Minding

12. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on the carrying out of child minding by children.

Mr. Mellor: I am afraid that I can add nothing to the reply given to the right hon. and learned Gentleman on 6 March by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. Archer: But does the Minister agree that a statutory provision serves no purpose unless it is effectively monitored and enforced? Does not the fact that the Minister is answering this question indicate the need for co-ordination among the numerous Government Departments that are responsible for enforcing the law on child employment? Is not the primary need for more resources for the law enforcement authorities?

Mr. Mellor: I appreciate the right hon. and learned Gentleman's sincerity. If there was evidence of substantial evasion of these rules, I should certainly want to look at it. But, with respect to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, if he has such evidence he should let the Government have it, because we are not aware of any widespread evasion.

Mr. Tom Clarke: If the statutory provisions to deal with the matter are inadequate—and I have to say that there is a great deal of support from voluntary and professional organisations for what my right hon. and learned Friend says—will the Minister consider them very seriously when the Children Bill is considered by the House?

Mr. Mellor: There are two points. First, there is no doubt that no one under the age of 16 can be registered as a child minder, so any attempt to make a child into a child minder is against the law. But, secondly, the hon. Gentleman is right to say that there is a need to reconsider the law on under-fives. I expect that we shall be doing that together when the Children Bill is considered by the House.

NHS (Expenditure)

13. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the gross domestic product was spent on the National Health Service in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the percentage in 1978.

Mr. Mellor: In 1987, 5·4 per cent. of the United Kingdom's gross domestic product was spent on the National Health Service compared with 4·8 per cent. in 1978.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. and learned Friend think that these figures show up the different priorities that Conservative and Labour Governments attach to the National Health Service?

Mr. Mellor: They do, because not only has there been an increase of 40 per cent. in real terms in revenue spending on the NHS—double the rate under Labour—but an increase in the capital spend, which was slashed to the bone under Labour. Above all, there is a growing national wealth of which health is getting a larger slice. Since the foundation of the NHS, no Government's record can compare with that.

Mr. Haynes: We have another Minister bragging at the Dispatch Box. Is he aware that I opened a health fair in my constituency last Friday and that I was told in no uncertain terms that more resources were needed? There is £14 billion in the bucket so the Minister should put his hand in and get some out—*[Interruption.]*—for the central Nottinghamshire health authority.

Mr. Mellor: I am glad to feel as though I am back at Chelsea football club. The hon. Gentleman's comments find a real echo among my hon. Friends. He can tell his constituents that from the beginning of April, £2 billion of extra resources will be made available to the National Health Service. It is a long time since any Government have done that.

Mr. Hayes: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that it is a question not just of how much, but of how we spend it? Will he urge the BMA and the presidents of the royal colleges to look carefully at the well reasoned and constructive critique of the National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales and warn them that outbursts based on emotion rather than fact will do for the image of the medical profession what King Herod did for babysitting?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to what the National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales has said, to which the Opposition have not drawn attention, because the response of the association was constructive. It has said that the proposals will benefit the Health Service. It is not good enough just to sign a large cheque because what matters is the patient care that is bought with it. We know that there are tremendous variations in efficiency and effectiveness in different parts of the NHS and our job is to draw the standards of them all up to the standards of the best. We are the only party that has provided a blueprint for doing that.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Prime Minister take the time today to check that the forthcoming tour of the Secretary of State for Health will include an early meeting with the joint consultants committee? Has the Prime Minister had a chance to study the remarks made by the chairman of the JCC, Sir Anthony Graham who warned that the health proposals present real risks to patient care in this country and who said that what is needed instead is more money and more doctors and nurses involved in the decision-making process? If the consultation is to mean anything, what more can the health professions do, say or prove, to get the Prime Minister to have second thoughts about the proposals which are potentially extremely damaging to the provision of health care in this country?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will have heard my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State reply from the Dispatch Box a moment ago to the effect that £2 billion more will be given to the Health Service this coming year and the hon. Gentleman knows that provision has been made for more consultants. The White Paper offers a choice both to general practitioners and to hospital consultants to be members of self-governing hospital staffs. Some will choose not to take that choice; others will choose to do so. Just because some do not want to make use of it does not mean that they should attempt to deny that choice to others.

Mr. Butterfill: When my right hon. Friend is next in Bournemouth, will she take the opportunity to visit the Bournemouth and district water company, which has been a private water company for 126 years and has charges

that are among the cheapest in the country at about only 60 per cent. of those of the water authorities? Is that not an example of what can be done by private enterprise?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my hon. Friend and his constituents. A quarter of the water industry has been privatised for years. Even some countries that profess to believe theoretically in nationalisation still choose to have their water privatised because it gives a better service.

Mr. Kinnock: From the detailed briefing notes that she has with her, will the Prime Minister give the House a full and exhaustive list of all the representative professional organisations that are backing her plans for the Health Service?

The Prime Minister: I wish the right hon. Gentleman had listened to the reply I gave previously. However, I unerstand that he has usually made up his questions before he has heard any of my replies. The Health Service White Paper—*[Interruption.]* I should point out straight away that there are now far more doctors in the Health Service than there were when the right hon. Gentleman's party was in Government and there are far more nures. But the White Paper—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: The White Paper gives a choice, both to general practitioners and to hospitals. I know that the right hon. Gentleman does not believe in choice, although yesterday he professed to believe in it—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: Yesterday he annunciated; today he repudiated.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a doctor just over the border from my constituency, but serving patients in my constituency, is abusing his professional position by inscribing political slogans on repeat prescriptions?

The Prime Minister: I understand what my hon. Friend is saying, but I am sure that she is very able to deal with that matter herself.

Q2. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cook: If the economy is so healthy, if we can afford the luxury of a post-Budget debate among Conservative Members as to what to do with the £14 billion surplus, if our standing in the international community is as high as the Prime Minister would have us believe, why is it that, in the 26th year of the United Nations peace-keeping force in Cyprus, our Commonwealth cousins from Canada can be billeted in four-star comfort, while our serving men and women and their families are condemned to the squalor of Jubilee camp and its associated quarters?

The Prime Minister: With regard to the £14 billion surplus, as the hon. Member knows, quite a lot of it will go to paying off the debt that the last Labour Government created—and a very good thing to do. With regard to our massive defence budget, I am delighted to hear that the hon. Member supports a big defence budget and, apparently, would like it to be even bigger.

Mr. Jessel: Can my right hon. Friend confirm the decision to stop any increase in night flights at Heathrow for five years, taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, whose respect for people's need for night sleep is warmly welcomed by hundreds of thousands living near Heathrow?

The Prime Minister: I understand that my hon. Friend has a very deep interest in perpetuating that situation. The only thing that I have seen which might ask for it to be revised is the very recent report of a Select Committee of this House, which, of course, we shall consider in due course.

Q3. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Livingstone: Has the Prime Minister seen the figures from the Bank of England, which show that the average life of equipment in British manufacturing industry is 28 years, compared with 18 years in America and 11 years in Japan? Does she believe that British workers should have equivalent equipment in order that they may compete effectively, and what does she intend to do to close the gap?

The Prime Minister: I fear that the hon. Member may not have heard my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer last night point out that business investment in this country now, as a proportion of gross domestic product, is higher than it has ever been, and that a good deal of the adverse balance of trade has gone into the import of the latest kind of investment, which will help to put up the productivity and production of our manufacturing capacity.

Q4. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the horrific and tragic events at Lockerbie were the result of a bomb being placed on an American aeroplane at a German airport, and that it is outrageous to see my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport hounded in this way?

The Prime Minister: I believe that my right hon. Friend will have an opportunity later today to rebut the totally unfair accusations that have been made against him by lesser men.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: May I make it clear that since that investigation became a murder investigation, responsibility lies with the Lord Advocate.

Mr. Molyneaux: Is the Prime Minister aware that there is widespread support for the conclusion of her right hon. Friend the Home Secretary that

"no political solution will cope with terrorists—they just have to be extirpated"?

The Prime Minister: We have to use every possible instrument to try to deal with terrorists, including extradition. Both my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland use everything possible, including the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974, which is not always supported on both sides of the House. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that we also need the co-operation of all the people in Northern Ireland, in the Republic and of the official Opposition if we are to eradicate terrorism.

Q5. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is the Prime Minister aware that there is unanimous support on these Benches for her views on a free enterprise, deregulated Europe? Will she confirm that there is nothing inconsistent in that with the idea of a Europe more closely united, even though some of her Ministers seem to think so?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the kind of Europe we want is a free enterprise Europe, open to trade from outside its borders, and not putting up any more restrictions. Yes, we require a more united Europe to do those things together that we seek to do best as a unity, but at the same time respecting sovereignty and the infinite variety of cultures in the Community. I do not believe that the two are incompatible in any way.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is the Prime Minister aware that I am not short of a few bob? *[Interruption.]* Is she aware further that I have just received my poll tax bill which is more than £1,000 less than I paid in rates last year? Why has she devised a tax which ensures that the people on the lowest incomes have to pay more local tax in order to compensate people like me?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that the people on the lowest incomes are fully protected—[HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."]—both by an 80 per cent. rebate and by an additional payment through income support to enable them to pay the rest of the 20 per cent. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be making handsome donations to some estimable charities.

Q6. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Devlin: Will my right hon. Friend take time during her busy day to condemn the very expensive advertising campaign which is currently being mounted by the Bar Council against the legal reforms and against the Crown prosecution service in particular? Does she agree that the time and resources of the Bar Council would be better spent in putting together a more constructive response to the need of the consumer as outlined in the excellent Green Paper on legal services?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. The Government share the dismay of the director of public prosecutions at the unfair and inaccurate comments made in the advertisements. It is most unprofessional of the Bar Council to denigrate other members of the legal profession.

Mrs. Mahon: Will the Prime Minister tell the House why, since April 1988, there has been such a huge increase in rent arrears in the public sector?

The Prime Minister: As the National Audit Office has shown, very frequently the rents have not been properly collected. Those people who are poorest already have their rent paid 100 per cent. by housing benefit, so the rent arrears—*[Interruption.]*—can apply only to those people who are able to afford to pay rent. It is a disgrace that those rents have not been properly collected.

Q7. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gill: Does my right hon. Friend welcome the interest that is now being shown by member countries of the European Free Trade Association in joining the European Community? Will she remind the House of the importance of creating a wider Europe rather than the deeper Europe propounded by the Labour party and other parties of the Left?

The Prime Minister: We have always been in favour of a close association on trade between EFTA and the European Community. As my hon. Friend knows, that does indeed exist. At the moment our main task is to bring to fruition the single market in 1992, but I agree with him that we must constantly look to the Europe across the European divide and we are doing that. Recently the Community, under the leadership of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, concluded a trade agreement with Hungary which will be of great benefit to that country and will be a very fair arrangement for the European Community.

Q8. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 21 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Prime Minister contact the chairman of the Wakefield health authority today to try to bring some common sense to bear upon that authority, so as to reduce the waiting lists that are building up because the secretaries of consultants and other secretaries are locked out of their workplace? The situation is that, because of the developments in the Wakefield health authority, people are unable to receive the treatment for which they are waiting. Will the Prime Minister ensure that that health authority applies common sense to the situation?

The Prime Minister: I cannot say that I will myself contact the Wakefield health authority. I am quite certain that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health will have heard what has been said and will take the appropriate action.

Lockerbie Air Crash

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the state of the investigation into the planting of a bomb aboard Pan Am flight 103 on 21 December, and if he will give a further account of steps that he has taken in connection with airline security before and since the air disaster over Lockerbie?

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): The criminal investigation into the Lockerbie disaster is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate. Last Friday, 17 March he announced the present state of the investigation. He said that the type of item of baggage in which the tape recorder was contained was now known and that this would allow the police to take a further step forward in the inquiries that they are making, both on a national and an international basis.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate commented on the remarkable progress of the inquiry; but he made it clear that the evidence which had been secured so far had not yet led to the identification of the person or persons responsible for placing the bomb in baggage on Pan Am flight 103. Inquiries were continuing with that end in view. My right hon. and learned Friend promised to authorise disclosure of relevant information about the progress of the investigation wherever possible and as soon as possible, recognising the general interest of the public and the particular interest of the relatives of the victims to be informed about the matter.

The right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition also asked me about the steps I have taken over aviation security before and after the disaster at Lockerbie. Late in October 1988 the German police in Frankfurt discovered a radio cassette bomb, which contained barometric and timing devices indicating that it was intended to sabotage an aircraft.

The Department of Transport learnt of this on 17 November through the normal channels. On 18 November, the Department received a copy of a bulletin to United States airlines from the United States Federal Aviation Administration about the events in Frankfurt. Having received further information on 22 November about the radio cassette bomb, the Department issued a warning by telex on the same day to United Kingdom airports and airlines, pointing to the possible existence of other such devices. On the basis of this the authorities at Heathrow airport simulated a radio bomb and distributed photographs for the training of their security staff.

The Department subsequently sought photographs of the German radio bomb and additional information. The Department then set in train the preparation of a supplementary circular to the aviation industry covering the coloured photographs with a little extra information. On 19 December the Department's principal aviation security adviser signed the circular. This was not sent out because of the need to obtain reproductions of the photographs in colour.

On 21 December the Lockerbie disaster took place; and on 22 December I made a statement in the Commons about it. At that time there was no certainty that the disaster was caused by sabotage; indeed, many then considered it equally likely to have resulted from a structural failure of the aircraft. It was only on 28 December that the officer superintending the investigation at Lockerbie announced that the Pan American aircraft had been destroyed by a bomb. My Department immediately ordered increased security measures for United States airlines, particularly for hold baggage.

I attended an emergency meeting of the National Aviation Security Committee on 5 January at which it was decided to bring in further measures in relation to cabin baggage, hold baggage and cargo. I made another statement, bringing the House up to date, on 10 January.

Subsequently, I was concerned that our requirements for the control of access to restricted areas were not being properly observed and ordered new rules for the issue and use of passes at all United Kingdom airports. In particular, I asked the chairman of BAA, Sir Norman Payne, for a report on the security of restricted areas at BAA airports. His comprehensive report sets out measures which are being and will be taken, and I have asked for a follow-up report on progress in April.

The threat did not end with Lockerbie. There remained a risk from bombs of the kind found in Frankfurt; therefore, once colour reproductions of the photographs had been made, the Department's supplementary circular, which repeated the telex warning of 22 November, was issued by post in the second week of January to United Kingdom airports and airlines and to some foreign airlines, including Pan Am, which had already been informed by the United States Federal Aviation Authority on 18 November.

On 16 February, the investigators announced in Lockerbie that the bomb that caused the disaster had been contained in a radio cassette player packed in luggage—luggage which almost certainly did not originate from Heathrow—in the hold of the aircraft. On 17 February, the Department issued its aviation security circular 1/89 recommending procedures that airports and airlines should follow in the light of this information and of the possibility that other similar bombs might exist in Germany or elsewhere.

By telex on 20 March the Department reminded airports and airlines of the 17 February circular and re-emphasised the need to apply the procedures set out, as well as adding supplementary recommendations.

I turn to the anonymous telephone call to the United States embassy in Helsinki on 5 December 1988. This telephone call warned of an attempt to sabotage a Pan American aircraft flying between Frankfurt and the United States within two weeks, which expired on 19 December. The caller did not mention London. Information about this telephone call was disseminated in an FAA bulletin addressed to United States airlines, which my Department received on 9 December.

My Department immediately had the information in the bulletin assessed in conjunction with appropriate United States authorities; the conclusion was that the information therein had little credibility. My Department decided that for the moment no further measures were necessary in the light of the bulletin. Special security measures were already in force in respect of United States flights out of the United Kingdom.

In a written answer to a question in another place on 16 March, my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate said that an inquiry by police officers involved in the Lockerbie investigation into the Helsinki "warning" had produced no evidence to indicate that the telephone call had any relevance to the Lockerbie disaster and the

investigation into it. The United States Government are of the same view. Testifying on behalf of the FAA to a United States Senate sub-committee on 14 March, Ambassador Clayton E. McManaway said:

"By 10 December the Finnish police had determined that the 'threat' was a hoax. The US fully concurred in this judgement.

In the wake of the Pan Am bombing this 'threat' was thoroughly reinvestigated by the Finns, the US and other concerned Governments. It is our unanimous conclusion that the Helsinki 'threat' was baseless."

In view of this, it is disgraceful that the hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has cruelly deceived the relatives of those who died by encouraging them to believe that this warning was genuine. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Channon: In all of this we must not lose sight of the fact that what really matters is the apprehension of the terrorists who perpetrated this crime. It is my responsibility to ensure that our airports and airlines respond vigorously to the threat that now exists from international terrorism. It is a responsibility that I take extremely seriously and am determined to discharge.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for Transport for responding to my question and now making a statement.

There are two issues that need to be addressed this afternoon. The first is the way in which the Department of Transport treated the bomb warnings that it received before the Lockerbie tragedy. The second is the way in which the Secretary of State has dealt with events since the tragedy.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that there were significant differences between the telex issued by his Department on 22 November and the letter dated 19 December? Does he accept, in particular, that there were at least three new and vital pieces of information in that 19 December letter that could have assisted in the detection of an explosive device in a radio cassette recorder?

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept also that, whereas the memorandum of 22 November contained only a general warning about devices, the 19 December letter contained a quite specific assessment that other devices were in circulation? More than that, is it true that the information contained in the 19 December letter was available to the Secretary of State for the Home Department and international police authorities even before his memorandum of 22 November? If it is true, why did he not follow the course of action taken by authorities in other countries that received the information and send the full information to the airlines immediately?

In any event, will the Secretary of State tell us exactly when the letter dated 19 December was posted? Why was it delayed at all and, when that letter was finally sent, why did it not go by the speediest means available?

I now turn, as the Secretary of State did, to the question of what has become known as the Helsinki warning. Why did the Secretary of State dismiss this warning as having little credibility? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are matters that the whole House wishes to hear.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Secretary of State confirm that we now know that other authorities, especially the United States authorities, made the connection between the Helsinki warning and earlier warnings and circulated it to airlines and airport aviation security personnel in FAA Bulletin 88/22? If those authorities did that, why did not the Secretary of State for Transport in Britain?

Will the Secretary of State also tell us why, on 10 January, when he made a statement to the House about the warnings that had been received, he referred only to the Helsinki warning and made no mention of the 22 November warning? Why, in that statement, did he disclose the warning that he said was unimportant, and yet make no mention of the warnings which, he now tells us, were critical?

Turning to more recent events—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the whole House—*[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) should behave like everybody else.

Mr. Kinnock: The public at home and abroad will not fail to notice the interruptions from the Conservative party.

I shall turn to the most recent events, which have a strong bearing on affairs because it is clear that if any details exist of the identity of terrorist bombers, it would obviously be indefensibly irresponsible to report those details to anyone as it would seriously diminish the chances of catching those criminals.

Did the Secretary of State have a meeting last Wednesday with Ian Aitken, Julia Langdon, Robin Oakley and Chris Buckland? During the course of that meeting, did he use words that could reasonably be taken to mean that the authorities knew the identity and whereabouts of those suspected of committing this atrocity? He must tell us that. If the Secretary of State was not responsible for that story, what action has he taken to discover who was? What action will he take against newspapers which this morning attributed the briefing to him?

As everyone is convinced that everything humanly possible must be done to prevent another tragedy such as that at Lockerbie, will the Secretary of State give further consideration to an independent inquiry to provide further means of improving the procedures for combating the threat to airline safety posed by terrorism?

Mr. Channon: I shall deal specifically with all the points raised by the right hon. Gentleman in his supplementary questions. First, he asked me the differences between the November warning and the December supplementary circular, which he said was significant. The House will no doubt be interested to know exactly what the 22 November warning contained. It was sent by telex and contained the following vital information. It said that a device had been found in Germany linked to Palestinians. It said that it was a Toshiba radio cassette player and gave its model number and exact dimensions. It said that it contained two sorts of battery—and gave the dimension and voltage of the additional batteries. It gave the form, wrapping and weight of the explosive, the sort of detonator, and the two activating devices. It said that the radio would not work and could be armed by plugging in an antenna jack plug. That information was sufficient to enable specialists at Heathrow to build a mock-up of the device.

The telex urged recipients to inform security staff of the details. Apart from containing a photograph, the letter of 19 December added little. It added that there was more

[Mr. Channon]

wiring than normal but that this was not a significant indicator. It said that the batteries were not secured and that the jack plug might be taped to the side. The batteries, wiring and role of the jack plug had been referred to in the 22 November telex. Therefore, the House will be able to judge that the important warning—*[Interruption.]* I do not want to duck any of the questions put by the right hon. Gentleman. He asked me when the photograph was sent out. As I said in my statement—which I am sure that he heard—the photograph was sent out in the second week of January—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]—because many of the people concerned with sending it out were at the time dealing with events after the Lockerbie disaster—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House must give the Secretary of State a fair hearing.

Mr. Channon: Let me turn to the right hon. Gentleman's second point, about the Helsinki warning. I have tried to explain to the House on a number of occasions—and I thought I had been fairly specific this afternoon—that the reason we gave no credence to the Helsinki warning was that it was not worthy of any. The American Government do not think it worthy of credence; nor do the Finnish Government. The Lockerbie investigators are not following up any trails relating to that warning in their inquiry. The only person who seems, for some extraordinary reason, to be still pursuing it is the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East. *[Interruption.]* I must say to the Leader of the Opposition that the Helsinki warning is a red herring. I have never misled the House. We know that his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East is still on that old story, but I have already explained that the Lockerbie investigators gave it so little credence that they are not even following up a line of inquiry connected with it.

The right hon. Gentleman's next point concerned recent events. He asked me about my movements on Wednesday. I am not prepared to comment on meetings with individuals—*[Interruption.]*—nor, I think, would any hon. Member in similar circumstances, but the interpretation by some people, most of whom are not present, of what I am alleged to have said last week has astonished me. At no time have I known—or, indeed, could I have known—more about the progress of the investigation than was stated by the Lord Advocate last Friday. He is in charge of the investigation, and he knows all the facts. I know no more than he does, and I have nothing further to add on that point. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State has been asked a number of detailed questions, and he must be given a chance to answer them.

Mr. Channon: Finally, the right hon. Gentleman asked for an independent inquiry into the whole matter. I can think of nothing that would delay the progress of the general investigation of this terrible crime—a murder that killed more than 270—than to take people off that investigation to set up an independent inquiry. What we want to do is apprehend those who perpetrated this appalling act, and I should have thought and hoped that that was common ground on both sides of the House.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I thank my right hon. Friend for his very clear statement. Does he agree that the best way to reduce the anguish of the relatives of those who lost their lives in the Lockerbie disaster, both in the air and on the ground, and that of the townsfolk would be for the police to track down and arrest the murderers, and to know whether the bomb was placed on the aircraft in Frankfurt or in London? Will my right hon. Friend do everything possible to assist the chief constable and the Lord Advocate to that end, and not be diverted by the Opposition's scurrilous call for an inquiry that would do nothing to help?

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, who, after all, has played a very active and sad part in this tragic event, and I take his advice very seriously. That is certainly what the Government are determined to do.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Does the Secretary of State realise that many hon. Members recognise that this is a peculiarly difficult and delicate affair, and that that is why we on these Benches have not called for his resignation on each of the past few days?

Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate, however, that his answers today, especially about the information given to journalists last week, are unsatisfactory and will not retain the confidence of many people in the nation about his handling of the affair? Will he say clearly whether he or any member of his Department—or, as far as he knows, any Member of the Government—gave journalists information that enabled them to publish articles last week about arrests or impending arrests that were subsequently described by the Lord Advocate as "wild, irresponsible speculation"?

Mr. Channon: I have reviewed in my mind many times all my conversations with anyone last week, and, in all honour, I must say that, to the best of my recollection, I have said no more than where we believe the bomb was put on the plane, how it was concealed and that the police were making brilliant progress. I know no more than what the Lord Advocate who is in charge of the criminal investigation has said.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Pan Am was fully briefed about the Frankfurt warning and the Helsinki warning well before the tragedy occurred? Will he confirm that Pan Am alone is responsible for checking the baggage, that Pan Am let the bomb on board and that there is not a shred of evidence that there was a breach of British security? Will he further confirm that his plans to protect the travelling public do not include the character assassination and gutter politics currently being used by the Opposition?

Mr. Channon: I think I can confirm all my hon. Friend's points and I am grateful for his support at a very difficult time.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): How can the Secretary of State possibly defend a delay of well over three weeks in sending out the circular on 19 December? Exactly when was the colour photograph of the terrorist device received in his Department? When others can wire photographs so quickly and effectively, why did it take so long to send that photograph to airlines

and airports? What possible confidence can the House have in an administration that was so dilatory in a matter involving life and death?

Mr. Channon: The right hon. Gentleman may not have fully considered what I said a few moments ago about the warning covering all the important points that went out on 22 November. I have read them out to the House, and I shall not waste time by repeating them, but the message sent by telex on 22 November contained all the vital information that was necessary and Heathrow acted upon it. Surely that is one of the acid tests. The December addition was a colour photograph, and a little more supplementary information was sent out with it.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will my right hon. Friend agree with a proposition that will command the support of the whole House, including the Leader of the Opposition, that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) is as ruthlessly ambitious as he is deeply unpleasant?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a question relating to this statement.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Who let him in?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is correctly back again.

Mr. Sillars: May I refer the Secretary of State to his very first statement to the House the day after the Lockerbie disaster? Is he aware that many people disbelieve a great deal of what he says because he allowed the House to believe that the accident might have been caused by structural failure when the prima facie evidence within his Department pointed to the possibility—it was no more than that at the time—of a terrorist act? Is it not the case that infomation has had to be dragged out of the Secretary of State?

May I refer the right hon. Gentleman to his often-repeated statement this afternoon that he knows no more than the Lord Advocate? He was asked not whether he knows any more than the Lord Advocate, but whether he spoke to those journalists in a way that was fairly interpreted by the *Daily Record.*

Mr. Channon: I have debated the matter with the hon. Gentleman before, and he took a very reasonable line then. I am rather surprised by the first part of his question. He said that it was wrong to speculate on structural failure, but that was very much in people's minds at the time and it was extremely important that that matter should be disposed of and that people should not reach premature conclusions about whether the disaster was caused by a bomb or by structural failure. In one of his better remarks, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East said—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members behind the Government Front Bench must behave.

Mr. Channon: He said that it would be better if we withheld any speculation until the investigation was completed, and I agreed with that. It was some days before it became clear whether it was structural failure or a bomb and that became clear on 28 December.

On the second point, I have nothing to add to what I said earlier. I know no more about the progress of the investigation than that stated by my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate. I cannot go further than that because I have nothing else to say.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a private notice question. We have a further statement, a ten-minute Bill and business under the guillotine. I shall allow two more questions from each side.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that his prime responsibility as Secretary of State for Transport is to do his best to ensure that tragedies such as Lockerbie do not occur again, first, by assisting the Lord Advocate in bringing the criminals to trial and justice and, secondly, by plugging all possible security loopholes in our civil aviation system? I hope that my right hon. Friend is reassured by the fact that Conservative Members have absolute faith in his ability and determination to achieve both objectives.

Mr. Channon: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for his support. I agree that it is essential that we should have a continuing review of aviation security. We have taken a number of steps since Lockerbie.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Are you a liar, or will you sue?

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I thought that I heard an unparliamentary word. If I did, will the hon. Gentleman please withdraw it?

Mr. Snape: I asked the right hon. Gentleman a question——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did not call the hon. Gentleman to ask a question. He used an unparliamentary word. I know that he is a man of honour and that he will withdraw it.

Mr. Snape: If I have been guilty of using an unparliamentary word—[HON. MEMBERS: "You have."] If I have, I withdraw it. The question remains——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman, who is a Front-Bench spokesman, to withdraw unreservedly. That would help the whole House.

Mr. Snape: Out of respect to you, Mr. Speaker——

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I believe that the hon. Gentleman is about to withdraw. Hon. Members must contain themselves.

Mr. Snape: Out of respect to you, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw unreservedly.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Is it true that the Secretary of State had to repudiate statements made by a Scottish Office Minister about the progress of the investigation? If so, was he referring to the Lord Advocate?

Mr. Channon: I recall no such incident. I do not think that I have repudiated any Scottish Office Minister on anything—probably throughout my parliamentary career.

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): Is it not abundantly clear that my right hon. Friend took every reasonable steps to alert the authorities at Heathrow to the type of threat that might occur and that—using all the lavish hindsight that other hon. Members are prepared to use—the only possible action that might have made a difference in those precise circumstances would have been an international agreement that baggage in transit at airports should be further re-examined?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has put his finger on an important point. Arrangements in that regard have been changed and we shall keep them under continuing review.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I am appalled at the arrogance of the Secretary of State. As one of the few hon. Members who were here on 22 December to listen to his statement in the House, I recall that he did not disclose to the House or the nation the knowledge that he has talked about this afternoon. Why was it that on that occasion, when the whole nation was shocked by this tragedy, he was not honest enough to disclose all the facts that he disclosed subsequently?

Mr. Channon: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I think that on reflection he will realise that that is an unfair remark. On 22 December, I told the House what I could. *[Interruption.]* I remember the hon. Gentleman being there; it was one of the few pleasing features of the day.

I also reported to the House on 10 January. The important point is that on that day the cause of the accident had not been established, as I told the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) a few moments ago. That had to be established in the next few days. In such investigations, with delicate security considerations, the House of Commons must understand that if we wish to apprehend all the people involved it is essential that all of us exercise some restraint.

RUC Officers (Murder)

4.5 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the murder yesterday of two senior RUC officers.

At approximately 1 pm yesterday afternoon Chief Superintendent Harry Breen, the divisional commander of Armagh, together with Superintendent Bob Buchanan, the local border superintendent, left Armagh in Superintendent Buchanan's car to attend a meeting with their opposite numbers in the Garda Siochana in Dundalk. I understand that their meeting lasted about one hour and that they then left to return to Armagh.

At 3.55 pm the RUC received information that there were two people believed dead in a car on the Edenappa road south of Jonesborough in County Armagh. The car was located at 4.15 pm some 50 yards north of the border. This car was found to be Superintendent Buchanan's and the dead were identified as the Chief Superintendent Breen and Superintendent Buchanan. The clearance operation was put in hand immediately, involving both RUC and Army and with full assistance from the Garda and the Irish Army. Because of the risk of possible devices, this operation is necessarily taking some time to complete.

A full investigation is now under way into all the circumstances surrounding this outrage and in this connection I am grateful for the immediate and forthright assurance from the Taoiseach that every possible co-operation will be forthcoming to ensure that those responsible are apprehended and brought to justice.

Our immediate thoughts must be for the families, friends and serving colleagues of the two officers in extending our deepest sympathy to them in their tragic loss. Our duty to them now is to ensure that everything that can be done will be done to find the perpetrators of these murders, and that we take immediate account of any lessons that need to be drawn from this terrible event.

Nor, sadly, Mr. Speaker, are these the only murders in Northern Ireland in recent days and weeks. Since the beginning of this year, 25 people in Northern Ireland have died as a result of terrorist violence. More than half of those were the victims of purely sectarian attacks.

Only yesterday I called on the whole community to give the fullest support to the RUC in its work to protect everybody from the evil sectarian killers from whichever extreme they might come. Everybody owes a great debt to the RUC and the security forces for their unstinting efforts and courage against the terrorists, and indeed for their successes this year in the number of people who have been arrested and charged with many of these murders and attempted murders.

At a time when the whole community depends so much on the RUC, the murder of two senior officers shows how vile and evil is the IRA's intent. That is why it needs to know that such a deliberate attack on the security co-operation between ourselves and the Irish Government will only make us more determined to make that co-operation all the more effective and to rid the island of Ireland of the evil of terrorism.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): On behalf of my colleagues, I join with the Secretary of State in expressing our horror and dismay at the murders

in South Armagh yesterday. The sympathies of myself and my hon. Friends go out to the families and friends of Chief Superintendent Breen and Superintendent Buchanan. Two more families have been bereaved, a price which unfortunately the families of the security forces may be asked to pay for the security of the rest of the community, and we should all remember that.

The murders yesterday follow a series of sectarian murders in the Province in the past month. The murders committed by the IRA and other paramilitary organisations such as the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish People's Liberation Organisation have one thing in common: they reveal on the part of the perpetrators a total contempt for human rights, and the basic human right, the right to life. The killers are bent on destroying the possibility of peace in Northern Ireland, and I am sure that the Secretary of State shares my view that neither the people of Northern Ireland nor the vast majority of their elected representatives, nor members on both sides of this House will capitulate to them.

Yesterday's tragic murders have a particular significance, insofar as the victims were two men who have done much to make Northern Ireland a safer place. South Armagh is often described as bandit country. Chief Superintendent Breen and Superintendent Buchanan were working in co-operation with the Garda Siochana to remove that unwanted label from that part of the Province.

Will the Secretary of State assure us that this work will not be abandoned? In fact, the tragic incidents yesterday underline even more the need for positive co-operation between the RUC and the Garda Siochana. I assure the Secretary of State that we share his view that it is the duty of everyone, particularly Members of this House, to co-operate with the security forces on both sides of the border to put a stop to the killing, and that any information they have should be given to the appropriate authority. I join him in welcoming the helpful statement made by the Taoiseach.

Finally, may I put a number of specific points to the Secretary of State. Will he give the House an indication of how security matters will now be conducted to ease the fears of people in all parts of Northern Ireland, but particularly in South Armagh and north Belfast, where there has been a particularly vile set of sectarian murders over the past few weeks?

The right hon. Gentleman may not be in a position to answer my two final points, as his statement seemed to indicate that the clearance operation is not complete, but there has been a degree of speculation. Will he indicate why the car and the incident were not observed from border observation posts, and secondly, in view of what has been reported in some papers, is he able to indicate to the House whether there were any documents of a security nature in the car which are missing?

Mr. King: I thank the hon. Member first of all for the very forthright statement he made on behalf of the Opposition and his right hon. and hon. Friends in their firm stand against terrorism and the evils that these murders represent. He is right to say that many live in fear in South Armagh, not just of the evil of the terrorist but of the gangster and the smuggler; all the criminality there undoubtedly brings terror to many people.

The hon. Member is right to pay tribute to the work of those officers, and indeed those working with them, in co-operation with the Garda Siochana, to try and lift the burden of fear which exists in that part of Ireland on both sides of the border. I am grateful to him for what he said on that, and I confirm to him that that work will certainly continue and be reinforced.

In respect of the fears which exist, with this nasty and very vicious outbreak of sectarian killing, I had a meeting yesterday morning with the deputy Chief Constable. The RUC is taking a number of steps to ensure that its success in bringing a number of people to the courts is continued. We are certainly giving that aspect a very high priority indeed.

I am afraid that I cannot satisfy the hon. Member on his last points in respect of observation and documents. I have referred the incident to a full investigation and I would rather not comment further until more facts are available.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Having known both officers personally, I add my sympathy and that of my hon. Friends to what has already been said.

Does the Secretary of State agree, that as Parliament has required such men to engage in such consultations and meetings, hon. Members now have a duty to review that requirement? Is it necessary to meet in Dundalk, of all places? It is generally recognised to be the garrison town and operational base of the IRA. If such meetings and consultations serve any useful purpose, would it not be safer to meet here in London? After all, it is only 50 minutes' flying time away for both forces.

Mr. King: I express my appreciation for the right hon. Gentleman's opening words. Several hon. Members knew both officers concerned, and the matter becomes all the more tragic, although every death and every murder is a tragedy. That is why I was anxious to take note of the recent tragedies in Northern Ireland.

I profoundly disagree with the right hon. Gentleman's second remark. Parliament has not required officers of the RUC to meet officers of the Garda Siochana. Those officers act under the independent operational responsibility of the Chief Constable. If the suggestion is that the officers of the RUC are doing things that they do not believe to be right in terms of cross-border co-operation —the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) mentioned something similar on the radio today—it is an unfortunate line to take. It is unfair to senior officers of the RUC. No serious observer of the security scene in the island of Ireland does not recognise that one is more likely to have an effective response to the terrorist challenge by close co-operation between senior officers in the Garda Siochana and the RUC. That co-operation is essential.

I ask the right hon. Gentleman to read the recently published report of the Chief Constable of the RUC, in which he talks about the growing trust and co-operation, which bodes well for the future between the RUC and the Garda.

On the right hon. Gentleman's serious point about the problems of meetings, clearly it is desirable that officers meet and work face to face and co-operate. Those issues will be part of the consideration. The right hon. Gentleman will understand if I do not comment further on them at this time.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): I join with the Secretary of State and others in expressing sympathy to those who have been bereaved by the foul and callous

[Mr. Peter Robinson]

shooting of two highly respected and senior police officers at the border yesterday. All hon. Members will do all within their power to ensure that nothing that they say will make more difficult the task of the security forces.

Will the Secretary of State find out where the IRA got the information in relation to this crime? It is well known that Dundalk has a heavy concentration of active IRA cells and that little goes on within Dundalk that the IRA is not aware of. Information will flow freely about people who would not normally be present in the town. Therefore, was it a wise decision for it to be the meeting place of such senior officers?

Does the Secretary of State accept that there is growing concern in Northern Ireland not just about the recent shootings but the long series of sectarian tit-for-tat killings? The present security policy is not dealing with the situation, and something more must be done. Will he pursue a more rigorous and resolute security initiative against the terrorists, rather than simply react to what terrorists do?

Mr. King: Any security policy needs the support of all people of good will within the community and their determination to stand against terrorism. No security policy can be perfect against the pure hatred for a Catholic or vice versa, by a man with a gun who will be determined to go out and kill anybody, not caring who it may be. The only way that that can be met is by the whole community standing together—every person being determined to see those killings stop, and being prepared to help the police and the security forces with any information whatever that may bring those people to justice. The impression that committing a murder is somehow a victory for one's "side", if I can put it in the most obscene and simplistic style, will have the effect, in the currency of Northern Ireland, that there will be retaliation, and it will inflict tragedy on the other "side" as well.

That is the message. I hope that all hon. Members, and not just those Members elected to represent constituencies in Northern Ireland, can stand together and make everybody appreciate the vital need to stand against the particularly poisonous and vicious challenge that we face in Northern Ireland.

On the point about Dundalk as a suitable meeting place, I have heard comments about some of the activities there and I do not propose to comment on them further today. These are decisions taken by police officers. Such matters will need to be considered in the light of these terrible events. The hon. Gentleman must forgive me if I do not comment on them further this afternoon.

Mr. Eddie McGrady: I and my party colleagues wish to join in the extension of sympathy to Chief Superintendent Breen and Superintendent Buchanan, whose remit and authority extended to the part of South Down that I represent. I express our deepest sympathies to their families. I echo the sentiments of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) who yesterday called upon the whole community to give every support and help to the police in securing these barbarous killers. I endorse and reiterate that statement this afternoon.

I ask the Secretary of State, in the course of his investigations into this horrific and unwarranted crime, to take cognisance of the fact that the scene of the murder, the Edenappa road, is probably the most secure road in western Europe. As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, (Mr. McNamara) said, there are many watch towers and security checks in that area. The Secretary of State will need to inquire how this type of event could occur.

I also join the Secretary of State in extending sympathy to the families of those who have been murdered, almost on a daily basis, simply because of the faith that they hold dear. That is happening nowhere near the border, but mainly in north Belfast. It has nothing to do with the so-called "bandit country". It is most unfortunate for the many law-abiding, good, honest ordinary people in South Armagh especially, and in Newry who have to suffer the stigma of being referred to as the bandits of bandit country. We should drop that phrase entirely from our vocabulary.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): When they give up their terrorists in Armagh.

Mr. McGrady: We have, of course, the repeating record of the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) who is trying to exacerbate a delicate and dangerous situation.

In conclusion, may I personally and on behalf of my colleagues again extend our sympathy, and call upon the entire community—both communities in Northern Ireland —fully to support the police investigations.

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and I thank him for his general comments. Could I draw upon both his concluding remarks and those made by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, (Mr. Mallon) who was the first I heard to comment on this event, as it occurred in his constituency. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh made an unqualified and unequivocal call to all members of the community who had any information available to help the police to bring to justice those responsible for these appalling outrages. I was glad to hear that categorical statement by the hon. Gentleman. I hope that it will be heeded and that all people, from whatever part of the community they come, will realise that murder and killing in Northern Ireland is destroying not only the prospects for young people for a better society, but it is destroying the prospects for everybody in the island of Ireland. That is why all people need to stand together and help the police to suppress this.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): This latest atrocity has taken place on the 20th anniversary of the present IRA campaign of terrorism in Northern Ireland, which is a long time for any people to suffer. Surely in addition to expressing its sympathy, which I do to the relatives of those two police officers, the House should also express in some tangible way its recognition of the gallantry and dedication of the Royal Ulster Constabulary which, together with the armed forces, has had to hold the line in Northern Ireland.

There is no hope for Northern Ireland while the atrocities continue. I am referring both to those perpetrated by the IRA and the equally dastardly tit-for-tat murders that have taken place over the years. Can the Secretary of State give some hope to the people of Northern Ireland, perhaps along the lines of his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who said that the IRA should be extirpated? Now, in this 20th year, will he not say that attempts will be made to boot out and destroy those evil

men and, to do that, will he now promise all possible funds to the RUC to make sure that it has the equipment, including helicopters, to deal with the men of violence?

Mr. King: I certainly join the hon. Gentleman in his tribute to the gallantry of the RUC and the security forces for the way in which they stand in the front line against terrorism. However, I do not stand with him about there being no hope for Northern Ireland. One of the most inspiring things that I have seen during the time when I have had the honour to be the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has been the way so many people triumph over all the disadvantages and the problems, and to see the advances that have been made in the economic life and the improvement that there has been in the quality of life in Northern Ireland. It is a confirmation that the spirit of the people will rise above the threat of terrorism in Northern Ireland. Yes, we are determined to root it out and if it cheers him I can tell him that I endorsed the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on the day after he made them although as I did so on the "The Late Late Show" on Radio Tele fis Eireann he may not have heard me. I made it clear that I fully support those needs.

However, there are those whom arguments simply do not reach and they must be rooted out and brought before the courts and, if guilty, they must be sentenced and put in places where they are no longer a threat to society. There is no question about that. From whichever extreme they come, they must recognise that that is the action that must be taken.

In recognising the gallantry of the RUC, I recognise also the gallantry of all the people of Northern Ireland for the way in which they have progressed, as they have, against all the difficulties and the setbacks that they have faced.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that all hon. Members appreciate what he has just said and that we are concerned for all the people of Northern Ireland and that although we are also concerned about the murders of the policemen because the RUC bears the brunt, we recognise that there have been sectarian murders on both sides of the divide? The terrible thing is that they will continue. Somehow they run their course and then stop, and no words from anybody here will stop them. The people of Northern Ireland have heard such words too often from the Secretary of State, myself and other people, but how one feels for the people of Northern Ireland.

I want to ask only one question—that is the only reason I rose. In South Armagh, with all the problems and difficulties along the border, are the Irish Government still not interested in the two armies down there—not anywhere else—working together directly, because it is not enough for the RUC alone to cover the border? That would not solve the problem, but it would ease it.

Mr. King: I shall not attempt to qualify the right hon. Gentleman's opening remarks because obviously I respect very much his knowledge and experience. I understand that he has every reason to believe that he is right to talk about the cycles of sectarian killings and the need for the security forces and the police to be as vigilant as possible to try to ensure that that cycle stops at the earliest possible moment.

On the issue of co-operation in South Armagh, there are problems in the approach that the right hon. Gentleman suggests. He will recognise that the tragedy of the particular outrage that we are discussing is, in a sense, symbolic of very much closer co-operation, which I hope and believe will develop. From all my meetings, not least with the commissioner of the Garda, and from all that I know of the relationship that has developed between the senior ranks of the Garda and the senior ranks of the RUC, nothing could have done more to reinforce the resolve to deal with the terrorists in the island of Ireland. The outrage that the IRA committed yesterday is the clearest possible symbol of the challenge that the police forces face, and it will reinforce their determination to work together to achieve what everybody in the island of Ireland wants—the end of terrorism.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to repeat that we have a guillotine motion and a ten-minute Bill motion today. I shall take two more questions from either side, and then we must move on.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Does the Secretary of State agree that there is great disquiet and fear in many hearts in the Province at this time, not only because of the tragic murder of the two senior police officers but because of the sectarian murders that have been taking place throughout the Province? Does he appreciate that it is difficult for the people of Northern Ireland to understand how two senior officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary were permitted to go into the heart of Dundalk, which is known as the lion's den, to talk about security matters, when, on the walls of every police station in the Province, there are numerous photographs with the words, "Now residing in Dundalk, Republic of Ireland"?

Can the Secretary of State tell the House whether those officers were guarded during their stay in the Irish Republic, whether they were left to the border still guarded by the Garda, and whether they were to be met at the border by officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary? I ask those questions because it is known that the officers were to go to another location, but did not turn up. At what time did they leave the meeting in Dundalk, and who knew the route that they were to take? The people of the Province believe that those are vital questions that must be answered.

Mr. King: I understand the hon. Gentleman's comments about the disquiet and fear in Northern Ireland. It is incumbent on us all to exercise great care over the statements that we make, so that we may avoid stirring up fear or hatred, which is so easily done in the present atmosphere. Whatever the tensions, whatever the pressures, whatever the emotional difficulties that any hon. Member must have faced, we have a heavy responsiblity at this time. The questions that the hon. Gentleman has asked are all relevant, and they will undoubtedly be addressed in the investigation. He will understand if I do not go further at this stage.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, may I extend sympathy to the families of Chief Superintendent Breen and Superintendent Buchanan, and may I extend to the Secretary of State support for the actions that he has taken following the terrible and pointless murder yesterday.

[Mr. David Alton]

Does not this underline yet again the necessity for the Garda and the RUC to continue the strongest possible, the most unequivocal, co-operation? Is not this what the IRA fears more than anything else? Does not the incident underline the need for the minority community in Northern Ireland to recognise that, as the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) said, it has to extend unequivocal support to the RUC and that, in due course, that should involve members of that community joining and working in the RUC?

Mr. King: I thank the hon. Member, and I agree very much with what he has just said. Certainly, the fight against terrorism must be reinforced by better co-operation between the Garda and the RUC. We must all stand together against the evils of terrorism. I do not know whether the House is aware of the fact that at this very minute the Taoiseach is making a statement in the Dail about the murder of three Irish soldiers who were serving with UNIFIL. I understand that they were blown up by a land mine yesterday. Countries must co-operate in the fight against terrorism and in the fight to maintain the peace. Every community must give full support to the security forces in their efforts to protect the community against terrorism.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): Given the shock of these appalling murders, is it not significant that the IRA continually shows its fear about the success of Anglo-Irish co-operation and does its best to discredit it?

Mr. King: Whatever other views are held of the Anglo-Irish Agreement—I understand points of principle which come from the entirely different perspective, which I respect—there is absolutely no question, and never has been, but that the IRA fears closer co-operation between the Irish and the British Governments. Obviously, that is a threat to the activities of the IRA. Whatever their views about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, no serious observers of the scene doubt the need for there to be closer security co-operation between the Irish and British police forces —the RUC and the Garda Siochana.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): May I join other hon. Members who have expressed regret at the deaths of two fine and gallant members of the RUC, whom I knew personally and who were courageous and courteous in their duty.

The Secretary of State's words going back to the people whom we represent will appear to be but a weak echo of all the platitudes and clichés that we have heard over the years about many tragedies such as this. Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that I have in my hand a file more than 2 in thick, recording the details of 254 people who have died in Northern Ireland since the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed? Will he acknowledge without equivocation that the present rate of killing in Northern Ireland is running at a figure close to 100 per annum, which is exactly twice the rate in the year before the agreement was signed?

May I ask the Secretary of State and other hon. Members to be careful when they use the word "sectarian" because it seems to excuse certain other murders? Like my colleagues, I totally abhor the sectarian killings which have occurred and which are on the increase. Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that of the 87 Roman Catholic victims who have been killed since the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, 45 per cent. were killed by the IRA, while 54 per cent. were killed by loyalists? Will he acknowledge that of the 167 Protestant victims, 92 per cent. were killed by the IRA and 7 per cent. by loyalists? Will he be careful in using the word "sectarian" not to suggest that it is one-way traffic but rather acknowledge that the vast amount of killing where the IRA predominates is also sectarian?

Mr. King: In the first points he made the hon. Gentleman referred to some 250 people having been killed since the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed. If I followed him correctly, the implication was that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was somehow responsible for those murders, leaving out the 2,250 who were killed in the years before the agreement was signed. He might have been more honest if he had given the House all the figures.

He might also have told the House the date when the Libyans probably started to ship the Semtex, the machine guns and the other weapons of death and destruction—which was significantly before the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement—therefore leaving no one who is prepared to study the matters objectively in any doubt that the IRA campaign that we now face, and that is a threat against which we all have to stand, was planned some time before that, and that these weapons are being used to try to destroy co-operation and to try to ensure that terrorism will win within the island of Ireland. It is our determination not to make political points but to make sure that everybody in the community, the security forces and the Garda Siochana, works together in the most effective way to defeat the evil terrorist ends.

Mr. Speaker: Despite what I said a moment ago, I have just been told that the two police officers were the constituents of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker). I shall, therefore, call him and welcome him back to the House. I hope that his health is improving.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): Will the Secretary of State bear in mind that it was not us who claimed that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would bring peace, stability and reconciliation? None of us for one moment suggested that it is responsible for the violence. However, the hope was held out to our people that the agreement would bring a change. Will the Secretary of State also bear in mind that, despite the exhortation of the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) for information, despite his best endeavours and despite the promises of Charlie Haughey, the experience of the past 15 years shows that the chances of bringing the people responsible for this crime to justice are negligible? That is why South Armagh was described as bandit country by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). I believe that he did old-fashioned banditry an injustice, because that is not a word to describe the foul activities of the people who over the past 15 years have engaged in far worse crimes in South Armagh than this one. I speak as its Member of Parliament for the past 10 years.

That being the case, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether those two policemen were armed. If they were not, why not? Were they murdered by a shot in each of their heads when their car was moving or were they stopped at a road block? Were terrorists able to go up to

their car, open the door and murder the two of them without them being able to do anything? Is it not asking too much of me and certain people whom I represent to believe that after 20 years incidents like this can still occur?

Mr. King: I respect the knowledge of the hon. Gentleman and his sad experiences at some of the outrages in the past, not least in South Armagh. His illustrations, and those in the newspapers this morning, suggest that there were some terrorists hiding behind a stone wall who fired machine guns when the car went by. I do not know the facts. The hon. Gentleman has given two fairly emotive speculations with considerable implications, which could be intepreted in different ways by different people. I say quite candidly to the hon. Gentleman and the House that we do not know precisely where or how the incident occurred. That is now the subject of an investigation.

The Irish Cabinet met this morning and the commissioner of the Garda has been specifically instructed by the Cabinet to take personal responsibility for its part of the investigation. The commissioner contacted the Chief Constable first thing this morning. The incident will be the subject of a thorough investigation in which I confidently believe that nothing will be held back between the police forces on either side to discover how it happened and to do everything possible to bring the perpetrators to justice.

That is the seriousness with which the Taoiseach has carried forward his pledge of last night into the Cabinet meeting and with a further statement this morning. I have given my assurance of complete co-operation in the investigation. It is important that we now consider the facts. I believe that we all have a duty not to speculate on what might have happened, some of which speculation will be quite emotive and deeply distressing to many people.

Empty Property and Community Aid

4.43 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require local authorities to take steps to identify empty houses and to put them to good use.

Just 12 months ago, I introduced a similar Bill in an attempt to ensure maximum use of housing accommodation available in both public and private sectors. In view of the number of homeless families in this country, it was disappointing and unfortunate that that Bill did not receive a Second Reading. It was disappointing and unfortunate, too, that the Government's proposed amendments last year to cover the proposals in my Bill relative to local authority dwellings were ruled to be outside the scope of the Governments' own Housing Bill.

Since then the problem of homelessness has continued to increase. In 1988, 116,060 households in England were classed as homeless—a 3 per cent. increase on the previous year and more than double the total recorded in 1978, when the homeless persons legislation came into effect.

I received a letter yesterday from the chairman of the development committee of the Catholic Housing Aid Society. Lord Hylton wrote:

"Over the past few months we have become increasingly concerned with our capacity to cope with the growing number of homeless people and families. It is a massive task and we are now receiving an average of 115 calls for assistance every day from different parts of the country."

In 1988, more homeless households were placed in bed and breakfast and emergency accommodation than ever before. That is an unsatisfactory and expensive way of trying to deal with the problem of homelessness. A situation in which so many people are homeless is bad enough, but when there are more empty properties than homeless households it is ludicrous and scandalous.

In 1987, there were 707,294 empty dwellings in England alone. I accept that even if all the empty properties were brought back into use, the problem of homelessness would not be totally solved. Many properties are the wrong size and in the wrong place, but empty properties in areas of housing need where there is an unmet demand for housing are a wasted resource.

This Bill has one aim—to ensure the maximum use of houses that are left empty, often for many years. The mere existence of such a large number of empty properties—I have given the figures—despite continued public concern, is evidence enough that a new initiative is needed. This measure gives us an opportunity to act. If, by implementing the proposals, we were able to help only those people living in bed and breakfast accommodation, where family life is impossible, the Bill would be worthwhile and justified, but the proposals go further than that. The Bill attempts also to deal with properties allowed to lie empty and derelict for many years, abandoned by their owners and causing worry, distress, danger and financial loss to those unfortunate enough to live near them. All hon. Members have examples of derelict properties in their constituencies. In mine, there is a serious problem with empty properties—in Rishton, Oswaldtwistle and Accrington—properties which in some cases have been empty for more than 30 years. Efforts to have the properties improved have not been successful and

[Mr. Ken Hargreaves]

short of using compulsory purchase orders, the local authority has little power to act and a great deal of staff time is wasted.

The Bill would require local authorities to register all empty residential property and to provide the Secretary of State for the Environment with an annual statement of their strategy for bringing back into use any empty properties that they own. It would oblige councils to allow community groups, such as housing associations and other voluntary bodies, to use empty properties in council possession for housing homeless families unless the council could show good reason why the properties were empty. It would allow local authorities to guarantee loans made by building societies to enable empty houses to be repaired, the loans being repaid by the occupants as though they were rent or mortgage payments.

The Bill would give councils a new power, similar to the control order provision in the Housing Act 1964, to put empty property use orders on long-term empty properties. That would allow local authorities working, for example, with housing associations to make use of such properties to house homeless people for up to five years if the owner of the property could not show good reason why the property was empty. Private owners whose property was brought back into use by means of an empty property use order would benefit in real terms with the passage of years by the material improvement to their property, particularly as building society funds would be used substantially to improve the property.

The power to use empty property use orders on empty properties is a lesser power than already exists. At present, councils use compulsory purchase orders, which allow the expropriation of properties by the council for ever. Empty property use orders would permit local authorities to use houses for up to five years only, returning them to the owners in better condition than before. It is, therefore, a less extreme measure than a compulsory purchase order. It is a less drastic and more flexible weapon with which to counter the problems often caused by empty properties and, because it is used at a much earlier stage, it will result in the saving of houses before they become derelict and often beyond repair.

The Bill has wide support from local authorities and hon. Members across the political spectrum. With more than 700,000 properties empty in England alone and so many people homeless, there is an urgent need for action. The Bill would give homes and hope to many people now homeless and it would make a real contribution to reducing the eyesores that we see in our towns and cities. Its provisions would benefit not only the homeless but neighbours, residents and ratepayers. I hope that the House will support it as a small step forward in dealing with the major and growing problems of homelessness and derelict property.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Ken Hargreaves, Mr. Teddy Taylor, Mr. Bowen Wells, Miss Ann Widdecombe, Mr. Robert G. Hughes, Mr. Jerry Hayes, Mr. Clive Soley, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Ms. Joan Ruddock, Mr. Frank Field, Mr. David Alton and Mr. Simon Hughes.

Empty Property and Community Aid

Mr. Ken Hargreaves accordingly presented a Bill to require local authorities to take steps to identify empty houses and to put them to good use; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 5 May and to be printed. [Bill 105.]

WATER BILL (ALLOCATION OF TIME)

Resolved,

That the Reports [13th and 20th March] from the Business Committee be now considered.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Report considered accordingly.

Question, That this House doth agree with the Committee in their resolutions, *put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) and agreed to.*

Following is the Report—[20 March]—of the Business Committee:

Water Bill (Business Committee),—The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means reported from the Business Committee, That it had come to a Resolution in respect of the Water Bill, which it had directed him to report to the House:

That the Resolution of the Business Committee of 13th March be varied as follows—

The allotted days which under the Order of 6th February are given to the proceedings on consideration and Third Reading shall be allotted in the manner shown in the Table set out below and, subject to the provisions of that Order, each part of the proceedings shall be brought to a conclusion at the time specified in the third column of that Table.

TABLE

Allotted day	*Proceedings*	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
First day	New clause 8	5.30 pm
	Remaining Government New Clauses	7.00 pm
	Remaining New Clauses	11.00 pm
	Amendments up to the end of Clause 6	Midnight
Second day	Amendments up to the end of Clause 9	6.00 pm
	Amendments up to the end of Clause 98	10.30 pm
	Amendments up to the end of Clause 119	11.15 pm
	Amendments up to the end of Clause 162	Midnight
Third day	Amendments up to the end of Clause 183	5.30 pm
	Remaining proceedings on Consideration	6.00 pm
	Third Reading	10.00 pm

Orders of the Day

Water Bill

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 8

ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR WALES

'.—(1) The Secretary of State shall establish and maintain a committee for advising him with respect to matters affecting or otherwise connected with the carrying out in Wales of the Authority's functions by virtue of this Act.

(2) The committee established and maintained under this section—

(a) shall consist of such persons as may be appointed by the Secretary of State; and

(b) shall meet at least once a year.

(3) The Secretary of State shall, out of money provided by Parliament, pay to the members of the committee established and maintained under this section such sums reimbursing them for loss of remuneration, for travelling expenses and for other out-of-pocket expenses as he may with the consent of the Treasury determine.'.

—[Mr. Wyn Roberts.]

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.53 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take sub-amendment (a), in line 3, leave out 'Authority's function by virtue' and insert 'provisions'.

Sub-amendment (b), leave out lines 5 to 7 and insert 'shall comprise

(a) representatives of local authorities in Wales;

(b) the chairman of fisheries, drainage and recreation committees in Wales; and

(c) representatives of such consumer, environmental and recreational organisations as the Secretary of State may consider to be affected.'.

Sub-amendment (c), in line 7, at end insert—

'(2A) It shall be the duty of the Authority, or of any undertaker to supply such information to the Committee as it may reasonably request, in accordance with regulations made by the Secretary of State'.

Sub-amendment (d), in line 11, at end insert—

'(3A) The Secretary of State may confer on the Committee the duty to carry out any function exercisable by him by virtue of this Act.'.

Government amendment 9, in clause 2, page 3, line 14, at end insert

'and it shall be the duty of the Authority in determining the regions for which advisory committees are established and maintained to ensure that one of those regions consists wholly or mainly of or of most of Wales'.

and sub-amendment (a), leave out 'or mainly of or of most';

Government amendment 10, in clause 136, page 139, line 15, at end insert—

'and it shall be the duty of the Authority in determining the regions for which regional advisory committees are established and maintained to ensure that one of those regions consists (apart from territorial waters) wholly or mainly of or of most of Wales.'.

and sub-amendment (a) leave out 'or mainly of or of most'.

Mr. Roberts: New clause 8 establishes on the face of the Bill the advisory committee for Wales, which will be appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to advise him on matters relating to the policies and activities of the National Rivers Authority that impinge upon and affect Wales as a whole.

The advisory committee will be appointed by the Secretary of State for Wales. It is his intention that it will be chaired by his appointee to the NRA. It should include the chairmen of the three regional committees serving the NRA region based on Welsh Water's area and the chairman of the regional rivers advisory committee for the area based on Severn-Trent's area. It should also have one or more independent members.

Hon. Members may well ask why we have not specified named posts in the Bill. The main reason is that to do so would be very restrictive. For example, the occupier of a specific post might not be able to serve on the committee; there might be time constraints or the additional workload might be more than a particular individual could incur. There could be any number of reasons why individuals in maintained posts could not serve.

This is an important committee with a vital role in ensuring that the Secretary of State for Wales is kept fully informed, and obtains a Welsh view, of NRA policies that affect Wales and of the needs of the NRA, if Welsh requirements are to be met. Its remit will extend to Wales as a whole and not just the area of the Welsh water authority. Its success will depend crucially on the calibre of those appointed, the advice they give and the way in which this advice plays its part in developing or influencing NRA policies in Wales. It can be only an advisory committee. The executive powers must lie with the NRA. But the Secretary of State for Wales can and will use the advice given to guide his own actions in relation to NRA matters. Whether the committee is statutory or not is really incidental to its ability to be a success. Nevertheless, in deciding to establish the committee we kept an open mind upon whether it should be statutory. We have listened carefully to the arguments put both inside and outside the House.

I was particularly impressed by the words of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), when he said:

[Mr. Roberts]

"There is a pressing need for the advisory committee in Wales to be on a statutory basis. It is either important or it is not."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 2 March 1989; c. 1478.]

We have made our assessment of the advantages of having a statutory base for the committee and this new clause, which I commend to the House, is the result.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) has presented the advisory committee as some sort of concession by the Government to the demands and the weight of argument by the Opposition. This is on a par with the comment of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) when, in Committee on 10 January, he accused me of pulling the special committee like a rabbit out of a hat. But, as I have said, when we decided that there should be a National Rivers Authority we immediately recognised and acknowledged that there would be a difference between the regional structure of the authority and the territorial responsibilities of the Secretary of State. This was why, when we produced our policy paper in December 1987, we set out the need for an advisory committee and our views on its membership. All this has been promulgated and in full view for 16 months and cannot be regarded, even in a flight of fancy, as a concession to Opposition pressure. That policy document stated:

"Response to the consultation paper did not indicate the need for a separate NRA in Wales. Nevertheless, a special committee will be formed to advise the Secretary of State for Wales on Welsh issues. This committee will be chaired by the Secretary of State for Wales's appointee to the NRA and its membership will include the chairmen of the Regional Rivers Advisory Committee, the Regional Fisheries Advisory Committee and the Regional Flood Defence Committee."

We spent some time in Committee on the powers and duties of the Secretary of State for Wales and on how the needs and interests of Wales were to be looked after by the provisions of this Bill. I think I ought to make the position clear once again.

In Committee my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning explained clearly and simply the general constitutional position that the phrase "Secretary of State" is defined as one of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State and that powers are allocated to particular Ministers on an administrative basis. In a further effort I produced for the Committee a digest of the powers of the Secretary of State for Wales which set out precisely what those powers were; but for the benefit of the House let me state emphatically once more that the Secretary of State for Wales retains his responsibilities for the water industry in Wales under this Bill. The Secretary of State for Wales will share responsibility for the NRA; he will jointly appoint the Director General of Water Services; he will appoint water and sewerage undertakers in the present area of the Welsh water authority; he will be reponsible for the enforcement functions related to those undertakers; he will be responsible for matters related to pollution control, to water resources and to water quality in Wales; he will be reponsible, as now, for land drainage and fisheries matters in the area of the Welsh water authority.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The hon. Gentleman is at present cataloguing the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Wales, and of courses those responsibilities currently exist anyway. Can he confirm that up to the present time the Secretary of State for Wales has not submitted to Brussels any plans whatsoever to meet the directives on bathing water quality and tap water quality, despite reports to the contrary in the press? Does the Minister think that this shows how slow the Government have been in meeting the demands of these directives?

5 pm

Mr. Roberts: As the hon. Gentleman must realise, there is some misunderstanding. We are in continual contact with Brussels about the bathing directive and the water policy directive—as it has been in the past, so it will be in the future.

Let me also set out——

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn) *rose*——

Mr. Roberts: Time is short and I am aware that hon. Members want to speak.

Let me also set out the position with regard to the National Rivers Authority in Wales. Initially there will be two NRA regions which will include parts of Wales, each of which will have a regional rivers advisory committee, a regional fisheries advisory committee and a regional flood defence committee. We shall introduce amendments to clauses 2 and 136 to ensure, subject to the approval of the House, that the area served by one of the regional rivers advisory committees and one of the regional fisheries advisory committees will consist of the whole, or most, of Wales.

The NRA will not be a monolithic centralised organisation. It will be an organisation with a small central policy unit and the vast majority of its staff in the regions. The central unit will consist of some 50 to 60 staff but there will be about 660 in the area of Welsh Water alone. The industry with which we are dealing is one in which local knowledge is vital; it must in all its operations have particular regard to local differences. If it is to be an effective organisation the strength of the NRA must be in the regions.

The regional committee structure will help to ensure that that is so. The regional rivers advisory committee, regional fisheries advisory committee and regional flood defence committee in each region will be made up of members with local knowledge and experience. In the regions, the executive decisions of the NRA will be implemented based on the advice, knowledge and experience of its locally based staff and of the members of various committees. It is in the regions that the needs and resources required will be identified, and it is in the regions that the main activities will take place.

When we set out our policy for a National Rivers Authority we considered the need for a separate Welsh rivers authority. We decided against it, because there are two ways of providing a Welsh rivers authority. On the one hand, it means maintaining something akin to the present water authority areas. This has the advantage of preserving river basin management but would mean that the Welsh area, if based on the present Welsh water authority area, would include considerable parts of England and exclude considerable parts of Wales.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Historically, that is quite acceptable.

Mr. Roberts: It is not acceptable.

The alternative is to establish a Welsh rivers authority whose area is conterminous with Wales. There is only one

difficulty with this, which is that rivers do not follow administrative boundaries, and to have Welsh and English authorities on that basis would cut right across the principle of river basin management, which I understood that we all—on both sides of the House—agreed was important.

However, in proposing a National Rivers Authority we recognised and acknowledged immediately that there would be a difference between the regional structure of the authority, and the territorial responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Wales. That is why we have proposed that there should be a special committee to advise the Secretary of State for Wales on NRA matters related to Wales as a whole—to his territorial responsibilities—and why we are proposing that it should be statutory.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): One of the most telling comments on a Welsh pupil's school report is "Gwnaeth eu orau". I could say the same to the Minister for his totally inadequate contribution this afternoon.

Given the way in which Ministers have lost every argument and conceded nothing in Committee, we should be thankful for small mercies today. At least the Minister has conceded that, if it is to mean anything at all, the special committee offered to us needs to be in the Bill, as I told him weeks ago. He rejected that out of hand in Committee. I suspect that the real reason for this concession is to enable him to pay his nominees' expenses for attending, not because he has suddenly come to share our belief that the water industry in Wales needs proper and careful oversight.

The Secretary of State's new clause has two functions. It establishes a committee and allows the members to receive expenses. As it stands, it is a toothless corgi with permanent laryngitis. The Secretary of State could appoint three or four failed Conservative candidates—of which there are quite a few in Wales—and provided that they met once a year no more need be heard from them. The Secretary of State does not need to heed or even to acknowledge their advice. With the chaos that surrounds his Welsh language board, we can understand his reluctance to leave himself open to more advice. Nevertheless, he cannot be allowed to get away with such a meaningless gesture.

Our amendments do the Secretary of State a favour. They give content to his packaging exercise and reality to the promised committee. They introduce representation, accountability and access of information to the committee. They make it mean something, although I stress that it will not be ideal.

The one factor in the Bill that we have welcomed is the rivers authority, but we should like the Government to forget their privatisation exercise, concentrate on the rivers authority, set up a separate Welsh rivers authority—against which the Minister has completely failed to make an adequate case—and strengthen the powers and resources of those two authorities so that they can perform a proper job. Even at this late stage, I appeal to the Minister and to the Secretary of State to reconsider and do just that. If they will not, let them at least provide us with a committee in Wales that can advise them properly and satisfy the Welsh people that, in future, the water industry will come under full and proper scrutiny.

Our amendments are modest, reasonable, and yet vital if the special Welsh committee is to play a real and positive role. Amendment (a) aims to broaden the advice available to the Secretary of State from the scope of the rivers authority to all the Bill's provisions. Amendment (b) suggests that representatives of local authorities, the chairman of the three vital committees—fisheries, drainage and recreation—and the consumer, environmental and recreational organisations, to be selected by the Secretary of State, should be on the committee. That is the very minimum needed to create a meaningful committee to advise the Secretary of State.

Our amendments also give the committee power to obtain information—without which, what kind of advice can be made available? Finally, they enable the Secretary of State to give greater meaning to the committee by delegating to it some of his powers.

Accepting those amendments would give some teeth to the committee, as stated in the proposed new clause. In the weeks in Standing Committee, there have been literally hundreds of examples of areas of concern on which scrutiny and public reassurance is necessary. The function of the National Rivers Authority is important, but so are matters such as health, water supply quality and consumer interest.

The Minister should accept with delight and relief the advice on all these topics offered by our amendments. Due to the constriction of the guillotine on this set of amendments, I do not have time to dwell as I should like on these individual matters. I shall give just a couple of brief examples of where public scrutiny, followed by considered advice given to the Secretary of State, would be of great benefit.

Yesterday, the *Western Mail* reported public concern about the increase in the rat population in Wales. Experts partly blame warm weather but also the poor state of sewers—which allow the creatures to escape—and the reduction of expensive sewer-baiting programmes carried out by water authorities, which are currently under the privatisation spotlight. That matter should come under proper scrutiny and the Secretary of State should obtain advice on it.

We could hark back to the comments in *The Times* in 1875, where the quality of drinking water was referred to in detail as

"in every case unutterably disgusting".

When the Secretary of State for Wales sits in Gwdyr house contemplating his next press release or planning a foray into Wales for the next stage in his packaging initiative, he sits just where the 19th century reformers, Edwin Chadwick, sat to plan the clean-up of the private water industry to end the scandal of disease and dirt created by the then private water industry. Against his earlier instincts, Chadwick came to realise that action to bring water into the public sector was the only way to achieve a clean-up and protect the public. Why will not the Minister and the Secretary of State for Wales learn the lesson of history? Why will they not listen to the ghosts that probably inhabit their studies in Gwdyr house? The price to be paid if they fail to learn those lessons will be a repetition of past mistakes, and it is the people of Wales who will pay that price.

A former colleague of the Minister, Mrs. Sally Oppenheim-Barnes, referred to the importance of consumer protection in the privatised industry. She said:

[Mr. Alun Michael]

"until it is adequately regulated, simply moving a monopoly from the public to the private sector does little or nothing for its consumers . . . Robust regulation of the privatised industry will be needed if consumers are not to be faced with rising prices and falling standards."

We say, "hear, hear" to that. In Committee we have asked for a wide range of protection for consumers—fair prices, guaranteed supply, adequate water quality, a say for consumers, the right to public information and a guarantee of emergency cover. Let us at least ensure that the Secretary of State is given well-informed advice on each of those matters.

We have also commented on bathing directives and water quality. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) pointed out, the Minister fails to listen to what the European Commission tells him during what he describes as regular contacts, and fails to meet its requirements. The advisory committee ought to have information on such matters and to be able to advise the Secretary of State for Wales.

The NRA's responsibilities are manifold. I cannot dwell on them in detail, but one concern that has been referred to is the consequence of privatisation for conservation, recreation and public access to land currently owned by the water authorities. The Bill imposes on the NRA and water sewerage undertakings general environmental and recreational duties, including the duty to have regard to conservation and public rights of access. The code of practice, however, shows the duties imposed on the water authority to be operative only

"so far as may be consistent with the purpose of any enactments relating to the functions of that body".

The subsidiary nature of those duties, particularly in relation to those imposed in clause 6—which establishes a duty to "promote economy and efficiency"—continues to call into question the extent to which the new water bodies will be committed to conservation and recreation in a privatised economy.

We have called on the Government to strengthen the control of pollution, discharges and obstructions, to provide adequate public funding for water bailiffing and to act on many other aspects affecting the environment, anglers and so forth. Again, as the Bill's provisions are weak, scrutiny and good advice become all the more important. Representation of all the relevant interests on the advisory committee, which we recommend, is not merely incidental but essential to the proper administration of the Bill in Wales.

I have spoken on a range of issues in a few minutes, but each of the sentences that I have uttered could have been greatly expanded. The Minister knows that we have already drawn these matters to his attention in Committee and that he has continually failed to respond. I ask him to listen to the words of his hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), who said the other week that the privatisation measure was

"as intensely and deservedly unpopular in Wales as it has ever been".—[*Official Report*, 1 March 1989; Vol. 148, c. 316.]

If the Secretary of State for Wales will not heed the warnings that have come from the Conservative Benches—as well as from elsewhere—and exclude Wales from the Bill, and if he will not give us our own rivers authority, let him at least ensure proper public scrutiny and accept reasonable advice.

The Opposition believe that water privatisation will do nothing positive for the environment or for the consumer in Wales. In the amendments, we have sought the minimum improvement of the establishment of a separate Welsh rivers authority, and asked for a consumers' charter to be written into the Bill. Failing that, let the Minister at least accept the amendments, recognising that they represent a modest, constructive and positive proposal which will be welcomed in Wales and which he should accept if he has the slightest concern for protecting Welsh interests and the slightest intention of setting up a committee that will mean or do anything.

Mr. Raffan: It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), who is the only Member of the House who speaks faster than I do. I only wish that he made as much sense.

I welcome new clause 8. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State pointed out, it was foreshadowed in the Government's policy document on the NRA, which totally undermines claims by the hon. Members for Cardiff, South and Penarth and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) that this is some kind of concession. We know that they are desperate to claim that such a concession, any concession, has been made, having been so severely worsted throughout the Committee stage: they must have something to show for the hours that they put in. We nearly had to call in the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Opposition Front Bench Spokesmen, so regularly were the arguments of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth "pulped"—I think that that is the appropriate word—by the Minister for Water and Planning.

I strongly support the inclusion for a special advisory committee in the Bill, although, as my hon. Friend says, that is purely incidental. An important point is that one member of the committee will come from the Severn-Trent water authority part of Wales. That is a significant improvement on the existing set-up. The Secretary of State's present responsibilities relate to the boundaries of the Welsh water authority, which are not conterminous with the Principality: they go into Cheshire in the north and Hereford and Worcester in the south, while the Severn-Trent water authority comes right into the middle of Wales. He will now have a greater say on water quality and pollution control in the central part of Wales.

5.15 pm

The special advisory committee, backed by the Secretary of State's direct responsibility for statutory decisions in Wales and his joint responsibility for the NRA, will play an important part in setting a framework for the NRA's activities in Wales. That will help to ensure that the NRA is efficient and effective in securing improvements in both water quality and pollution control in Wales.

One point that the Opposition have continually missed is that the NRA will not be some top-heavy body concentrated in London, with hardly any members in the rest of the country. It will have a strong regional structure, including 660 members based in Wales. In Standing Committee the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor continually stressed the importance of local knowledge of rivers to river basin management in the Principality. I agree with him, and that will continue.

It is an important point that the headquarters unit of the NRA will be small. The body will not be distant from Wales and dominated by London but based very much within the Principality. The fact that the mass of its staff will be in the Principality, together with the special advisory committee, totally undermines the arguments for a separate Welsh rivers authority. A separate Welsh authority would lead to unnecessary duplication and bureaucracy. It would not fit the boundaries of the new public limited companies, which of course will be conterminous with the existing water authorities. I strongly endorse my hon. Friend's view that a separate authority would also undermine the principles of river basin management, which I thought were favoured strongly by all hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I try to quote the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) at least once in my speeches. On Tuesday 10 January, quoting from the Welsh Water journal, the hon. Gentleman said:

"Welsh Water rivers are holding their own in the quality stakes".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 10 January 1989; c. 55.]

Of course he is right. There have been dramatic improvements in water quality and pollution control in the Principality, thanks largely to the Government enabling the water authority to increase its capital expenditure. That spending will be accelerated when privatisation frees the authority from external financing limits.

Yes, we still have a long way to go. We must make up for years of neglect by the last Labour Government, who did not cut capital expenditure on water and sewerage infrastructure so much as slash and mutilate it. They reduced it by one third. With that record, Opposition Members are in no position to give us lectures about how to improve water quality or control pollution.

I want to respond briefly to the intervention of the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) about the EEC water quality and bathing water directives. We have seen a dramatic improvement in the quality of our beaches in Wales in the last year. I do not want the hon. Gentleman's remarks to go unanswered in the Welsh press. He should show more responsibility in his interventions. I note that he has now disappeared from the Chamber; he came in only to provide a quick quote for the *Western Mail* and then disappear. That is the contempt that he shows for the Chamber. If unanswered, his remarks could be highly damaging to Welsh tourism, and I intend to answer them.

There has been a dramatic improvement in the quality of our water and beaches in Wales. It is true that there could have been still greater improvement, but the blame for that not happening lies with the Opposition and their total neglect of capital spending on water infrastructure and sewage works during their last term of office, to the cuts that they instituted post-1976. I strongly endorse the advisory committee which will greatly benefit Wales and I look forward to its being set up.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): First, I must express my regret that only 38 minutes were available to discuss the Welsh aspects of the Bill. I hope the people of Wales realise that that is unsatisfactory.

I welcome the Government's proposals as a move in the right direction. As the Minister acknowledged the strength of argument in Committee for putting the provisions on the face of the Bill, he must face the logic that there should be a Welsh rivers authority. The Minister has said that it is vital for decisions to be taken locally and emphasised the fact that most of the employees will be located in Wales and neighbouring English regions, as did the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) a moment ago. The Minister said that the Secretary of State's powers in Wales will be as strong after the Bill has been enacted as they are now. Taking those three points together, the case for decisions to be taken in Wales for the benefit of Wales and on the basis of circumstances in Wales is overwhelming. Wales has specific problems which need the freedom to take decisions locally. Those of us who were in Pontypridd before the by-election saw the floods in the Taff valley. Those floods, and the floods that hit Carmarthen only a few weeks ago—I am sorry that the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) is not present—are evidence of the problems in Wales which require local decision-taking.

The amendments reflect an ironic position. We are to have two committees dealing with Wales—one is to be the advisory committee to the Secretary of State, which is conterminous with Wales, and the other is the regional advisory committee of the National Rivers Authority which may or may not be conterminous with Wales. Amendment No 9 refers to the regional advisory committee covering:

"wholly, mainly . . . or . . . most of Wales."

The Government virtually acknowledge that there needs to be a strong legislative structure to deal with Wales, with all the powers that currently exist, but instead of having one structure we are to have two. The hon. Member for Delyn rightly said that we should avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and duplication, yet that is exactly what we are getting.

The logic of what the Minister announced today and of the amendments that we are debating is that we should move towards a regional advisory committee, which is part of the structure for England and Wales but conterminous with Wales, being amalgamated with the advisory committee which should then be given the powers of a fully-fledged authority. To that extent, we have proposed amendments to Government amendments Nos. 9 and 10. In the meantime, I support the amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), which provide more powers and spell out the responsibilities of the advisory committee. We have tabled amendments today because the needs of Wales as a unit in its own right are recognised, but the administrative bodies have not been given sufficient responsibility lest they start doing what needs to be done for Wales. The amendments provide for half that job. We now need the other half.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): If there was ever proof or evidence of the need for a major measure of devolution, it is the charade of debating major legislative issues affecting Welsh institutions in 38 minutes as a result of the guillotine and the way in which the House has performed. The United Kingdom Parliament legislates for the United Kingdom and I uphold that principle even when the Government of the day do not command a majority in the nation for which they are legislating. But —and it is a massive but—they should do so with respect for the views of the majority when they alter the structures, institutions and organisations which are directly responsible for the Principality. Our fundamental objection is that the Government are not doing that.

I must be one of the few survivors of the Water Act 1973. I served on the Committee considering that Bill and

[Mr. Ted Rowlands]

heard the Government justifying the concept of an integrated Welsh water authority commanding all powers and responsibilities. They boasted about giving executive power to that water authority and said that they were creating a Welsh water authority, although due to the river basins other territories outside the Principality were to be included in its operations. Now the Government seek to break up the Welsh water authority and to establish another authority which is deprived of any executive responsibility. We are being fobbed off by Ministers in a Government who do not command a majority in the Principality. We have been fobbed off with an advisory arrangement replacing an arrangement under which we had executive responsibility directly accountable to the Secretary of State, and through the Secretary of State to the House and to the people of Wales.

The Minister should not be surprised if there is a sharp and bitter reaction to the way in which the Government are behaving and are treating institutions in the Principality over which they do not command the legitimacy of a majority of people in Wales to justify the legislative actions. If nothing else, at least we have the right to expect the Government to respond to our request. If we are to be fobbed off with an advisory committee, at least it should have the additional responsibility contained in the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) to which I give my wholehearted support.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): New clause 8 is extremely important, and the new Welsh advisory committee is welcome. However, it does not have real executive power. That is a great weakness because it means that the committee is a toothless body. At least the Government have recognised the need for a Welsh committee, and we have to accept crumbs from their table. It is clear that there is no adequate funding for the NRA nationally or in Wales, and that is a serious problem. The functions of the NRA with regard to fisheries, land drainage and other matters are crucial.

In particular we have lost democratic control. After the 1973 Act, the water authorities at least contained local authority representation. The amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) proposes democratic local authority representation on the advisory committee. I hope that the Minister will give us some assurance about local authority representation.

The advisory committee's lack of accountability is very serious. The appointment and patronage of the Secretary of State is not acceptable. How many representatives of the Severn-Trent area will be on the advisory committee? That has not been mentioned, but it is extremely important. The committee's functions cover drainage, pollution control, fisheries and recreation, all of which are crucial. I do not know whether compensatory water flow control from some of our reservoirs can be guaranteed as it has been in the past, but I hope that such matters will be properly attended to by the advisory committee. The lack of technical services and the importance of a research base for the NRA is absolutely vital.

I regret that time is running out, but I hope that there will not be over-centralised organisation within Wales and that local knowledge will be taken into account.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I understand that the Opposition are concerned mainly about amendment (a), which seeks to widen the functions of the advisory committee so that it would be concerned with all the provisions of the Bill and not just the functions of the National Rivers Authority. I remind the Opposition that there will be a Director General of Water Services and a consumer committee for Wales. Decisions about flood defence works, which were mentioned by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), are taken locally by the regional flood defence committees.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause accordingly read a Second time.

Amendment (b) proposed to the new clause: leave out lines 5 to 7 and insert

'shall comprise

(a) representatives of local authorities in Wales;

(b) the chairmen of fisheries, drainage and recreation committees in Wales; and

(c) representatives of such consumer, environmental and recreational organisations as the Secretary of State may consider to be affected.'.—*[Mrs. Ann Taylor.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 215, Noes 322.

Division No. 125] **[5.30 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*

Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Nigel Griffiths.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David

Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question proposed, That the clause be added to the Bill.

It being half-past Five o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order [6 February] and the Resolution this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause added to the Bill.

Mr. Rowlands: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to draw your attention briefly to the fact that we have just witnessed nothing more than a legislative farce. A debate on a major Welsh issue has been truncated from what should have been at least a two-hour debate, even under a guillotine motion, to 38 minutes. That is because other important business intruded into the time available under the guillotine motion. Will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, draw Mr. Speaker's attention to that matter and ask him whether he will refer it to the Select Committee on Procedure so that it can consider whether debates under a timetable motion should be interrupted in such a manner and whether they should be protected business which cannot be eaten into by Government or any other business?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I suggest that the hon. Gentleman raises the matter himself with the Select Committee on Procedure.

New Clause 9

WATER QUALITY IN SCOTLAND

'Schedule *[Water Quality in Scotland]* to this Act shall have effect to make provision for Scotland in relation to the quality of water.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 11 and 42.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Since we have only one and a quarter hours to debate three new clauses, would it be convenient to debate them all together rather than separately?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a little hypothetical at the moment. I shall not be in the Chair throughout, but while I am I shall take a tolerant view, particularly over the first two new clauses, which are fairly closely related. The third new clause may be a little wide of those. However, in view of the time constraint, the Chair will be tolerant.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: New clause 9 is a paving measure to introduce the new schedule in Government amendment No. 11 on water quality in Scotland.

On Second Reading, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced that the Government would introduce on Report a limited number of amendments relating to drinking water and protection of the water environment. The amendments introduce new provisions on the quality of water supplies to the existing legislation in the Water (Scotland) Act 1980. The provisions have the same effect as the provisions already in chapter II of part II for England and Wales, and have been discussed in Committee. They are in the same terms as the provisions for England and Wales except where we have taken account of particular Scottish circumstances.

The provisions are based on consultations which took place throughout Britain in 1986. We stated our intention then to use the Bill to apply a limited number of legislative proposals to Scotland in order to maintain a common line with England and Wales where necessary, especially in the context of EC obligations.

The provisions are evidence of our commitment to high-quality drinking water in Scotland. They will be backed up by strong regulations, on which we will be consulting soon, which will make it clear that all water supplies—public and private—must meet the quality standards in the EC drinking water directive and a number of additional standards, within agreed time scales. We propose to set down minimum sampling and treatment requirements which exceed those in EC directives, and materials and chemicals used in water treatment and distribution systems will be subject to a statutory approval process. Comprehensive information on water quality will be made available to the public to demonstrate whether supplies meet the standards, and, if they do not, what steps are being taken to comply.

Mr. Maxton: I am slightly surprised to hear the Minister say that draft regulations will soon be put out for consultation. My information is that that has already happened and many people already know the details of them.

5.45 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman may be confusing the consultation to which I referred with the consultation last week on another document relating to land, whereas the regulations to which I referred deal with water and sewerage.

The amendments will also enable the Secretary of State to take action to ensure that a water authority complies with its duty to supply wholesome water if he is satisfied that it has contravened any of the statutory requirements.

I should emphasise that our water supplies in Scotland are generally of very good quality. The water authorities have already made good progress in improving supplies which repeatedly failed to meet the exacting standards of the EC directive. That progress is being maintained. The remaining improvement programmes are being completed as quickly as possible.

Until last year we had been working on the understanding that occasional failure to meet one of the directive's standards did not require action to be taken. However, the European Commission took the view that that interpretation was not correct, even where the standard had nothing to do with health, but concerned, for example, the colour of the water. The Government considered the matter further and have since adopted the Commission's interpretation.

The water authorities have investigated the implications of this new interpretation and are preparing improvement programmes for supplies which occasionally breach a standard. Those programmes will be discussed with the Scottish Development Department. They will relate mainly to factors affecting the appearance and taste of water, such as colour, iron and manganese.

To maintain and improve the quality of our water supplies requires investment. The Government have played their part through the expenditure allocations to the regional councils in respect of water and sewerage. In 1985-86 the capital allocation for the Scottish water and sewerage programme was £95 million. The original allocation to the authorities for 1988-89 was £107 million, but last November we made a supplementary allocation of £5·5 million to the programme. For 1989-90 the capital allocation has been set at £121·5 million, an increase of 14 per cent. over this year's planned provision.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Let me direct the Minister's attention to the sewerage rather than water purity side of the figures. Strathclyde region will have £3 million extra for sewerage schemes in the coming year, for which I am grateful. I am also grateful for the courtesy with which colleagues and I were received by the Minister. However, £3 million is—if the hon. Gentleman will pardon the expression—a spit in the ocean compared with what is required. I am told that for just one of the sewage teams needed to clean up the Clyde it will take between £10 and £15 million. Clearly, the cleaning up of the Clyde will not be achieved on the basis of the kind of figures the Minister was talking about. I suggest it is really a test of the Government's green priorities whether they will make available serious resources for the cleaning up not just of the large beaches of the Clyde but also of the smaller beaches in the foreseeable future.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Member, who came to see me with a deputation from Strathclyde region. I am very much in favour of a strong environmental policy, which is why we have had the 14 per cent. increase this year. There are, of course, a number of major schemes in hand now in Strathclyde aimed at improving the waters off the Ayrshire coast and off the hon. Member's constituency. Overall planned expenditure on sewerage is slightly over half of the total water sewerage programme. The capital allocation for the programme is about £40 million in 1988-89 and £45 million in 1989-90. Priority schemes include works at Troon, Barassie, Irvine harbour, Saltcoats and the Garnoch valley sewer, so a certain amount is happening.

Mr. Wilson: I accept that, but will the Minister accept my point that, with the current levels of increase, the time scale goes into the next century and that there is a serious problem which requires a different scale of resources altogether? Will he also accept the point that these beaches are the major beaches in Ayrshire which require cleaning up, but there are many smaller beaches on the Clyde which are not designated for European standards purposes, and they are falling through the net altogether? In places like Seamill, Fairlie and the Isle of Arran there is no prospect whatsoever, even within this programme, which reaches into infinity as it is, of anything being done about the problems in these areas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I obviously take seriously what the hon. Members says, which relates to the next new clause. These are matters which take a certain number of years to resolve. I was encouraged to see that *The Daily Record* today said that in the war on water:

"Scotland shines at the top of the class. There's a sparkle in the seemingly endless floods of worldwide dirty water. Scotland's pollution control on our inland water has reversed a century of neglect. Our rivers and lochs are the cleanest in the world—an average 95·3 per cent. of our water is pollution free."

The point which the hon. Member has made will be borne in mind.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan) *rose*—

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am tempted to give way to the hon. Member. We shall take these matters into account when the next PESC round of public expenditure is considered and the priorities are worked out because we want a strong environmental policy, which accounts for the increase in expenditure.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

I am anxious to get back to the amendment but I will give way.

Mr. Sillars: With regard to the quote from *The Daily Record,* has it ever crossed the Minister's mind that the reason we can boast like that is that our water is in the public sector?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member takes me on to a completely different point—why there is no privatisation in Scotland. We concluded that there was no case at present for a similar move in Scotland, where the existing arrangements are operating satisfactorily. In Scotland, as the hon. Member knows, water and sewerage services are the responsibility of the regions' and islands' councils, while control of water pollution is the responsibility of independent statutory river purification boards and the islands' councils in their area. I confirm we have no plans to privatise water services in Scotland.

I return to the new clause, as I am anxious that as many hon. Members as possible can speak. The supplementary allocation this year and the increased provision for 1989-90 will go a long way to meeting the needs of the local authorities. Though they are free to set their own expenditure priorities, they will be able to make faster progress in attaining European Commission standards in the drinking water and other directives. The amendments provide a sound basis for ensuring that the quality of water supplies in Scotland is maintained and improved where necessary. They are an important addition to the existing water legislation, and will provide further protection for the health of the Scottish people. They are also necessary to fulfil Britain's legal obligations under the EC drinking water directive, but I emphasise that the regulations will go beyond the requirements of that directive, and I am sure that the addition of such robust and wide-ranging provisions to the existing Scottish water legislation will be widely welcomed.

I do not want to keep hon. Members out, because it is a very short debate.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Minister has indicated what he wishes to see achieved. Does he have any time scale in mind?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Most of the lead improvement programmes will be ready by the end of the year. Other programmes, relating for example to aluminium, will run into the mid-1990s, and that is the most accurate answer I can give..

I will speak very briefly about amendment No. 42. Section 31 of the Water (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that a water authority in Scotland may consult an adjoining water authority or other appropriate authority in England about securing the best use of water supplies in the public interest, that is, to consider whether water in England should be transferred for use in Scotland and vice versa. This amendment simply changes the reference to "water authorities" to "water undertakers", to reflect the new organisation in England.

I hope there will be some time for the new clause following, but I hope we have a wide-ranging debate on this issue first.

Mr. Maxton: I was surprised at the complacency of the Minister's speech, both because he said problems in Scottish waters do not exist—or almost do not exist; he said we are one of the best—and also because of the timescale in which he suggested what problems we have will be resolved.

We welcome these new clauses, though giving an hour and a half of prime parliamentary time for clauses which are important, but not controversial, in the middle of the most controversial Bill in this Session of Parliament, if not of the whole Parliament, seems to me a deliberate attempt by the Government to delay the major attack on them which will inevitably take place later in the night. The time for consultation on the new clauses was far too short. They were tabled only last week. I gather that the director with responsibility for sewage matters for Strathclyde region received his copies this morning and was therefore totally unable to advise people such as myself and my hon. Friends on the exact implications.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Is the hon. Member aware that, whilst the Department of the Environment published its proposals for consultation on regulations last month, we still have to do so?

Mr. Maxton: That may be correct, but I am talking about the new clause we are debating tonight, and the notes on clauses, which the director in the Strathclyde region received this morning, with no time to consult or advise hon. Members in the constituencies which he covers.

I am grateful to the Minister and to his advisers for the courtesy they have shown over the past few days in ensuring that I and my hon. Friend, the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) were properly briefed on the new clauses. I am always reluctant to say nice things about the Minister, because every time I do so they appear in his next election address; therefore, I do not want to get too carried away.

This clause, as the Minister said, gives power to the Government to introduce regulations to ensure that Scottish water quality and the pollution levels in waters of all sorts reach standards laid down by EC regulations and that Scottish consumers receive water of at least the same quality as that provided by the new water plcs which will be established in England and Wales as a result of the Bill.

The EC directive on quality of water intended for human consumption became effective on 15 July 1985, and the directive imposed objective quality standards on water supplied from the public supply system as measured at treatment works and consumer taps. It is important to remember that there are two different terms of quality. It defines desirable and acceptable limits for 62 chemical and bacteriological parameters, though in practice this always means, of course, that there is what has become known as MAC, I gather, in the trade: maximum admissible concentration. Initially water authorities applied for delays or derogations under articles 9 and 20 of the directive in order to relax the approved standards. These applications, however, were made on the basis of compliance with the MAC values on a three-month or 12-month average basis. However, on 2 December 1987, speaking for all Secretaries of State covering water authorities, the Secretary of State for the Environment said that the MAC values

"should relate to individual samples and not to averages."
—[*Official Report,* 2 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 915.]

I was slightly surprised to hear that the draft regulations have not been put out to consultation. The

people to whom I have been speaking about water quality seem to know exactly what the new regulations will lay down. Perhaps I am talking to people in the Minister's own advisory committees. The draft regulations will lay down the minimum standards for water at the point at which it goes into the supply system and when it comes out of the consumer's tap. They are to be welcomed.

6 pm

The problem is that the clauses and the regulations that will follow them have enormous resource implications which the Government must recognise—the Minister did not recognise them—and ensure that local authorities are given sufficient money to enable work to be carried out.

I consulted with Mr. Chambers, the director of water, for Strathclyde region yesterday. He was extremely helpful and knowledgeable. Therefore, I will refer to Strathclyde region to illustrate examples of what he believes to be the implications of the regulations. I am sure that other authorities will have similar problems.

As my hon. Friends know, much of the Strathclyde region's water system dates back a long time. Last year was the 150th anniversary of the opening of Paisley's water system, and this year is the 130th anniversary of the first phase of the Loch Katrine system upon which Glasgow still largely depends. That water is supplied through cast-iron pipes that are now badly corroded on the inside and thus have a small bore capacity. Many pipes still in houses are made of lead. Glasgow in particular has great problems with lead levels well above EEC standards. Strathclyde region has been putting lime into the water to try to correct the solvency problem. On a trial basis, it is now putting potassium into some water. That has considerably helped with the problems of the combination of soft water and lead.

We also have much natural aluminium in many water supplies in Strathclyde. It may not be proven, but a clear link between aluminium and Alzheimer's disease and its causes is certainly beginning to be recognised. My hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) may say something further about that. Although we have those problems, the high catchment and plentiful water supplies mean that Strathclyde has few problems with the nitrate pollution that plague some water authorities here and abroad. Strathclyde does not need to recycle water, as happens in the south-east of England.

Let us examine what the new regulations mean to Strathclyde region. I am informed that, just to ensure that the standards for treatment works are met in terms of lead, aluminium and the amount of disinfectant required, it will involve a capital cost of about £170 million. Another £45 million capital expenditure must be spent on treatment works to comply with the other elements of the EEC directive. Modern automatic communication and control systems must be introduced to ensure that the quality of water is maintained at all times. If we are to expect 100 per cent. sampling levels, we must control the supply all the time, and that will cost another £10 million. To ensure that the quality of water is then maintained to the consumer's tap, 8,000 kms of mains piping will have to be reconditioned or replaced at an estimated cost of about £350 million. Thus, in Strathclyde alone, the capital cost required to comply with the regulations which we believe are coming is £575 million.

At current levels of capital expenditure—that includes the great boast of a 14 per cent. increase—it will take 18 years' work to comply with the directive on aluminium, lead and micro-biological standards, and another five years to comply with the directive in full. Of course, the EEC expects our water to comply completely with the directive by 1995.

Not only capital costs are involved. In recent years, in Strathclyde, the number of routine and complaint samples taken and analysed have dramatically increased to 20,000 bacteriological and 12,000 chemical samples a year. A conservative estimate of the sampling requirements that will be needed following the legislation fully to meet the specified frequencies will raise the number of bacteriological samples to 50,000, and chemical samples to 36,000. Inevitably, that means more laboratories and extra staff for sampling and analysing. A rough estimate of the cost of that is £500,000 a year.

Most of Strathclyde's treatment plants are single stage. They will all have to be converted to modern two or more stages of treatment. I have already dealt with the capital involvement, but those conversions will inevitably mean more manpower, more chemicals and more electrical power to operate, while maintenance costs in terms of manpower and replacement seals, motors, pumps, dosing systems and so on, will lead to much increased current expenditure on top of capital costs. Again, the necessity to provide pure water to consumers means that the region will have to have emergency non-pipe supplies—that is, tankers—available to ensure supply if the supply drops below acceptable levies.

The schedule and draft regulations also require the same standards to be met by private supplies. Thus, if a house or farm in rural area has its own private spring or well piped into the house, it will be required to meet the same EEC standards—the legislation makes that clear—as are required for the normal water supply. Again, that has cost implications for the local authority and/or the individual property owner. If the cost of providing a public supply is cheaper than upgrading the existing supply, the local authority must install a new supply. If not, the private owner will have to spend large sums of money improving his own water supply to bring it up to the standard.

It has been much more difficult to give any estimates of the increased costs for local authorities for the control of pollution measures—if there are any. On the face of it, it is purely a tidying-up measure, mainly concerned with the use of language, and changing "water authority" to "river purification board". Nobody has had an opportunity to examine the matter in detail and find out exactly what it means. The three-mile coastal waters limit is now included. Therefore, that includes EEC control of beaches and the level of sewage on beaches. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) said, there will be enormous cost if sewage must be treated before it is put out to sea or if pipes must be put a long way out to sea to make sure that it does not come back. That will involve local authorities in enormous cost. As I said, it is difficult to get the information. The directors of sewage have not been able to go through that information sufficiently.

It is clear that extra money in sufficient quantities must be found if the EEC standards are to be reached in the foreseeable future. Where will that money come from? The Government must provide capital grants to ensure that the required capital work is undertaken. It is not good enough to increase capital allocations. Capital allocations are no

[Mr. Maxton]

more than borrowing consents. They inevitably increase the costs of the water supply, because local authorities must then take account of interest rates, and that cost will be imposed on the consumer. The Government cannot throw the cost of the new legislation and the regulations that will follow entirely, if at all, upon the consumer. We must remember that non-domestic consumers will have massively increased costs. The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir. H. Monro) will appreciate that point—which will create great difficulties for companies operating at the margins of profit.

Even more important, if the burden is placed fully upon water authorities to recoup from their consumers, the majority of the cost will have to be obtained from the water poll tax or the water community charge. This would mean massive increases in the water poll tax. But my hon. Friends know that the water poll tax, unlike the poll tax, is not a rebatable charge, and is to be paid in full by everybody, from the poorest to the richest. There will be the same standard water and sewerage community charge, with no rebate. The only people who will not pay it in full are students.

Thus, if these costs increase, the very poor will have to bear the major burden of ensuring that the water supplies in Strathclyde and Scotland are met, and that cannot be just. I seek assurances from the Minister that his Department and the Exchequer will meet the costs of this measure in capital grants to local authorities and increasing revenue support to local authorities to ensure that the poll tax payers, especially the poorest, do not have yet another burden placed upon them by the Government. The Opposition will not vote against the clauses, but I hope that the Minister will give us some answers.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I should like to say a few words in support of the Minister's proposals in the new clauses. There are few countries where one can go to a cold tap and have a drink of water with the absolute certainty that one will not be any the worse off. But we should not be complacent because of that. It is good news indeed that the Government are taking a strong line about the quality of water for drinking and general use.

I have been concerned about piping, and its cost, to which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) referred. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will say something about the capital cost of renewing the lead and aluminium and other pipes that are not up to standard so that the quality of water does not fall on its way from the filter stations to our taps.

It seems strange that in Scotland—where it has done nothing but rain in the past year—sometimes we are very concerned about the quantity of water that is available for drinking, and it should be of the highest quality. Whether it comes by abstraction, impounding, by filter stations or from artesian wells, it can be in short supply in times of drought. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will bear those points in mind when he is thinking again about capital expenditure and revenue support grant for running costs. If we do not have adequate supplies of water when we need them, an industry might slip out of our clutches and go elsewhere when large quantities of water are required.

6.15 pm

Obviously the quality of water varies whether it is water for drinking or for fishing in. I commend that point to the Minister, because if the water in our rivers is of high quality it is likely that we shall have a much higher standard of fishing, which is very beneficial to the local community.

We should recognise the importance of the work of regional councils in providing the excellent water service in Scotland and at the same time commend the river purification boards for the standards that they have achieved in the past 20 to 30 years in making the rivers of Scotland very much safer for general use.

The hon. Member for Cathcart referred to the Clyde. We know how that river has been improving. A salmon is occasionally caught somewhere on the Clyde. That is certainly a step in the right direction. I dare say that my hon. Friend the Minister of Sport, when he has occasionally coxed a winning boat on the Thames, has been thrown overboard. In the old days, he would have been pumped out to save him from dying, but now they can throw him overboard with impunity as the quality of the river has improved so greatly.

It is important—and I am sure that the Minister will remark on this—to have frequent monitoring the quality of our water. If we do not monitor and analyse it, we shall not know to what extent we are fulfilling the European Community directives, and maintaining the high standards that we are setting ourselves for the future.

The measure will also cover monitoring of water with regard to acid rain. In Galloway, where that is prevalent, monitoring is carried out of the water quality with regard to forestry planting, granite rock or the very thin soil in that part of the countryside. We shall almost certainly need to have monitoring. As the hon. Member for Cathcart says, that will cost money. We cannot have increased quality without increased expenditure, whether it is for piping, filtration or monitoring the quality of rivers.

Perhaps the Minister will say a word about the position of environmental health officers in water testing. Is that to be left to the regions and the water supply authorities or will it be done by environmental health officers under their district responsibilities? It is important that we do not differ in our views—I do not anticipate that we shall—about who will carry out the monitoring of the water service.

I am glad that the Minister has taken power in the new clauses to provide supplies where there is a failure or where the supply has become unwholesome, either by means of a stand pipe or the provision of tankers, although clearly that provision would be only temporary. But could the Minister say whether the clause would come into effect in times of drought if there was insufficient water? Would that position be covered by the new clauses? Would the water authorities have to provide water by tanker during droughts?

I am very pleased that the Minister has taken this chance to implement the European Community directives and to go for higher quality water in Scotland. Therefore, I support the Minister's proposals.

Mr. Sillars: While I, like other hon. Members, welcome action that improves water quality, this is an absurd way for us to legislate on behalf of Scotland, by schedules tacked on to a major Bill for England and Wales under a

guillotine of an hour and a half. I believe that all of us, irrespective of our political differences, wish to register the strongest protest about that approach. It is insulting and absurd that we have to legislate in this manner.

During the period when I was out of this place, I took a course at Edinburgh university. I listened to professors and lecturers of constitutional law explaining to 18 and 19-year-old students how legislation reaches the statute book. The difference between the theory as taught at Edinburgh university, which is one of the foremost law schools in western Europe, and the practice is extraordinary.

I used to have great difficulty in tutorials explaining to the young students that it was not really like that at all, and that practising lawyers and indeed judges and sheriffs of judges of the Court of Session frequently complain that Scottish legislation is tacked on to measures the basic framework of which has nothing to do with Scotland.

I wish to illustrate for the Minister the absurdity of legislating in this fashion. The measure should have been a proper water Bill for Scotland, had a Second Reading and gone into Committee to be examined. At the moment, it would take a very able Philadelphia lawyer to whip through the new schedule and come up with the right conclusions as to its effect. The Minister is only an Edinburgh lawyer, not a Philadelphia lawyer. While I have a great deal of admiration for Edinburgh lawyers, some of whom rank among my best friends—*[Interruption.]* It would take too long to name them all. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) may wish to know that more of them are my friends than are my enemies.

The explanatory notes to the Bill refer to new schedule 11, which is section 76(1)*(a)* to be inserted in the Water (Scotland) Act 1980. Section 76A(1)*(a)* refers to

"when supplying water . . . for domestic purposes".

That appears to be plain and simple. Most folk think that they know what "domestic purposes" are. The phrase conjures up visions of a house with somebody turning on a tap. Will the Minister tell me whether those provisions apply to, for example, building sites where the men get their water for "domestic purposes", for tea-making and brewing-up, perhaps from a spricket coming off a main? If a case went to court and someone said that something had happened to the quality of the water and that it was not good enough and if the learned judge at the Court of Session began interpreting the legislation major arguments would arise about exactly what "domestic" means in those circumstances.

Such things warrant more time than a few passing minutes in which they can be identified to the Minister and my point illustrates why this is not the correct way to legislate on something that is as important as this for Scotland.

I shall go into greater detail to illustrate how unacceptable this method is, bearing in mind that the courts have to interpret the legislation. If we compare subsection (3) of new schedule 11 with subsection (2) a contradiction arises because subsection (2) provides that "For the purposes of this section"—

that is, section 76A—

"and 76B below and subject to subsection (3) below, water supplied by a water authority to any premises shall not be regarded as unwholesome at the time of supply where it has ceased to be wholesome only after leaving the authority's pipes."

Subsection (3) states:

"For the purposes of this section where water supplied by a water authority to any premises would not otherwise be regarded as unwholesome at the time of supply, that water shall be regarded as unwholesome at that time if—".

It then goes on to state the reasons.

There is a contradiction between subsections (2) and (3). What does subsection (3) actually mean? The Government have been helpful and have published explanatory notes, page 6 of which states:

"Normally the authority will not be responsible for any deterioration in quality caused by the internal plumbing within a property. However the authority will be considered to have breached its duty to supply wholesome water if after supply the water becomes unwholesome in pipes under mains pressure. . .as a result of the authority not having carried out certain actions prescribed in regulations in order to reduce certain risks, again prescribed in regulations".

As the Minister knows, not only is *Hansard* not consulted by the courts when they interpret Acts of Parliament, but nor are explanatory notes any good when pleaded in evidence when someone is trying to make a case about the interpretation of legislation. The explanatory notes may be helpful to us, but they do not add anything in terms of legal standing.

What I really object to is being required to talk about this new schedule today when the key issues are not yet before us and have not even been made known to us. In the explanatory note that I have quoted, the key words are "prescribed in regulations". That phrase is mentioned twice, but we need to have a fair idea of what the regulations are, even in draft. It is nonsense for us to discuss this new schedule without knowing what the Government have in mind in terms of secondary legislation because, to all intents and purposes, secondary legislation is the real legislation that people come across. It is unacceptable that we have been put in that position today. The Minister must come up with some answers. I know that we shall not divide on this—indeed, there is nothing to divide on—but there is a great deal to object to, especially because we have been asked to pass this legislation without knowing the detail of what the Government have in mind.

I should like clarification on one other point. I refer to the issue of there being no privatisation of water in Scotland. We have heard two statements from the Minister this afternoon—in the space of a minute—one saying, "No, we are not going to privatise" and the other saying, "We are not going to privatise at the present time". I should like an assurance about the phrase "at the present time". Was it a slip of the tongue by an Edinburgh lawyer, or was it an authoritative statement by a Minister of the Government? When the Minister replies, will he give us the kind of emphatic assurance that we have in parts of the explanatory memorandum—that the Government have no intention, in any circumstances, of privatising water in Scotland?

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): There are a few things that we take for granted—the air we breathe and the water we drink. There is a myth about Scotland's water because, although I have heard various things today, some of my evidence would prove that the quality of the water in Scotland is something that we should be concerned about. The Government are entering into an exercise of public buck-passing in relation to the problems associated with the supply of water in Scotland.

[Mr. Thomas Graham]

The Government claim that it is not their fault, but that of the local councils. I am concerned about that and I shall return to it.

I have tabled several written questions and sent various letters and I am appalled at the replies that I have received. They show a terribly complacent attitude. The Government are covering up the major problems that are developing in Scotland's water. I have with me a written answer to one of my questions. It shows that 140 reservoirs which supply tap water are under—not above—the standards of the EEC water directives. The authorities are not complying with the directives. What does that mean? I will tell the House what it means to me. It means that scientists and the EEC have come up with what they thought were the maximum levels of admitted pollutants or chemicals and decided on a level that should not be exceeded. It is not good enough to have more than 140 water suppliers in Scotland, covering a vast area, failing to meet the standards. It is not good enough that people in Scotland are drinking water with pollutants well above the EEC recommended level.

In that written answer, the Minister also stated:

"Up-to-date detailed cost figures for individual supplies are not available, but recent estimates by Scottish water authorities suggested that the overall cost of fully complying with the standards might approach £700 million."—[*Official Report*, 6 February 1989; Vol. 146, c. 555-59.]

I think that £700 million to ensure that the 5 million people of Scotland drink water of a standard recommended by the EEC is cheap at the price, bearing in mind the evidence that was provided to ensure that we reach those vitally important recommended levels.

On 30 January 1989 the *Glasgow Herald* contained an article about Gourock in my constituency, stating that tests showed that the level of aluminium was four times higher than the EEC recommended. It is incredible that that state of affairs has been allowed to continue. I also have a document giving the results of a test carried out by agricultural analysts of the regional council. A constituent of mine, having requested a test of her water supply, received this document by mistake. I can assure the House that it is authentic. It indicates that the level of aluminium in the tap water that she and her children have to drink is eight times higher than the acceptable level. She was told that she should not have the document. As I have said, she received it by accident. When she asked for a further test to be carried out, the council told her that the level had come down, but she was never given the relevant document, a copy of which I have here.

6.30 pm

I agree with the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) that there should be an independent analysis, that this should not be left to the water authority. When people request an analysis, they should get a copy of the results so that they may know exactly what they are drinking. The Minister well knows the anxieties and concerns of my constituents. The Secretary of State has received letters from Professor Anderson, who is also extremely concerned. I know, too, that the Gourock community council has written to the Secretary of State because it is very worried about the link with Alzheimer's disease. I have received a number of letters from the Department denying that link, but I believe that it is a terrible cover-up job.

Research all over the world shows evidence of a link between aluminium and Alzheimer's disease. The difficulty is in getting the proof. I need only remind the House how long it took the tobacco barons to admit the link between cigarette smoking and cancer. I am not being alarmist when I say that I am really worried that constituents of mine are drinking water containing eight times the aluminium level recommended by the EC. It is said that there is not enough proof, but there is plenty of evidence to justify Government action. Even if this is a grey area, it should be remembered that it concerns the health of the people of Britain—in particular, the health of the people of Scotland. The Minister should make available the £700 million needed to ensure that the people of Scotland are provided with drinking water which comes up to EC standards.

I am appalled at the Government's complacency in this matter. If they want to prove that there is no link with Alzheimer's disease, let every member of the Cabinet drink every day water containing eight times the recommended level of aluminium. Indeed, some of the statements they have been making would tend to convince me that they have been drinking it already. I hope that the Minister will be able to say to children, "There is no problem—drink this." I wonder if the Prime Minister would volunteer to drink Gourock water. I will make sure that a supply is available. Indeed, I will bottle it and bring it down myself.

This is a very important matter. The people of Scotland deserve a water supply that meets the EC's recommendations. We have heard a lot of nonsense today about the wonderful water in Scotland. According to *Which?* magazine, which did an investigation, the wonderful water in Scotland, especially in the Strathclyde area, contains aluminium, magnesium, iron and lead well above the recommended levels. Those levels can be brought down only if the Government commit £700 million to ensure that the EC directive is followed. That is the way to ensure that our people are able to drink healthy, wholesome water.

If the Government do not do something about this matter very shortly, it will be seen that we have been building a time bomb, and it is our children who will have to live with that time bomb. Nobody knows everything about Alzheimer's disease, but urgent research is being done all over the world. The Government of this country are not acting quickly enough to ensure that the people of Scotland do not have to drink the kind of water—water with eight times the acceptable level of aluminium—that my constituents have to drink. Let the Minister give us an assurance that £700 million will be provided to take the necessary action.

Mr. Wallace: I endorse the remarks of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) who, like other hon. Members, indicated that this is really no way to legislate on an important Scottish issue. I do not think that any hon. Member would challenge the importance of the subject of this debate, and we welcome the fact that efforts are being made to improve the quality of water throughout Scotland. Nevertheless, it is regrettable that the time allowed is so short, and the notice given so short.

I want to take up a specific matter with the Minister. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) thanked him and his officials for the information and briefing that had been given to him and his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). Given the short notice, I do not complain about that, but I am

not aware that any such briefing was offered to my party or to that of the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh), the Scottish National party.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Or to us.

Mr. Wallace: Or, indeed, to Labour Back Benchers. If such an offer was made to my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) as our spokesperson, I apologise for raising the matter. If not, I should like to know why the Scottish Office has been selective in its advance briefing on a matter such as this.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has a very great interest in the subject, as does the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). Because they had consulted me on these matters in the past, it was only fair that, as a matter of courtesy, they should be put properly in the picture.

Mr. Wallace: I am not particularly convinced by that explanation. The offer was obviously made to one party but was not extended to others. I hope that the Minister will bear that point in mind in future when he introduces legislation at relatively short notice.

My second point concerns the vast amounts of money that will have to be spent if some of these targets are to be met. I was quite surprised that the time-scale that the Minister set for local authorities—I refer to his reply to my intervention—was so short. We shall all rejoice greatly if it is met, but if one accepts the massive figures that have been put forward by the hon. Member for Cathcart, one cannot by any stretch of the imagination believe that the target of the mid-1990s will be achieved. I want the Minister to comment on the vast amounts, in terms of both capital expenditure and revenue expenditure, that have been mentioned.

Mr. Maxton: There is the problem of the enormous cost involved, but the people in the Strathclyde region tell me that there simply are not companies able to do the work on that sort of time-scale. It could be done only by bringing in cowboy-type companies, which would make a mess of it.

Mr. Wallace: That very point occurred to me as I sat down, so I shall not waste time by making it again.

Had I had time, I should have wanted to make inquiries of local authorities in my own area as to how they perceive the workload that might be put on them to meet these targets. If the Minister can indicate what further funds will be made available to them in the years ahead for that purpose, I shall certainly be very grateful. With a relatively small population, any additional capital cost that is not met by grant will weigh very heavily on individuals, particularly in the context of the community water charge.

The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) asked whether a district environmental health officer would monitor the supply by the region. In the context of the islands, where there is single tier local government, there is no doubt which level of local government will be responsible. Has the Minister perceived that there might be a conflict of interest? We have not had time to consult our local authorities to find out whether they perceive a difficulty, so I shall be interested to hear what thought has been given to that by the Scottish Office.

Mr. Home Robertson: I share the anxiety expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) about the apparent link between the concentration of aluminium in the water supply and the incidence of Alzheimer's disease. Whether such aluminium is present naturally in the water, as I suppose that it may be in some areas, or whether, as is more likely, it has been added as part of the so-called purification system by the authorities supplying water, it is a matter of great concern. Surely discoloration or scum in the water, which are not in themselves harmful, would be more acceptable than the inclusion of aluminium to remove the scum. The House will want assurances from the Government about that.

In an intervention, my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) raised the need for urgent major capital works to improve sewage disposal in Scotland. My hon. Friend referred to the Clyde and the massive costs that would be involved in raising the sewage disposal plant to the standard required by the European Community. The Minister, who has the good fortune to live in my constituency, will be aware of the strong feelings of some of his neighbours in north Berwick about the fact that the firth of Forth is subject to a great deal of pollution, with raw sewage being pumped into it from an aged sewage disposal plant. From time to time, the sewage turns up on beaches and is absolutely revolting. The Minister has met representatives of local authorities who have made strong representations to him about the need to speed up the programme of capital allocations to make it possible to dispose of that sewage in a more satisfactory manner. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) explained, it will take a long time at the present rate, or even at a slightly accelerated rate, to bring our beaches up to a tolerable standard.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cathcart emphasised, the burden of paying the loan charges which would arise from such a major capital programme would land heavily on poll tax payers, and in particular the poorer poll tax payers because the water poll tax is not rebated. That will cause great concern. How long does the Minister expect it to be before the beaches and coastal waters of Scotland are free from the unacceptable pollution that is present in some areas now? How long will it take and how much will it cost? The Minister owes it to the House and to the people of Scotland to give proper replies to those specific questions.

A detailed point connected with my constituency is the effect of the abstraction of water from water courses. In arable farming areas such as East Lothian, a large volume of water may be taken out of rivers and burns by farmers to irrigate the land. That can have the effect of reducing the flow of water, leading to an increase in the concentration of pollution in the water that is left in the water course. As I understand it, in Scotland there are no controls on abstraction such as there are in England. We should address ourselves to that point at some stage.

6.45 pm

I agree with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) that this is a grossly unsatisfactory way of dealing with Scottish legislation. It is an example of the kind of legislation that ought to be dealt with in a Scottish parliament in due course, with proper consultation and proper information. I also share the hon. Gentleman's anxiety about the assurance given by the Minister that we

[Mr. Home Robertson]

shall not have water privatisation in Scotland. The last time I heard a Scottish Office Minister giving an assurance like that was when the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) told us that there were no plans to privatise the electricity industry in Scotland. When we see what is happening now, I do not think that we can believe these people.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I too share the legitimate complaint raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) and by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). I could speak for some time on the control of pollution in Scottish waters from the viewpoint of the traditional fisherman. In Government amendment No. 88 —a schedule dealing with the control of pollution in Scotlannd—under new section 31A(1)

"The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision—

(a) for prohibiting a person from having custody or control of any poisonous, noxious or polluting matter".

Does that extend to the use of pesticides which, when water-borne, may have a pronounced effect upon the flora and fauna of sea lochs and rivers? That is a real concern to our fishermen, particularly those who use static gear close to salmon fish farms.

The Minister knows well that I have for long complained about the use of a particular pesticide, Nuvan 500 EC, on salmon farms. Many researchers claim that that pesticide has a disastrous effect on infant crustacea, with serious consequences for our static gear fishermen. Many of these fishermen have fished for generations for lobsters and crabs in some of these areas. We should be debating what controls are to be given, by way of this schedule, to the river purification boards vis-à-vis consents to determine what pesticides should be used to deal with certain problems faced by salmon fish farmers.

I have much sympathy for the problems faced by fish farmers and their employees. In no way do I wish to see them come to any harm because of interventions by people like me. Nevertheless, major problems arise for traditional fishermen from the use of certain pesticides.

Mr. Home Robertson: I think that my hon. Friend will find that the regulating authorities for fish farms in sea lochs are the Crown Estate Commissioners who, of course, are not subject to a range of laws. It would be useful to know whether the controls in the Bill will apply to them. In many instances, they are above the law.

Dr. Godman: If ever I were fortunate enough to take my place in a Scottish parliament, one of the first things that I would want to see would be the Crown Estate Commissioners being put out of work. They are a shadowy little group of men in Edinburgh who have colossal power over the location of fish farms. It is an untrammelled power which local authorities and river purification boards cannot control. They cannot influence to any serious extent the decision-making of that shadowy little group of men.

I want to ask the Minister another question about the schedule, relating to new section 46(1) entitled:

"Operations by water authorities to remedy or forestall pollution of water".

What kind of evidence does the Minister require to be presented by the river purification boards where the use of such pesticides is a long established practice? Could a purification board instruct salmon fish farmers not to use such pesticides? New section 46(1)(b) says that a water authority would have the right to ensure that the polluters —in terms of remedying or mitigating any pollution caused by its presence in the water—restored the waters, including the fauna and flora dependent on the aquatic environment in that area, so far as practicable, to their previous state. Is the schedule giving the purification boards much greater control over the operations of those fishing farms, especially over pesticides?

I shall finish now because I know a number of hon. Members wish to hear the Minister answer the questions they have asked. It is a disgrace that we have less than an hour to debate a matter of such importance to our fishermen and others who earn their livings by way of the coastal waters. That reflects badly on the Government and displays their abiding contempt for the House.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) criticised the omission of certain provisions from the Bill. Back in June 1986 the consultation paper stated that at that time we had no plans to privatise water services in Scotland. We also said, however, in that document that a small number of the proposals should be applied to Scotland in those cases where it was important to maintain a common line with England and Wales, especially in the context of European Community obligations. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) raised that point. I tell him that notice was given on Second Reading that those measures would be introduced. The standards and procedures in the Bill —as I said at the outset—are designed to maintain a common United Kingdom position. The Commission looked to the United Kingdom to have consistent standards, and the presentation of water quality and water environmental measures in a single Bill expresses that consistency.

Mr. Sillars: I accept the Minister's point, but he has missed our point. The Bill has gone through a long process and to have an hour and a half debate at this stage on a matter of such importance is a disgrace—and the Tory Government are a disgrace.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If the hon. Gentleman used his ingenuity not to engage in disruption, but to have Adjournment debates and debates on the Consolidated Fund, and actually to work the parliamentary process to raise such matters, he would have every opportunity of going into this matter in depth. I believe that the hon. Gentleman will have every opportunity to debate these matters fully.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow asked about fish farming. We believe that fish farming activities should be controlled by regional purification boards through the consent system. Because doubts have been expressed about whether the existing legislation covers them, we are proposing to insert a new definition of "trade effluent" in section 56(1) and (3) to put the matter beyond doubt. The term "premises" in section 56(3) is amplified to cover premises on land or not, so that all kinds of fish farming arrangements—for example, floating fish cages—are covered in Scotland.

Dr. Godman *rose——*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No, I shall not give way. I have many points to cover.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) raised sewerage problems in his constituency. I am glad to say that the capital allocation for the programme is £15·8 million in 1989-90, and priority schemes cover his own constituency at Dunbar, Musselburgh, Tranent, North Berwick, Granton, Cramond, Joppa, and South Queensferry. The matter has been considered thoroughly.

Obviously, it is important that there should be consultation as soon as possible and the provisions are based on proposals on which we consulted in 1986. COSLA was consulted and was represented on the advisory committee which prepared the draft regulations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) raised an important point about monitoring. There will certainly be monitoring, about which there will be no confusion. Environmental health authorities have powers—which the amendment extends—to monitor and deal with the quality of drinking water. River purification authorities have powers—also extended and improved by new clause 12—to control discharges to rivers and other waters and preserve the quality of the environment.

The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) raised the question of aluminium, which is obviously a serious matter on which I am not complacent. I cannot comment on the results of particular samples of water, but I understand that Strathclyde has schemes in its programme to tackle the aluminium problem in its area. I understand that the concentrations of aluminium recorded in Scotland do not indicate a severe hazard to health. We are embarking on a number of improvement programmes with which we will go ahead as quickly as is practicable.

Dr. Godman *rose——*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman has already spoken.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) spoke about capital expenditure. A number of improvements are already under way in terms of article 20 of the directive, following re-interpretation of the maximum admissible concentrations. The water authorities are preparing additional programmes for discussion with the Department and expenditure implications will be included.

The hon. Member for Garscadden mentioned improvement programmes and I shall certainly consider what he said about the capital grants. The cost of water, however, is not met only from the community water charge: meter charges and non-domestic water rates contribute to the cost of supplying water.

Mr. Maxton *rose——*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am sorry, I have only four minutes left and I want to answer many points.

When the European Community directive on drinking water came into operation in 1985, many treatment works already complied with the new standards. Since then improvements in more than 150 supply areas in Scotland have been completed to comply with the standards. By 1990 another 14 will have been improved and 86 out of 103 lead remedial schemes will be completed. That will leave about 64 areas still regularly failing to comply, but all of which are expected to comply by the end of 1995 at the latest. In addition, 38 supplies are covered by derogations given in accordance with article 9 of the directive and duly notified to the Commission. Some of those are being improved, despite the fact that article 9 derogations may be given where there is no health risk and the raw water exceeds a directive limit because of the nature and the structure of the ground in the area.

I appreciate that lead in water is an important consideration. The nature of Scottish water supply sources means that we have a considerable number of drinking water supplies which are, as the hon. Member for Govan said, plumbo/solvent. That means that the characteristics of the water dissolve lead from the pipes. The water authorities have been making good progress in improving their supplies by replacement of lead pipes or by water treatment. Twenty five supplies have now been improved to comply with the directive and a further 61 are scheduled to do so by the end of the year. Those programmes are kept under constant review by the Department and the water authorities and every effort is being made to improve the remaining supplies as quickly as possible.

The Government have provided funds for housing improvement grants at a preferential rate for schemes involving lead pipe replacement and more than 45,000 grants were awarded by local authorities in the period 1982 to 1987.

We have increased the funds allocated. My right hon. and learned Friend announced last November an additional allocation for this financial year of £5·5 million for water and sewerage. Of this, £2 million was specifically for lead improvement schemes. He has announced for 1989-90 an increase of 14 per cent. over planned provision for water authorities' capital expenditure on water and sewerage.

These proposals represent an important and valuable addition to water legislation in Scotland, and I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 12

Control of pollution in Scotland

'Schedule *[Control of Pollution in Scotland]* to this Act shall have effect to make provision for Scotland in relation to the prevention of pollution of water.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this we can also discuss Government amendment No. 88.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister did not answer one of the points that I raised when we were discussing the previous new clause. As he has a few seconds to spare, perhaps he will explain how much money will be given to my constituency to implement the changes that are proposed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will look into the matter thoroughly and write to the hon. Gentleman. Alternatively, I will willingly meet him if he wishes to come to see me to discuss the matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

It being Seven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order* [6 February] *and the Resolution this day, to put forthwith the Question on a new clause moved by a member of the Government.*

New Clause 10

Impersonation of persons exercising powers of entry

'.—(1) A person who, without having been designated or authorised for the purpose by a relevant authority, purports to be entitled to enter any premises or vessel in exercise of a power exercisable in pursuance of any such designation or authorisation shall be guilty of an offence and liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.

(2) For the purposes of this section it shall be immaterial, where a person purports to be entitled to enter any premises or vessel, that the power which that person purports to be entitled to exercise does not exist or would not be exercisable even if that person had been designated or authorised by a relevant authority.

(3) In this section "relevant authority" means the Authority or any water undertaker or sewerage undertaker.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Brought-up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

Reduction of pollution and allocation of cost

'.—(1) Chapter I of Part III of this Act shall have effect for the purpose of controlling and reducing pollution in rivers and other sources of water in England and Wales.

(2) In the exercise of their functions under the said Chapter, it shall be the duty of the Secretary of State and of the Authority to ensure that in all reasonable circumstances the person who causes any pollution of a river or other water source, whether that person is a body corporate, water or sewage undertaker or an individual, shall bear the cost of remedying that pollution and of taking steps to prevent any recurrence.".—*[Dr. Cunningham.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: It will be convenient to take at the same time the following:

New Clause 2

Separation of environmental functions from water supply and sewerage services, and contracting-out of functions.

'.—(1) Part I of this Act shall have effect for the purpose of establishing as separate functions the preservation of the environment in respect of rivers, and the supply of water and sewerage services.

(2) Functions relating to the preservation of the environment in respect of rivers and other water resources in England and Wales shall from the transfer date be the responsibility of the body created under section 1(1) below.

(3) Functions relating to the supply of water and of sewerage services in an area shall, in accordance with transfer arrangements under section 3 below, become from the transfer date the responsibility of any water or sewerage undertaker appointed for that area in accordance with section 10(1) below.

(4) The body established under section 1 below shall not sub-contract, or otherwise cause or enable to be carried out, any of its functions to any person who is for the time being, or has been in the previous five years, a water or sewerage undertaker within the terms of this section.

(5) Where the body established under section 1 below intends to cause or enable any of its functions to be carried out by another person, whether by means of tender or otherwise, it shall first give reasonable notice to such local authority or authorities as the case may be within whose area or areas the proposed activity falls for the purpose of according them the oppportunity of carrying out that activity."

New Clause 15

Duty of the National Rivers Authority to publish Plan for Water and the Environment

'( )—(1) The National Rivers Authority shall prepare and publish a plan in respect of the matters identified in subsection (2) below, for the purposes of the effective carrying out of its functions and, in particular, of promoting the cleanliness of water and the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment in relation to rivers.

(2) The Plan published under subsection (1) above shall include information on and as appropriate measures in respect of—

(a) the state of cleanliness of waters in England and Wales, including their chemical quality and levels of compliance with notified water quality objectives;

(b) discharges of sewage effluents and trade effluents in breach of consent levels and the monitoring of compliance in respect of all such consents;

(c) the prescription by the Authority of precautions to be taken by specified persons for the prevention of pollution;

(d) a programme of works and operations to prevent, remedy, or mitigate pollution;

(e) levels of charges to be imposed by the Authority on persons in respect of discharges and the creation of pollution;

(f) the conservation and enhancement of sites of natural beauty or amenity, and the conservation of flora and fauna;

(g) the preservation and promotion of public access to waters in areas of natural beauty or amenity, and their use for recreational purposes;

(h) the conservation, redistribution and augmentation of water resources;

(i) the general supervision of land drainage and flood protection including a programme of works on designated main rivers and sea defences;

(j) the conservation, maintenance, improvement and development of salmon, trout, freshwater and eel fisheries in inland waters; and,

(k) the carrying out of navigation, conservancy and harbour authority functions.'.

New Clause 20

Vesting of land and duties of the Authority with respect to land

'( )—(1) Any land owned by a water authority before the transfer date shall on that date vest in the National Rivers Authority.

(2) The other property, rights and liabilities of those authorities shall be divided between the Authority and the successor companies in accordance with schemes made under Schedule 2 to this Act.

(3) The Authority shall in the case of any land in respect of which it creates a lease or other interest, attach and enforce such covenants or other restrictions as it considers necessary for the purpose of ensuring that no use of, or development upon, the land may occur where such a use or development would be likely to cause harm to the environment, flora and fauna, beauty or amenity, contained within the limits of any such land.

(4) The Authority shall, in respect of any lease or interest in land transferred to it, attach such restrictions as shall prevent the sale or transfer of any such interest to a third party except with the consent of the Authority.'.

Amendment No. 139, in clause 3, page 3, line 35, after 'property', insert 'other than land'.

Amendment No. 140, in clause 3, page 3, line 36, at end insert—

'(1A) The property (other than land), rights and liabilities allocated to the successor companies in accordance with subsection (1)(b)(i) above shall be those which, in the opinion of the Secretary of State on the advice of the Director or the Authority as appropriate, are required for the fulfilment by the undertakers of their duties under the provisions of this Act and the terms of any appointment made under Chapter 1 of Part II below.'.

Dr. Cunningham: This series of new clauses would represent a major amendment of this part of the Bill. They aim significantly to strengthen the environmental protection aspects of the Bill and to enhance the role and duties of the National Rivers Authority.

I wish to make it clear at the outset that we recognise the need for changes in environmental law, duties and safeguards, and in that sense we have always said that we would not oppose the principle of the National Rivers Authority. But, like many people and bodies, including the Select Committee on the Environment, we regard the proposals in the Bill as too weak, too vague and too incoherent ever to provide the rigorous environmental protection that we believe to be necessary.

New clause 1 addresses the need to reduce pollution and properly to allocate the costs. In other words, it is concerned with the principle of the polluter paying. It says:

"it shall be the duty of the Secretary of State and the Authority to ensure that in all reasonable circumstances the person who causes any pollution of a river or other water source, whether that person is a body corporate, water or sewage undertaker or an individual, shall bear the cost of remedying that pollution and of taking steps to prevent any recurrence."

New clause 2 seeks the separation of environmental functions from water supply and sewage services and of contracting out functions.

New clause 15 places wide-ranging new duties on the National Rivers Authority, in particular the duty to publish a plan for water and the environment.

New clause 20 deals with the vesting of land and the duties of the authority in relation to the vast land holdings —approaching 500,000 acres—currently in the ownership and control of the regional water authorities and, therefore, in public ownership.

These changes are necessary because we believe the Bill to be weak, and deliberately so; to be confused about objectives; and to be incoherent and incapable of ever creating an effective framework within which to safeguard the environment. Indeed, in several respects the Government's proposals lay some of our most precious environment open to commercial exploitation.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): A terrible thought!

Dr. Cunningham: Apparently, that is not a terrible thought to the right hon. Gentleman. It is a terrible thought to Opposition Members and to many millions of people in the country. Indeed, as I have said before, I know of no other nation which is putting huge areas of its national parks up for sale and, therefore, at the mercy of predatory developers and potential exploitation. That is what the right hon. Gentleman's proposals do, and I shall come later to that aspect of the matter.

As the Secretary of State seems to think that this view is not widely shared, I refer him to a recent report of the Select Committee on the Environment. In its second report on toxic waste published on 22 February 1989, the Committee endorsed the Labour party's policy on and view about the need to create a more comprehensive environmental protection agency than is envisaged in the Secretary of State's proposals for the National Rivers Authority. On page 12 of that report, in paragraph 9, the Committee said:

"We had hoped that this national body might be the same national body which we had previously recommended be created to regulate river pollution. However, in setting up the National Rivers Authority, the Government have treated it as a residuary authority to receive a variety of functions, each in itself extremely important. Our aim is to establish a national regulatory body which would assume responsibility for integrated pollution control and evolve into a full-blown environmental protection agency or commission. The Government may still be in time to amend the Water Bill to take account of these views and lay the ground for the future expansion of the National Rivers Authority. But we do understand the difficulties of a sudden change of course."

That is precisely what we are proposing. We say that those general conclusions of the Select Committee should be written into this legislation., Indeed, it is necessary to have more wide-ranging and rigorous safeguards because even the Prime Minister is not aware of the state of affairs over which she presides.

I say that because it is interesting to see what the Prime Minister said in a "Nature" interview on 2 March last when questioned by Michael Buerk of the BBC. I quote from the transcript of the programme:

"Is it right for a developed country like the United Kingdom at the end of the 20th century to be disposing of something like 6 million tonnes of sewage sludge in the waters around that country? You said"—

referring to what the Prime Minister had said—

"'It's treated sewage of course, it's not untreated. It's treated.'"

Mr. Buerk then said:

"We also have a lot of outfalls that take raw sewage into the sea and are still building them."

The Prime Minister replied:

"Well, it should be treated sewage that goes out, treated all of it . . . I think you'll find that it's treated sewage in this country."

That showed the appalling ignorance of the Prime Minister about the state of affairs which prevails. I am anxious to emphasise how completely in error that statement by the Prime Minister was. With impeccable timing today, the Secretary of State for Wales, a member of the Cabinet, confirmed in a written answer the state of affairs in Wales on sewage outfalls to the sea. He said:

"The number of outfalls with no treatment is 90. The number of sewage outfalls relying on tidal storage schemes"—

that is, with no treatment—

"is 23. The number of sewage outfalls where there is preliminary screened and/or macerated treatment only is 53. The number of sewage outfalls with primary treatment is 29. The number with secondary treatment is 61."

In other words, 65 per cent. of all the sewage outfalls on the coast of Wales have no treatment process of any kind. That is how much the Prime Minister knows about the state of the environment in Britain.

I asked the Secretary of State for the Environment exactly the same question about the situation in England. Unlike his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for

[Dr. Cunningham]

Wales, he has refused to give the answer, no doubt to cover up his and the right hon. Lady the Prime Minister's embarrassment about this matter.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Since the burden of the hon. Gentleman's remarks is that he would like to see higher standards, I presume that he accepts that that will obviously cost more money. The Government have a system for bringing that about. The hon. Gentleman is bringing forward some amendments which would make life even more complicated and bureaucratic. He is asking for even higher standards, which of course will cost even more money. Can he tell the House how much he believes that these new clauses would cost, first, British industry and, secondly, the National Rivers Authority?

Dr. Cunningham: I am willing to set out all the answers to all those questions in a speech which I shall be making in a few weeks' time. But, yes, I agree that these things will cost money, and a great deal of money, and that the British people will need to pay. I also believe that, overwhelmingly, they are willing to pay. It is not necessary to sell off the nation's water resources to achieve these objectives. The British people recognise that quite clearly and in overwhelming numbers, as they continue to demonstrate.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West) *rose*——

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West) *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: No, I am not giving way. Sit down. I am answering the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

The British people are not willing either to pay unnecessary charges such as those set out by the West Kent statutory water company when it announced a 42 per cent. increase for consumers, half of which, it pointed out, was due directly to the cost of privatisation, or to accept unnecessary additional costs to pay for dividends and high directors' fees, salaries and expenses, because they regard that as irrelevant to the need to improve and enhance the water environment of this country.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Prime Minister was obviously not aware that when raw sewage is discharged even through long sea outfalls at the south Wales coast, where there are many popular tourist beaches, it goes into the Bristol channel and the Greater Severn estuary and then enters that same body of water, 5 cubic km of sea water, that swishes up and down the channel twice a day, so that it has now become one of the world's largest flush lavatories? The volume of sewage that it takes is not discharged into the open ocean because, by and large, it is the same body of water that goes up and down the channel; therefore, the sewage is not dispersed into the ocean.

Dr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If the Prime Minister, after her speech in Scarborough on Saturday, had walked out of the Spa hall and looked at the beach and the sea in front of her she would have seen the outfall discharging untreated raw sewage into the marine environment. It is a pity that she so averts her gaze from the reality of environmental pollution in Britain that she cannot see what is obvious to so many people.

Mr. Ashby: The hon. Gentleman discloses a rather worrying state of affairs in Wales. I accept that and I think that all my hon. Friends would accept it. But that discloses that there has been a lack of investment over the years. Can the hon. Gentleman tell us what the level of investment was in the 1970s when the Labour Government were in power? Will he point out that it went down 50 per cent. under the Labour Government, that there was 50 per cent. less investment?

Dr. Cunningham: I can give the hon. Gentleman the figures at constant prices. The water authorities' capital expenditure in England and Wales set out the figures in water statistics. The average during the five years of Labour government from 1974 to 1979 was £1,344 million per year, and the average in the period of Conservative government has been £1,014 million—lower than in the five years of Labour Government during a period, apparently, of economic success.

7.15 pm

We know what is happening on the Conservative Benches. Hon. Gentlemen are unwilling to strengthen the environmental protection safeguards in this Bill because they realise that it will create a huge dilemma for the private enterprise monopolies they seek to create. They are planning to cosset those private enterprise monopolies. The Secretary of State has already, unprecedentedly, guaranteed them immunity from prosecution. That is an on-the-record statement. We know, because of our possession of the leaked memorandum from Mr. Michael Carney, the secretary of the Water Authorities Association —*[Laughter.]* That is true. We know only because it was leaked; he was telling a different story in public from the one he was telling in private. I do not see what hon. Gentlemen find so funny about that; it is a statement of the truth. Mr. Carney said:

"Any further strengthening of the regulatory framework now put forward would have significantly adverse consequences for the successful management of the privatised [water] companies."

That is why the Government have rejected all attempts to strengthen the provisions in the Bill to safeguard the environment and enhance the role of the NRA.

Sir Anthony Grant: The hon. Gentleman has not really addressed himself to the question quite rightly posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). He has come to the House with a series of new clauses and a determination to strengthen the Bill, but he must tell the House what additional cost there will be. It is no good his saying he will make a speech about it at some obscure place in three weeks' time. The House wants to know now. Surely he has not put forward these proposals without doing some arithmetic. If he has done his arithmetic, will he let us know what it is?

Dr. Cunningham: I have a copy of the Tory Central Office brief about this as well. Since the hon. Gentleman fleetingly shows an interest in these matters, I have to tell him that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can only guess at the number of billions of pounds that it will cost to make the necessary improvements, and we are in a similar position. My guess is that the Secretary of State's proposals have no hope of reaching fruition under private enterprise. So, if the hon. Gentleman wants more precise figures, perhaps he would ask his right hon. Friend to give the House more precise figures so that we can all enjoy the

debate. [An HON. MEMBER: "He does not know."] That is true. That is what I have said, and, what is more, the hon. Gentleman's right hon. Friend does not know either.

We need to recognise that pollution cannot be controlled, our rivers and other water resources cannot be protected from further pollution and the existing polluted rivers, streams, brooks and ponds will remain polluted and dead if financial resources are not devoted to them. The purpose of the new clause is to make it a primary responsibility of the NRA to control the pollution as the first step and then to start reducing the pollution of our water resources.

The aim of new clause 2 is to expose, as it does quite clearly, one of the most blatant flaws in the Government's case. It shows that the existing situation whereby the water authorities police themselves in respect of pollution is wrong. That is what the Goverment say, and we agree. They omit to say that the status quo results from Conservative Government legislation in the first place. The Government claim that the Bill will—to use the Secretary of State's phrase—separate the poachers from the gamekeepers. However, he neglects to emphasise that the National Rivers Authority can and, as Ministers have admitted, will contract back many of its functions—including regulatory ones—to the private water plcs. That will take place principally because the NRA will have inadequate resources to perform all the functions itself.

Far from freeing these constraints from the public sector borrowing requirement—which the Secretary of State has always argued is one of the fundamental reasons for them—the proposals leave the financing of the National Rivers Authority fairly and squarely in Treasury control.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Will the hon. Gentleman say, with regard to the problem of contracting back, whether the duties imposed on the National Rivers Authority by the Bill will be waived—or diluted—by any contracting which the authorities may decide upon for sensible operational or other reasons?

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, it will be weakened because it will not be independent. Any work done by the very organisations that are supposed to be policed, monitored and controlled will be less than satisfactory. That is the point that I have been making, and I stand by it.

Mr. Boswell: I must press the hon. Gentleman on this point. Certain general duties have been laid on the authority by the Bill. If the authority chooses to contract out of certain of those functions, will the duties be in any way amended or reduced?

Dr. Cunningham: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the now infamous quotation of Mr. Keith Court, the chairman of the South West water authority, who said that after privatisation it would be the responsibility of his managers and scientists "to outwit the regulators". Those are the circumstances that we face.

Mr. Ashby: That is not an answer at all.

Dr. Cunningham: It is.

New clause 15 would lay a duty on the NRA to prepare and publish a national plan for the promotion of clean river water and the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. Specifically, it would require the NRA to do so in respect of

"(a) the state of cleanliness of waters in England and Wales, including their chemical quality and levels of compliance with notified water quality objectives;
(b) discharges of sewage effluents and trade effluents in breach of consent levels and the monitoring of compliance in respect of all such consents;
(c) the prescription by the Authority of precautions to be taken by specified persons for the prevention of pollution;
(d) a programme of works and operations to prevent, remedy, or mitigate pollution;
(e) levels of charges to be imposed by the Authority on persons in respect of discharges and the creation of pollution;
(f) the conservation and enhancement of sites of natural beauty or amenity, and the conservation of flora and fauna;
(g) the preservation and promotion of public access to waters in areas of natural beauty or amenity, and their use for recreational purposes;
(h) the conservation, redistribution and augmentation of water resources;
(i) the general supervision of land drainage and flood protection including a programme of works on designated main rivers and sea defences;
(j) the conservation, maintenance, improvement and development of salmon, trout, freshwater and eel fisheries in inland waters; and,
(k) the carrying out of navigation, conservancy and harbour authority functions".

In other words, new clause 15 makes the National Rivers Authority a far more comprehensive and wide-ranging environmental protection agency than is envisaged by the Secretary of State.

New clause 20 would transfer all the land of the existing water authorities to the National Rivers Authority, ensuring that it remained in public ownership and control. It would similarly transfer buildings, machinery and other rights, where necessary on operational grounds, so that they could be leased to the companies. The land could be leased back to water undertakers where necessary for their functions. No development on, or use of, the land would be permitted which damaged the environment, and no interest in land could be sold by the lessee without the consent of the National Rivers Authority.

The Government's proposals contain no justification of why the freehold of all the land currently in public ownership—owned by water authorities—should be sold. Technically, plcs would only need control over the necessary rights to fulfil their statutory responsibilities, which might include rights of access to land, right of water gathering and abstraction. The transfer of the freehold opens up the possibility of land exploitation and development, which runs counter to the best interests of land management and conservation.

The code of practice under which the Government claim that public interest is to be protected does not apply to subsidiary companies that will undoubtedly be created by water plcs.

Mr. Ridley: If the hon. Gentleman wants all the land to be vested in the NRA, what is there to stop the NRA from developing it as it surely should in order to maximise its assets?

Dr. Cunningham: Because that is not the duty of the NRA, which, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, will not have development powers. The aim of our amendment is to safeguard our national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and sensitive habitats from development. That is what people concerned with the countryside and

[Dr. Cunningham]

our natural heritage overwhelmingly want to see. They do not want to see what the Government propose, which is——

Mr. Ashby *rose——*

Dr. Cunningham: No, I shall not give way. The people do not want to see what the Government are proposing allowing or what, with a wink and a nod, they are hinting at to beef up interest in the flotation of the water industry —which is that people can make a quick buck by selling off land or developing or changing its use and using it for other commercial purposes.

Mr. Marlow *rose——*

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way in a moment. I wish to develop this point because it is important.

Mr. Ridley: It is a rotten point.

Dr. Cunningham: I wonder whether the Secretary of State has had the benefit of re-reading recently the letter of 6 February 1989 of his Minister of State to Mr. Jack Jeffrey, the chairman of the Statutory Water Companies Association. In the letter, the Minister of State refers to pathetic failed attempts to keep down price increases in the statutory water companies. He says that by agreeing to increases of 22 per cent. on average—three times the inflation rate—he has actually saved consumers money. That is a preposterous and pathetic claim.

In his letter, the Minister laid bare the Government's ideas about all this. Talking about ways of trying to avoid price increases and costs, he said:

"These should come out of dividends or reserves or proceeds of asset sales".

There is no doubt about the Government's view. They are encouraging people to realise the assets that they will acquire after flotation—if a successful flotation ever takes place. People in the City know that very well. A brief on the future of the water industry has been prepared by Seymour Pierce Butterfield Ltd. It was written by Mr. Nigel Hawkins, who, when approached by a research assistant in my office today, declined to talk to her on the ground that it might get him into trouble. I am not sure what he meant by that, but it turns out that he is an aspiring Conservative parliamentary candidate.

7.30 pm

As Mr. Hawkins was unwilling to discuss his proposals in the document, I shall mention a couple which are germane to this part of the debate. Referring to land and assets, Mr. Hawkins writes:

"Given the heavy dependence of Water Authorities upon their 'core' activities, it will be extremely difficult for most to expand the 'non core' sector at anything like an acceptable rate . . . To compensate for this expected shortfall in growth, some Water Authorities with significant amounts of surplus land may well realise sizeable capital gains by selling it."

He goes on to speculate about exactly who will be interested in acquiring assets in such a way:

"Companies in the chemical, waste disposal and heavy construction sectors might find particular attractions in bidding for privatised Water Authorities."

There is no doubt in the City about the opportunities for exploitation in the proposals. They are vast, and they threaten much of our most priceless national heritage.

For all those reasons—because of the need to strengthen the Bill and to remove the gaping holes, weaknesses and inadequacies—I commend the new clause to the House.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I know that time is short, but I must say that I find much to commend in new clause 1. It attacks the basic problem of pollution, about which —and about the source of which—there is much anxiety. The new clause imposes a direct duty on the Secretary of State to ensure not only that a National Rivers Authority is set up but that those who pollute our rivers and coastlines are held responsible and have to pay to put matters right. That strikes me as entirely acceptable.

I speak from some personal experience. Although Torbay's beaches are regarded as some of the best in Europe and have received prizes, I am afraid that the same cannot be said of South West water. I very much doubt that it would win any prizes in a European contest. Parts of the north Devon coastline are quite simply a disgrace —and, indeed, a health hazard where there are short outfalls into the sea.

When people talk about treated or untreated sewage, they often use the term "macerated". It is not generally known that maceration is no more than a mincing process —by and large, the material is untreated and its strength is not bacteriologically reduced. It is a vile experience for people to go swimming and come across sewage, whether macerated or not. New clause 1 would go some way to improving the current position.

In my constituency, just off the coastline, there is a beauty spot called Thatcher Rock, a popular site for divers. I know that we are urged to wear condoms as frequently as possible, but the experience reported to me by divers of emerging off Thatcher Rock with condoms on their heads is pretty unpleasant. I also consider it entirely unacceptable that 27 per cent. of all sewage sludge is disposed of at sea. It is said that the position will have been improved by 1995, but that is six years too late for me.

I am concerned about Devon's position for two reasons. First, since 1980-81 our water rates have risen by just over 90 per cent. It is currently proposed that they should rise again by a staggering 13 per cent., which I believe to be the largest increase in the country. Two messages come back to me—first, that such increases are entirely unacceptable and an appalling burden on water rate payers and, secondly, that they are an indication of crisis management in the past, particularly at the time of the 1974-79 Administration. We know from the figures that in that period capital investment was cut dramatically —and capital investment, surely, is the key.

What is the capital structure for the new water authorities? Will there be a continuing burden on water rate payers? A scheme that has commended itself to me is one advocated in the *Financial Times*—a diversion of flotation revenue during privatisaton to the water companies rather than the Treasury. I accept that the Bill does not cover that, but I nevertheless regret that it was not considered because it would have got us off a particularly unpleasant political hook. Certainly capital is the key to the future—we cannot expect high standards without a satisfactory level of capital investment. The answer, in my view, would have been to allow the flotation revenue to go to the companies to provide a satisfactory capital basis. That would have been a neat solution and, I think, widely acceptable, along the lines of the TSB flotation. I am not

arguing against the principle of privatisation, which I have always advocated strongly. No doubt the Secretary of State is gazing into his crystal ball and will tell us that it means more efficiency in the future. I know, too, that the NRA will be an important development.

Let me indulge in one of my occasional lapses into a history lesson. I remind the House that, when the water assets were taken over by the Government as a trustee, undertakings were given—not only about debt—implying that the Government would continue to look after those assets, which would be managed on behalf of the boroughs that had previously owned them. My constituency contained a particularly impressive water system, with two reservoirs. In some respects we are in competition with Bournemouth, which has retained a private sector system and where water rates are about 40 per cent. below those of Torbay. That, of course, is an argument in favour of private companies and privatisation.

It may well be too late to consider any diversion of the funds realised from the flotation to the water companies and not to the Treasury, which we know from the Budget is brimming over with funds and does not need the money. I seek an assurance from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that after privatisation there should not be a continuing burden on the water rate payers, and that there should be a proper capital structure for the industry so that we are not burdened with further rate increases. I remind the House that the water rate increases in Devon have been just over 90 per cent. since 1981, and that the current increase, which my constituents consider totally unacceptable, is just over 13 per cent. I hope that the Secretary of State will provide that assurance and give great relief to the people of Devon.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The group of amendments and new clauses that we are debating touch on some important fundamental issues. Despite the many hours that we have spent debating the Bill, we are still far from satisfied that it contains adequate safeguards to protect the environment. Our fears are fully justified by the post that we continue to receive from organisations representing those involved in conservation, access to the countryside and other interests which still do not believe that the Government have got the Bill right.

The hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) touched on some vital matters. It is a pity that he was not on the Committee considering the Bill as he could have made some important contributions to those debates. He is absolutely right to say that even if the necessary safeguards were written into the Bill—we very much doubt that they are, which is why we have tabled new clauses and amendments—the problems could not be resolved without capital investment. That raises the argument as to whether the public sector or the private sector is better able to raise capital.

It is important that the National Rivers Authority should have sufficient powers and use them to deal with such matters. There is fear that that will not be done because it requires massive investment from the private sector. We can envisage that, having invested in the shares, the private sector will not be prepared to deal with the problems of pollution, sewage works, or the transfer of sewage out to sea. The money may not be available because investment in such basic requirements will not necessarily provide an adequate profit or return.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) referred to the Select Committee report on toxic waste. I served on that Select Committee which agreed that the National Rivers Authority should have been the basis of creating an environmental protection agency. I believe that the Secretary of State would do better to ignore the privatisation clauses of the Bill that we are to debate later, and allow us to have a constructive debate on how to make part I work in a positive way. That would be welcomed in the House and by many interested organisations. I hope that the Secretary of State will think again, although that is unlikely. I hope that he will recognise that there is genuine concern on the issues raised in the amendments and new clauses that we are discussing.

New clause 20 deals with the ownership of the land and suggests that it should be vested in the National Rivers Authority. We recognise that under the Bill as drafted the water authorities will become plcs and decide what is and is not operational land and will be able to dispose of the non-operational land. Historically, the water authorities own a great deal of land in towns and city centres that easily could be designated non-operational and could be disposed of, with large amounts of profit accruing to the privatised water authorities. More important still, the water authorities own land in areas such as the Lake district, the Peak district and, in my constituency, the Pennines, Worsthorne moor and many water catchment areas surrounding Burnley and other towns on both sides of the Pennines.

7.45 pm

The water authorities own acres of valuable land which are water catchment areas but are easily designated as non-operational. If a water authority were to dispose of some of that land to raise money to fund some necessary work, it would cause tremendous damage to our heritage in many of the most beautiful areas of the country. We do not want that to happen, so we believe that new clause 20 should be added to the Bill. Many organisations take that view. The North West Council for Sport and Recreation sent me a fairly long brief expressing those fears. It says:

"We consider that the Water Bill, when enacted, will represent a major threat to recreational interests".

It goes on to discuss the status of land sold off or not directly related to the water supply. It feels that land will be disposed of, that we shall destroy our heritage, remove recreational facilities, and access to the countryside will be lost. It goes into great detail as to why it takes such a view.

The Burnley borough council planning officer, Mr. Andrew Walker, has written a detailed letter to the Secretary of State expressing similar fears about the code of practice and the ownership of land, with particular reference to the catchment areas. He stresses that not all the land will be alongside a river and that in moorlands and other areas there will not be a river in the immediate vicinity, but it is important that those moorlands should be retained for public access and to protect the birds and animals in their natural habitat. He explained why the Government have got it wrong, and that one acceptable improvement would be for the Government to accept new clause 20.

The Greater Manchester countryside unit also expressed concern. Locally and nationally anglers have written expressing their concern about the future ownership of the land. I hope that the Secretary of State recognises that the Bill as drafted raises great fears that the

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

land will be developed. Even if only small sections of the Peak district or the Lake district are sold off and developed for exclusive housing, which will be extremely valuable, the whole nature of such areas and our heritage will be destroyed.

It is no use Ministers saying that this will be dealt with by planning laws. Hon. Members on both sides of the Committee read submission after submission and saw evidence from many organisations demonstrating that there were not sufficient planning safegurds to deal with possible development.

On new clause 1, it has been said that the polluters should pay. I agree that polluters should be made to pay more for the problems of agricultural or industrial pollution, and we have to consider that.

It is not good enough that new sewage treatment works are being built at Bootle, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), to deal with the sewage from Manchester, which will go along a pipeline instead of by sludge boat along the ship canal, and to deal with the sludge from the Liverpool area, because when those works become fully operational they will merely take sludge out into the Irish sea and dump it. We need more thought and investment to deal with such problems.

The North West water authority is extending the sewage pipe at Rossall near Fleetwood and dumping sewage a little further out into the Irish sea. The hon. Member for Torbay made the point that the coast of Devon is not suitable for swimming because of the sewage being pumped out into the sea. The sea at Blackpool, Morecambe and other places in the north-west is not suitable for swimming, either.

The amendments are positive improvements to the Bill. The Government must recognise that the Bill contains too many loopholes to deal with pollution, river quality, sewage treatment works or drinking water quality. If more safeguards are not written into the Bill, we know that the Government will make exceptions, give derogations and extend the periods of time for compliance. Drinking water quality and river quality will not be dealt with and we shall have pollution for many years. Those are the reasons why I hope that the Government will be prepared to move in a positive way for the first time and show that they want genuinely to ensure that the Water Bill protects our environment in a better way than it does at present.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I hope that the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) will forgive me if I do not follow him, but I want to be brief. In principle, I am relaxed and fairly happy about the Bill. One of my constituents wrote to me yesterday, accusing the Government of being about to poison him through the Bill. What he did not seem to realise was that he is, and always has been, a customer of a private water company. I was thus able to reassure him that, whatever the problems about the legislation, he could rest easy.

I support new clause 1. I have a reasonable track record on pollution and I believe that we must be seen to be serious in the Bill about giving the National Rivers Authority the teeth and powers to ensure that pollution is controlled. In 1979, when the Merchant Shipping Bill was in Committee, I managed to persuade Committee members of all parties to amend the Bill so that when dealing with oil pollution at sea the owner of the oil rather than the carrier of the oil would be made responsible for any pollution at sea. That concentrated the minds of the oil companies no end, but because of the collapse of the Government led by the present Lord Callaghan, I was threatened that we might lose the entire Bill if I was not willing to withdraw the amendment at the truncated Report stage on the Floor of the House. The proposition that pollution must be paid for by those who create it is thus a long-held view of mine. I hope that, even if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State cannot accept the amendments, he will consider as the Bill proceeds whether to accept any reasonable proposal that comes forward to ensure——

Mr. Ridley: I am delighted to meet my hon. Friend's point. The two points contained in new clause 1 are already amply and fully covered in the Bill. New clause 1 is wholly unnecessary, so my hon. Friend can vote against it with complete equanimity.

Mr. Adley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, but I told the Chief Whip some weeks ago that I was especially concerned about the National Rivers Authority, so he would be disappointed if I did not vote in favour of new clause 1. I do not want to detain the House indefinitely, but I must point out that from time to time my right hon. Friend and I have taken common cause on certain issues. However, I had better do as I said and vote in favour of new clause 1, while registering the fact that, in principle, I am happy with most of the other provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Wigley: The contributions made by Conservative Members have been much more encouraging on Report than in Committee. I suspect that there was careful selection of those chosen to serve on the Committee. There has been a breath of fresh air in the speeches made by the hon. Members for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and for Torbay (Mr. Allason). The matter of concern to them and to all of us is how to upgrade standards on pollution. Those of us who represent maritime constituencies are very much aware of the large distance that we have to go to reach EC standards. The fact that they are European standards is neither here nor there because we ought to be insisting on them ourselves. As we come to the end of the 20th century, our standards should be well ahead of their present levels.

The Secretary of State tried to give assurances that those points were met by the Bill, but had he been in Committee he would know that week after week we were far from convinced that the Bill was sufficiently rigorous and, more fundamentally, that we were far from convinced that adequate financial resources would be provided to undertake the job that is so desperately needed.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) spoke about the proportion of sewage outfalls in Wales —he said that it was 65 per cent.—discharging untreated sewage. That caused considerable concern in the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs when we looked into the question a couple of years ago. That Committee produced a far-reaching report which was supported by hon. Members of all parties, but regrettably the overwhelming majority of its main recommendations have still not been implemented. Many of them come back to the question of finance. What was disturbing to the Committee was to understand that when the implications of the Bill were hitting home to those who might have to find the finance

for privatisation, the doubts began to emerge—so much so that the leading story in the *Financial Times* on Monday 6 February, under the headline:

"Water privatisation rules make industry 'less attractive'",

said:

"The Government's water privatisation plans were in disarray last night as ministers faced threats of increases in charges of up to 50 per cent. from statutory water companies. Industry leaders also warned of a significant drawback in privatisation legislation that would make the water authorities much less attractive to investors.

The industry's problems, which are becoming a major embarrassment to the Government, flow from the huge capital investment programme required to meet the increasingly stringent European Commission Regulations on drinking water quality, cleaner beaches and more effective sewage treatment."

That is the guts of the case.

Obviously, as hon. Members have pointed out, costs will be involved in improvements. Last Thursday, at Prime Minister's Question Time, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged the extent of those costs. The question is whether the costs can be met from the privatisation structure. On 28 November 1988, the Secretary of State said that water charges might increase by between 7·5 per cent. and 12·5 per cent. in real terms in the decade following privatisation. It is not credible that increases of up to 12·5 per cent. over 10 years would generate sufficient resources to undertake the capital investment programme needed to upgrade our sewage treatment and water outfalls. Conservative Members taunt the Opposition by saying that we do not face up to the cost of our demands, but we do. All Opposition Members face up to that cost. We are prepared to see that cost funded either from general taxation or from public sector borrowing, whichever may be more appropriate.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): What would the basic rate of income tax have to be to fund any proportion of the environmental programme that has been suggested by the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends?

8 pm

Mr. Wigley: I cannot comment on the environmental programme put forward by the Labour Front Bench because I am not privy to the details of that, but I know that Wales needs a capital investment programme of about £90 million year by year to meet the standards looked for by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs. I also know that last year Welsh Water's retained profit was about £27 million and, even if all interest were written off, would barely generate another £50 million, so there is a shortfall of between £20 million and £30 million in Wales in terms of the capital injection needed. The shortfall would be nearer £50 million to reach EC standards. If that is multiplied by 20 for the United Kingdom, we may be talking of a shortfall of £1,000 million. If it helps the hon. Gentleman, that shortfall could be met by 1p on income tax. I would be more than happy to see 1p on income tax to reach those standards.

The Opposition accept that such improvements have to be paid for one way or another, but do the Government accept that? It is not credible for the Government to say that those standards can be reached with an increase of no more than 12·5 per cent. in real terms over 10 years. Funding is central to the problems facing a maritime constituency such as mine, sticking out into the Irish sea, which is one of the most polluted seas in the world. It is not acceptable to go into the next century with the kind of standards that we have at present. Wales has to deal not only with maritime pollution but with the effects of both older and modern industrial pollution. In many instances, it does not seem to be making much headway.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) will be aware of the pollution of the river Taff. I saw the hon. Gentleman just before the rugby match on Saturday. I was travelling down from Pontyprydd to Cardiff. Looking at the river, very little progress seems to have been made in the past 15 years. I do not criticise the Welsh water authority, which is undertaking important work, but this underlines the work that we still have to do, and which has to be paid for one way or another, whether from general taxation or by the polluter. *[Interruption.]* It is all very well Conservative Members heckling, but if we are to achieve the necessary standards, we must find a way to pay for that. I am convinced that that is not possible under the privatisation structures which have been proposed. It is not possible with the 12·5 per cent. ceiling to which the Secretary of State referred. If Conservative Members say that that 12·5 per cent. increase is wrong and that we need a 50 per cent. or 60 per cent. increase in real terms for such a level of funding over the next decade, the sums would add up—but they are not saying that.

Mr. Rowlands: The situation is not made easier by the fact that the private companies will also have to pay dividends.

Mr. Wigley: That is the whole point. If the Welsh water authority is to give a return of 10 per cent. on capital, assuming that its assets, with a current cost of £1,700 million, are to be given away for, say, £300 million—a figure that has been bandied around—with £1,400 million being written off, a profit of £30 million is still needed to give a 10 per cent. return. That is a higher profit than at present. All the profit will go on that and there will be that much less to meet the capital programme that is needed.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that one of the difficulties in his part of the world, as in mine, has been the short-term nature of the water industry in the past 20 years? Each year the water industry has had to spend within the capital constraints put on it by the Government. Under the new arrangements, water companies will be able to act like any private company and go out into the market, borrow the money that they need and invest it in cleaning up all the beaches about which the hon. Gentleman is so worried.

Mr. Wigley: Of course I should have been delighted to see the water industry, like many other industries, investing money over the past decade, particularly in a period of high unemployment. There should have been much greater investment in the capital infrastructure—for example, in sewers. I regret that water authorities have been under such constraints from the Government, funding more and more of their capital investment from retained profit. That is the Government's philosophy.

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Mr. Wigley: I am still dealing with the hon. Gentleman's point.

[Mr. Wigley]

The hon. Gentleman argues that Government constraints have created difficulties over the past decade and that the water industry will find things easier when it is privatised, but that is a non sequitur. It presupposes that after privatisation it will be possible to obtain hundreds of millions of pounds from the market, but that will be possible only if substantial interest is paid by way of loan or share capital. That means a rate of return substantially higher than the water industry is obtaining at the moment. In Wales, the rate of return at the moment is 2 per cent. We cannot get money from the market at 2 per cent.—we shall need to pay 10, 12 or 15 per cent. to get the money in for the sort of programme that is necessary.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): We should also bear in mind that the first investment that the newly privatised water authorities will undertake is the cost of metering—an unnecessary expense of about £1·3 billion.

Mr. Wigley: Any such additional expenditure will come from the limited capital that is available, or more will have to be paid to attract more capital. I understand what Conservative Members say, but their arguments add up only if there is a substantial increase in the price of water. They argue that improvements should be paid for by such increases. We agree that the money is necessary, that we need the capital expenditure and that the money must come from somewhere, but we are prepared to see it coming from the public purse because it is a matter of such importance to all in our communities.

Mr. Ridley: A few minutes ago the hon. Gentleman said that he believed in the principle that the polluters should pay. In relation to sewage pollution, which demands by far the greatest proportion of expenditure, who does he think is the polluter?

Mr. Wigley: To a large extent, it is the community. That is why general taxation is so relevant. I look for a method of equitable payment for pensioners, those on low incomes, disabled people, and so on. They should not be burdened in the way that they are by the poll tax. The most reasonable way to obtain the necessary funds is through progressive taxation. The capital has to be obtained and it has to be paid for.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North) *rose*——

Mr. Wigley: I shall not give way as other hon. Members wish to speak and I have taken more time than I intended.

On Second Reading, the Secretary of State said that over 10 years the increase in prices would be between 7·5 and 12 per cent. Does he stand by that assessment? Will he give a commitment from the Dispatch Box today that all the necessary improvements in standards in terms of the pollution of our coastal and inland waters can be paid for with no more than a 12·5 per cent. increase in real terms in the price of water between now and 1999? I suspect that he realises from what is happening in existing private companies—the way in which they have run for increases in their prices—that his proposition does not stand up.

The money will not come in because the Government's sums do not add up. That is why it is so important to have issues such as the reduction of pollution and the allocation of costs written into the Bill, as new clause 1 provides. I suspect that many Conservative Members know in their hearts that that is the case. I hope that when the time comes to vote they will have the courage of their convictions.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): Having listened to the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on the problems of the water industry, I cannot help but feel that for about 100 years these problems have been dodged. It is surely an industry which, probably more than any other, has failed to have any serious renewal of investment since its establishment in the opening decade of this century. The greatest development now in investment is the replacement of aging structures which have not been touched for at least 60 years. It is just the problem which the hon. Member for Caernarfon so eloquently put about how the water industry will obtain the renewal of asset capital, which is so desperately needed, which is fundamental to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's measure in this Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason), who is no longer with us, was referring to the outfall. I remember, a few years ago, when I was in the Department over which my right hon. Friend presides with such distinction, going to Torbay to examine that outfall. I think it was in 1981. It was then a fine pumping station, built about 1908. It was all in brass, and had been converted to oil at no small cost, and was still merrily pumping the sewage of Torquay into Torbay. That is the kind of problem which exists all round the coastline to which all hon. Members refer. I recall that in Newcastle the first sewage works ever was opened in about 1983, replacing the practice of discharging completely untreated sewage into the Tyne.

So the great problem with the water industry has been a lack of interest in renewing and modernising its assets. For the vast majority of this period it was in the hands of local authorities, and it was the fact that the public purse was involved which, almost by definition, starved the water industry of assets. It is exactly the same now as it is within the national public purse, because the water industry comes at the bottom of the list of priorities from one year to the next of the state or council.

There are two simple reasons for this. First, there are very few votes in sewerage or sewerage replacement, because the public does not want to know. Secondly, there is an infantile belief that water is free and therefore cannot be charged for adequately, and there is a reluctance to disturb this happy myth. It is the disturbance of that myth and the regeneration of a drive towards capital improvement and the fairly skilful presentation in this Bill of controls balanced by liberating the assets of the authorities to obtain capital in the private sector which is the very nature of my support for the Bill.

Speaking to new clause 1 and the allied clauses moved by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), I have to say to my right hon. Friend that the argument on the National Rivers Authority is utterly crucial to this whole structure. I am not a supporter of the NRA. I have never been wholly convinced that the arrangements currently in place for the whole water cycle to be managed by authorities of the kind we possess are not perfectly satisfactory for the running of the hydrological cycle and for dealing with water supply and pollution. However, my real worry about the NRA from the time when the concept was first introduced by my right hon. Friend has been that it could so easily become the mortmain of the industry and

the dead hand of Government, and the controls, the extension of influence and the manipulation of committees would mean that the water industry would not be privatised but slowly strangled.

Nothing convinces me that I am right more than new clause 1 and the allied new clauses promoted by the hon. Member for Copeland, who is no fool, never has been and probably never will be. When he seeks to increase the powers of the NRA and prays in aid the importance of pollution controls and making certain everybody pays, and so on, I get very worried indeed, because he is quite right to say that, once established, the NRA will be an absolute godsend to any Socialist Administration. Heaven forfend the day when they use the NRA as the great mortmain of Government, because it must be seen as that.

8.15 pm

The balance of this Bill at the moment is weighted too heavily towards controlling the activities of the private companies in relation to the controls applied by the NRA. However, having said that, I recognise that it is now necessary to see that it is set up efficiently and that the powers given to it over its wide remit are sufficient to discharge its responsibilities. In the case of pollution, in other portions of the Bill, clauses 103 and beyond that, there is an enormous range of powers available to the Secretary of State, the Director General of Water Services and the authority itself to do practically everything possible so that the NRA ensures that the privatised water authorities or any other polluter meets its requirements. I cannot see the need to strengthen the powers, as suggested by new clause 1.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Will the hon. Gentleman say whether his proposal to leave what will now be functions of the National Rivers Authority with the water authorities will increase the possibility of privatisation being successful or make it more difficult, bearing in mind that all the functions being given to the NRA, environmentally essential functions, do not make any profit?

Sir Giles Shaw: I quite understand why the hon. Member is anxious about that. I am not advocating recasting the Bill in relation to the NRA; I am merely warning my right hon. Friends that the NRA is potentially an instrument of very great power, and I do not accept that its powers need increasing.

In relation to access to land, I find it extraordinary that hon. Gentlemen express such great concern over the disposal of land in the current ownership of the water authorities. I understand that the development of land increases its value, and there are various ways of selling such assets for the benefit of shareholders. I understand also that over the last few years the water authorities, encouraged by this Government, have been able to extend public access to their land to a quite remarkable degree. Not long ago water authorities would not allow the public anywhere near their reservoirs, and acres of land were fenced off. Now, commendably, there are many acres available for public use, provided that the public respects the fact that it is catchment land or water designated for public supply.

The vast majority of water authority land is clearly catchment land. If there is really a fear among hon. Gentlemen that catchment land has enormous development potential, they are setting at naught the planning system. The vast majority of water authority land is already in national parks, green belt areas, areas of outstanding natural beauty and probably conservation areas too. It is ludicrous to have this phobia, when the policies of authorities have steadily developed towards marketing their catchment land for environmental purposes and to think this will suddenly be destroyed by the fact that the authorities are being privatised. It is crucial that their consumers, who pay their bills, should have access to the land which they currently enjoy. In relation to Yorkshire water authority, which I know well, there is no intention whatever to alter the existing policy of access to its catchment land. That land has the lowest possible development value and nobody will build a block of flats on Upper Wharfedale.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Yorkshire water authority is considering, for example, selling part of its land in the Tophill low reservoir for the creation of a commercial fishpond, which will go in a site of significant environmental and scientific interest, will destroy rare plants in that area and completely obliterate an area which is part of a voluntary nature reserve?

Sir Giles Shaw: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that I do not know of that proposal. There will always be substantial conflicts in the conservation and environmental policies to be pursued in regard to any piece of land, particularly the aquatic environment as opposed to the catchment land, to which I referred. There will be alternative uses. There could be people who find it more beneficial for the land to be used as a fish farm than for a protection zone for flora or fauna. That is where the local office of the NRA will come in. It will be responsible for ensuring that the water authority pursues a conservation policy which is consistent with national objectives.

We can forget catchment land being on development land. Development land tends no longer to have a potential use, with redundant sewage works and things of that kind. It certainly could be development for commercial use. I sincerely hope that my right hon. Friend —even the hon. Member for Copeland—will consider that a redundant sewage works should be replaced by something moe profitable as soon as possible. If it is for domestic buildings or for buildings of another nature, so be it. That is a far cry from saying that the policy of disposal of land will somehow be turned on its head by water authorities trying to build flats in upper catchment areas and river valleys.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman was not a member of the Committee. He seems to deal lightly with what he calls catchment land. The area that I come from, Cumbria, includes the Lake district national park. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that 45 per cent. of Lake district planning appeals are presently allowed by the Secretary of State? There would be great worries that, if large tracts of what is now water authority land become available, this Secretary of State especially will continue to give planning permission by overruling the Lake district planning board.

Sir Giles Shaw: I would be well out of order if I were to refer to planning applications in a local authority such as

[Sir Giles Shaw]

Cumbria. There will be occasions when planning applications will be granted, which will cause great concern for the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Giles Shaw: I must proceed, otherwise I will exceed my time limit.

Urban land in the ownership of water authorities must be considered in relation to the land register. At the moment, as public authorities, water authorities are required to list such lands for which they have no present purpose. The Derelict Land Act 1982 is an important instrument to dispose of derelict land for the betterment of public use. It will apply to the water companies just as it applies to British Rail, other bodies and local authorities. There is a positive inducement to get rid of derelict land for other purposes in urban areas, and I fully support that.

What worries me most is that, by adding these further powers to the NRA, as the hon. Member for Copeland and his colleagues seek to do, we would so extend the powers of that body that it would make it much more difficult for a privatised water company to try to run its business in a cost-effective way. We know that profits will be limited, that charges and costs will be controlled by the Director General of Water Services, and that the conservation and environmental powers vested in the NRA will be implemented. Those powers include major powers against pollution and discharges. When privatised, water companies will also be under the control of my right hon. Friend through the NRA. There will be immense control on the activities of the companies.

For that reason, their capitalisation should not be high, and the return on assets should be modest—suitable for public utilities, which always had a reasonable place in a share portfolio as safe but not stunning. For that reason also, the privatisation of water authorities will be a major achievement.

I wish the Bill well, but I counsel my right hon. Friend to make sure that we defeat the extended powers that he and the hon. Member for Copeland wish to impose on the NRA.

Mr. Rowlands: My few remarks follow those of the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw). I shall identify a vital area where the exploitation of assets will become a major concern to the communities that I represent. Fundamental issues have been raised by my hon. Friends and by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). I endorse all that has been said, so I will not go over it again.

However, I shall pick up the points that were made by the hon. Member for Pudsey and illustrate what they could mean in community terms if we privatise water companies. As he rightly described, they will desperately look around for asset sales and for means of raising income. Unlike almost any other company, their main business is not capable of major expansion. It is a mature industry. It supplies its main sales, and its service is already provided to almost every household in the country. There is no way in which there can be any significant increase in sales per se. Therefore, there cannot be a major expansion of sales to boost dividends to finance the company or to give better dividends to the City that invests in it.

Where is the opportunity to deliver the returns that are required in the City for the investment that it will make? The hon. Member for Pudsey has understandably said that there will be restrictions on the development of land, that planning permissions will be required in respect of national parkland, and that there will be enormous problems in trying to exploit land. Hon. Members have cast doubt on that point. A potential exploitation of land in my area deeply concerns me. I refer to the exploitation of operational water belonging to water authorities, in particular the reservoirs that form an important part of the recreational requirements of many of our communities.

I have the distinguished privilege of being the president of the Welsh Anglers Society. Therefore, I know of the ways in which we anglers and Welsh Water have been trying to develop relationships in the expansion of opportunities for local angling organisations and individual anglers in the communities around the reservoirs of the Principality. Nowhere in the Bill is there a sufficient safeguard against large-scale exploitation of reservoirs by commercial enterprises, which would undermine the importance of local angling associations and individual anglers. It is the one other major area which, when privatised water companies put all their assets into subsidiary bodies, the City will try to exploit. There will be no planning permission objections or difficulties of the kind that the hon. Member for Pudsey mentioned. They will be able to offer powerful commercial leases and lease out our reservoirs. They are our reservoirs—they were built and financed by the communities—and they are of tremendous commercial potential.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend was a member of the Committee.

Mr. Rowlands: I was not.

Mr. Spearing: Does he agree that the area of reservoir available for fishing is proportional to the amount of storage capacity for drought purposes and the extent to which water companies must have water for purification by sunlight? What restraints will there be on private water companies, which are currently municipal bodies, from cutting such areas or volumes of storage and cutting corners that are not cut at the moment?

Mr. Rowlands: I am unable to answer the powerful and important technical point that my hon. Friend raised. I did not serve on the Committee.

I was making a good, simple community point. It is not mentioned in the Bill and I want to find out about it before the night is out. What safeguards will the Secretary of State, himself a keen angler, provide for angling communities? How will he prevent commercial exploitation? This is not a fanciful idea that we have dreamed up as an objection to the Bill.

We have watched while short stretches of Welsh rivers have been sold for enormous sums. They are becoming precious assets for use as business perks and weekends. There is a huge market in these assets in the Principality. But there is no provision in the Bill to safeguard the development of local activities for anglers and angling organisations on operational waters after the privatised water companies are running them. I hope that the Secretary of State can answer me. The lack of that safeguard is another fundamental reason why we should object to this act of privatisation.

Mr. Boswell: Has the hon. Gentleman studied the draft code of practice for the conduct of conservation, access and recreation and specifically the reference to the way in which established recreational activities should be able to continue wherever possible?

8.30 pm

Mr. Rowlands: I have certainly read those weasel words. The codes of practice will not last five minutes with a private company looking around to finance the dividends of its new investors. They will be pushed aside. There need to be statutory rights. Compared with those weasel words. I find no satisfaction in "where possible" or "in a code of practice". We all know too well how they will be pushed easily and quickly aside with a big offer for a major lease of a reservoir for the fishing and angling facilities in our communities. I find no satisfaction in the code of practice or those words.

I apologise for talking now about angling because it seems like a sideshow. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The main issues of water prices and charges are important, if not fundamental, but we are also dealing with the various side effects of the legislation. The existing situation is not satisfactory. The arrangements have not been effective. I know that the hon. Member for Pudsey was a Minister for water a long time ago. I can remember the neglect and difficulties that occurred due to lack of investment in sewage plants and other areas. Nobody is arguing that it is not a historic problem; we wonder whether any of these measures will make the situation better.

Dr. Cunningham: Perhaps I can draw my hon. Friend's attention to clause 7(5), which says:

"Nothing in this section or the following provisions of this Act shall require recreational facilities made available by a relevant body to be made available free of charge."

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend has underlined the point that I am making, I hope with some effect. I want to add another thought. We do not find that the provisions about pollution——

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South) *rose——*

Mr. Rowlands: In fairness, I want to be as brief as possible. I am sure that I would be tempted to reply at length to the hon. Gentleman.

The history of the situation is unsatisfactory. Anyone who has been a Minister or who has had responsibility knows that there are inherited problems that remain unsolved. But I do not believe that any of this backlog will be effectively dealt with, especially when the water companies hand out dividends to shareholders. The money will go into the shareholders' pockets, not into improving the rivers and dealing with pollution. It will be handed out to those who invest in the privatised companies.

Why do the Government oppose simple arrangements of the kind proposed in Committee? At least we ought to know when pollution occurs. It should be registered properly. In the Rhymney valley we have been developing exciting new local angling associations. We have stocked local rivers, yet overnight and at a stroke all those efforts will be wiped out by one irresponsible or negligent action, not by a domestic consumer but by a commercial or industrial operator.

I fully understand why hon. Members have received letters, as I have done, asking why we cannot strengthen the Bill so that we know who the polluters are. We should know when they pollute rivers. There should be a register. Even if the National Rivers Authority took no effective action, we could pursue the polluters. But that, too, has been rejected by the Government in Standing Committee.

Before we pass the Bill, which I fear we will do, I must say that it has no mandate in Wales. Of all the sensitive issues, water has been a special case. It has no mandate in Wales although the Government have a general mandate. We accept that as elected Members of Parliament. Therefore, the Government should heed our warnings, as represented by the new clauses.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) does not need to apologise to the House for talking about angling, because millions of people do it and also because many of us have received representations on the subject. I have had eight letters in the past 24 hours. The only shame was that they were all exactly the same and typed on what appeared to be the same pieces of paper. Nevertheless, they show a strength of feeling on this issue.

I wish to raise only one matter with my hon. Friend. It concerns Rutland water, which is in my constituency. My right hon. Friend will doubtless remember when Rutland water, the largest man-made lake in Europe, was created by Act of Parliament in the 1970s. The proposal was so unpopular at the time that Sir Kenneth Lewis, then the Conservative Member for Rutland, felt unable to introduce the private Bill to the House but opposed it. It was introduced by Mr. Tom Bradley, then the Labour Member for East Leicester. The Bill having passed, and the reservoir being duly flooded, my good friend Sir Kenneth Lewis was invited to the opening—which was carried out by Her Majesty the Queen—and Mr. Tom Bradley was not, which rankles with both of them to this day.

Rutland water has become a very important natural resource in my constituency and for the whole of the east midlands and even wider still. It is one of the most important wildlife reserves in the world. It has angling, sailing, and a fine nature reserve. It is a tremendously popular resort for the people of Leicestershire and others. They can walk around the area and enjoy themselves.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will therefore not be surprised to learn that there is concern about the prospect of development around Rutland water. I have carefully studied clauses 7, 8 and 9 which I think are well intentioned. I have studied new clause 20, which was tabled by the Opposition. It does not tackle the issue in the right way. I cannot see any advantage in vesting the land in the National Rivers Authority.

I know for a fact that under the existing system of statutory water authorities one of the most detrimental planning applications that was made to develop around Rutland water was made by the Anglian water authority in 1984. It proposed some hideous Swiss-type chalets around the catchment area—to follow the theme of my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw). Thank God that that very prejudicial application was rejected. The water authority did not proceed with an appeal.

I must ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State *—[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) should not anticipate me. I am just leading up to

[Mr. Michael Latham]

that point. I am now fixing my beady eye on my right hon. Friend and saying to him that I shall take seriously the assurances which I hope that he will give this evening and which were given to me in writing by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning and by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan).

I accept that of itself ownership is not decisive in that the privatised water companies do not need to sell land to developers. They can put in planning applications themselves if they want to, as the existing Anglian water authority did a few years ago. What I want from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is a clear assurance that the Government will not grant appeals for development around Rutland water because that is simply not acceptable. There will undoubtedly be applications. Indeed, an application is outstanding at present, with a written appeal that has been before my right hon. Friend, and we shall take the way in which he deals with that appeal to be a touchstone. It is a planning application for an hotel on the edge of Rutland water. If I have any reason to believe that the water authority or anybody else is allowed to believe that it can come along with proposals for developments all around Rutland water and that they will be supported on appeal by Ministers, I shall not put up my hand for the Bill. However, I do not believe such things because I have had assurances from my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State and from my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East.

Mr. Mullin: If I were the hon. Gentleman, I should not take such assurances too seriously. We had many such assurances in Committee and we did not take them seriously.

Mr. Latham: The hon. Gentleman can take them seriously or not, just as he likes. I am making this speech to put my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on notice that the Rutland people expect the Department of the Environment to defend the environment around Rutland water—[HON. MEMBERS: "Not in my back yard."] Opposition Members know nothing about Rutland water.

Mr. Ashby: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not the Rutland people but the Leicestershire people who will not accept that sort of development?

Mr. Latham: I thank my hon. Friend. I am glad that he drew a clear distinction between Leicestershire people and Rutland people, although the present Secretary of State for Wales tried to abolish the difference between the two in 1972 by that most regrettable reform of local government, which is not accepted in Rutland to this day.

Mr. Ashby: Will my hon. Friend accept that I am giving him my support?

Mr. Latham: I do not think that I shall give way to my hon. Friend again because he is worsening his chances of taking part in the debate, which I know that he wants to do.

If I may have the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, I repeat that the planning procedures must remain inviolate. Rutland district council has developed a Rutland water plan. The Leicestershire county structure plan does not agree with proposed development around Rutland water. If the planning procedures are to be the defence—I believe that they must be and that they are—I want assurances from Ministers that that is the way in which they wish to proceed.

Mr. Livsey: The National Rivers Authority, to which we are referring in terms of pollution in our discussions on new clause 1, is essentially an environmental protection agency. New clause 1 specifically attends to the question of the polluter paying.

The record on pollution is not good because 903 km of rivers were downgraded in the period 1980-85 and 2,800 km are biologically dead in the United Kingdom. In the last year for which recorded figures are available—1987—more than 20,000 pollution incidents were registered, but only 1 per cent. were prosecuted and only one case received the maximum fine of £2,000. When one considers that 20 per cent. of all sewerage works do not come up to standard, one realises that we face a serious problem.

The Government's past record on water authorities and their ability to bring the polluters to book is not a good one. I hope that the Bill will bring about improvements, especially under new clause 1, which insists that the polluters must pay for the environmental damage that they do. I wonder whether the Government really believe that that should happen or whether it is just an idea that sounds good but that cannot be adhered to in practice. I hope that it can be adhered to, because if we make the polluters pay, and if the NRA is effective enough to bring that about, there will be a vast improvement in the quality of our rivers. The new environmental protection agency—the NRA—is hopelessly underfunded and I do not believe that it will be in a position to carry out its environmental protection functions effectively.

8.45 pm

New clause 2 deals with contracting out. It is clear that that should not be allowed by the NRA. It would not be acceptable because if the water plcs are to carry out that contract work, it is obvious that we shall be back to having the gamekeeper and the poacher under the same roof. One could say that, by stealth, the plcs could carry out the contracting out functions for the NRA, but that would result in a hopelessly compromising situation. I hope that the Government will give us definite assurances that the water plcs will not be in that position post-privatisation and that they will not be doing the work of the NRA on environmental protection.

Much has already been said about the statutory water companies. There are many misconceptions about them, especially on the part of the Prime Minister, who has stated that a quarter of the industry is already privatised. Clearly, statutory water authorities do not operate in anything like the same way as the plcs will operate post-privatisation. When we learn that statutory water companies charge 25 per cent. less for their water than the water authorities, the reasons for that become clear. Part of the profit of the statutory water companies is, in law, recycled back to the consumer to reduce the price of water. That will undoubtedly be unscrambled when they become plcs, as can be seen from what has happened in terms of the recent water price increases from the statutory water companies, pre-privatisation, of between 30 and 50 per cent.

New clause 15, on producing an environmental plan, is excellent and will work specifically to protect the environment. Like many hon. Members who served on the Committee, and like many other hon. Members, I am an exceptionally keen angler. I like some aspects of new clause 15, which states that the NRA should be pro-active in developing angling resources and in increasing the productivity of our waters. Angling is undoubtedly an important recreation. We know that more than 3 million people enjoy it. As the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said, the unfortunate thing is that if those aspects are privatised, the price of angling will be prohibitive for local people.

I live in a constituency where most of the rivers cost £100,000 per mile and I know how galling it is to be brought up in such an area as an angler but to be unable to fish the river. My first opportunity to fish the river Wye in my constituency was at the behest of two brothers from Stoke-on-Trent who had made a lot of money and generously offered me the opportunity to fish the river. That was my only legal opportunity to fish the river Wye. In the past, such situations have caused great problems. We do not want the reservoirs of Wales to become unaffordable to local people. In the past, local people were able to fish some of our waters only by using hand grenades. That is very deleterious—it ruins fisheries and spoils people's enjoyment. However, it may again become the only way of catching fish, which would be most regrettable.

There must be proper provision, as in new clause 15, for restocking rivers with trout, salmon and other migratory fish. In this respect, it is particularly important, from an environmental point of view, to ensure that the compensatory flows from reservoirs keep rivers at levels that will cater adequately for fishing and other recreational interests. It is important that the plcs do not, through avarice and a desire for extra profit, take action that will lead to rivers drying up. That is what might happen as a result of lack of effective controls by way of compensatory flows. No doubt the NRA, given the necessary power, will ensure adequate compensatory flows from reservoirs into rivers.

New clause 20 deals with the vesting of land. The land ought to be transferred to the NRA—there is no question about that—but the House should know that, under this privatisation measure, 99 per cent. of it will go to the plcs. I regard that as an unsatisfactory state of affairs.

In the context of the NRA, we are talking about environmental protection. The water protection zones around our reservoirs ought to be in the hands of that body to ensure that pollution does not occur. The Government have no right to maximise the assets of the water authorities—assets that were given to those authorities in 1973. Now those are to be sold off. That is not a satisfactory state of affairs. In fact, under this legislation, approximately 10 per cent. of my constituency —66,000 acres—will be sold off. That is very worrying. The Welsh water authority owns 45,000 acres of the Elan valley, and 21,000 acres in the Brecon Beacons national park. The Government are selling off assets that they do not own, which amounts to misappropriation. The Elan valley originally belonged to Birmingham corporation and that water complex was brought about through the corporation's Water Act of 1892.

Mr. Pike: While the hon. Gentleman was referring to the disposal of land in his constituency, the Minister was shaking his head as though he did not believe that it was possible. If the Government really did not believe that there is any danger of the water authorities disposing of land, there is no good reason for their rejecting new clause 20, which would put the land in the ownership of the NRA but would allow the water authorities to operate exactly as the Bill proposes.

Mr. Livsey: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is quite right—that the NRA and the plcs could function adequately with the land in NRA possession. Indeed, that would be a far cleaner division of responsibilities than is proposed in the Bill.

I have referred to the Birmingham Corporation Water Act of 1892, under which the Elan valley complex was built. There is no doubt that the current situation is very worrying. When the water authorities were set up under the 1973 legislation, the assets were transferred to the Welsh water authority and certain payments were made to Birmingham corporation. Everyone appeared to be satisfied because there was local authority representation on the water authority, giving some democratic control of the situation, but all of that is to go by the board and the assets are to be sold. It is not surprising that the leader of Birmingham corporation says that he would like £500 million for those assets. After all, they were paid for years ago and have served the water consumers extremely well.

Important large assets ought to be transferred to the NRA. It is also important that local reservoir fishing rights, going back a very long way, should be safeguarded. They ought not to be sold off over people's heads.

For all those reasons, the amendments before the House should be accepted. There is a great deal of logic in them, and they would do much to improve the Bill.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I am delighted to take part in this debate—the longest today —because it will focus the attention of Parliament and the country on what ought to be one of the proudest achievements of this Parliament—the setting up, for the first time, of a national environmental protection agency, in the shape of the National Rivers Authority. That is something that no Government, of either party, has succeeded in doing. Government Members should welcome this long, four-hour debate, as an opportunity to say again and again that we are proud that, as the environment becomes more and more important in politics, we have taken this initiative, whereas no other Government has succeeded in doing so.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Can the hon. Gentleman explain why it is necessary to confiscate the people's water and land to create a National Rivers Authority?

Mr. Leigh: I simply turn that question on its head: if it was unnecessary, why did the last Labour Government do it? Does the hon. Gentleman seriously believe that, but for privatisation, we would have the resources to set up the NRA? Of course, the answer is no. It is because of the pressures created by privatisation that we are setting up the National Rivers Authority.

I accept that in the country there are some doubts about this measure. That is hardly surprising. There is bound to be some doubt about any new measure. If food had been

[Mr. Leigh]

nationalised by the Attlee Government, there would have been concern. If we had food queues, and if the Prime Minister were to suggest the privatisation of food, there would be worries in the country. But that would not make it wrong to privatise food distribution, and I think we could show that food retailers are no profiteers but actually provide an excellent service in respect of an essential commodity.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the functions of the National Rivers Authority are those which are necessary, which do not result in profit, and that if they had been left with the water authorities that would have been a bar to successful flotation? Is not that the only reason for the setting up of the National Rivers Authority? Is it not a fact that Lord Crickhowell, who is chairman of the National Rivers Advisory Committee and will be chairman of the National Rivers Authority, has said:

"I think I should make it absolutely clear that I see it as one of the priority objectives of the National Rivers Authority to operate a slim, efficient, cost effective organisation"?

What resources will it be given?

Mr. Leigh: The National Rivers Authority has to be set up because it is not right that private companies should regulate the affairs of other private companies.

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Leigh: I am sorry, but I cannot give way again. Other hon. Members want to make their contributions, and I am making a short speech.

When I go out into the country I always ask people whether they are entirely satisfied with the service they are getting from the nationalised water industry. The answer is, of course, that they are not. This week, I visited a small sewerage works in Welton, in my constituency, where there has been under-investment. The village is suffering from under-investment, and there have been delays in implementing what is quite obviously an essential scheme.

I do not want to make a party political point, but it has to be said—and it should be said again and again—that investment in sewerage was cut by 50 per cent. under the Labour Government. They did not do it deliberately. They were speaking the language of priorities. They did not want to cut investment in sewerage but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) said in his cogent speech, there are no votes in sewerage but there are plenty in hospitals and schools. The measure is necessary from an environmental point of view and also to attract private capital into an industry which has been underfunded historically and in which there has been under-investment.

9 pm

We have an excellent case to take to the country in arguing for a National Rivers Authority, in saying that poachers do not make the best gamekeepers, in saying that it is not right that the Government should set the standards and then provide the cash, and in saying that historically the Treasury has had more power in these matters than the Department of the Environment. We can say that again and again. As I said at the beginning of my speech, we can be proud of the fact that we are the Government who are setting up an independent, nationally funded and adequately funded national environmental protection council.

I can deal briefly with the Opposition's proposals. In regard to new clause 1, no one has mentioned clause 110, which deals with anti-pollution works and operations. I am sure that in replying to the debate my hon. Friend the Minister will make it clear that in clause 110 we have in legislation, for the first time so far as I am aware, a provision to enable the National Rivers Authority to carry out works and operations where it is likely that there has been pollution. In that clause we have the powers that are needed by the National Rivers Authority. New clause 1 is not needed. It is a debating device. All it has done is to enable my hon. Friends to debate what we want to debate —the NRA and what it will do to improve standards.

As regards new clause 2, it is suggested by the Opposition that the NRA will be in the pockets of the plcs. In the early days following vesting, there may be only one computer or other resource available for the NRA function and the plc function. Are the Opposition suggesting that the NRA should not be allowed to use that essential resource?

Neither new clause 1 nor new clause 2 makes sense. New clause 1 might not be enforceable. I can illustrate the point by referring to nitrates. What will happen if it is decided that nitrates are polluting land? Who should pay? Should it be the present generation of farmers, the farmers of a previous generation, or the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which encouraged farmers of previous generations to put nitrates on the land? New clause 1 is not practical. None of the amendments that the Opposition has placed before us makes sense.

I am not dogmatic about whether the ownership of land should rest in the hands of the NRA or the plcs. I simply pose one question: is it seriously contended that nationalised industries or nationalised bodies are necessarily better housekeepers or environmentalists than plcs? I am not convinced of that or that the planning process in areas of outstanding natural beauty is not fully equipped to deal with the problem.

In short, here we have an opportunity to go to the country with a good case. We should not be apologetic about the Bill. Tomorrow, if I am fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, I shall develop the argument to show that we have got an even better case to put on why, as well as setting up the National Rivers Authority, we should create strong, powerful, well-regulated plcs.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): It has been interesting to listen to Conservative Members airing their differences on the latest Government attempt to rob the people of public assets. It is particularly interesting to note that the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) has been the only hon. Member to give enthusiastic, unthinking support for what the Government are putting forward. With the exception of the hon. Gentleman, Conservative Members have all had reservations or qualms about various aspects of the Bill. That indicates to some extent the way in which the new clauses are being discussed against clear changes in public opinion. Our constituents are concerned about what the Government propose.

I made the point in Committee that one good thing that had come out of the progress of the Bill was that public opinion had changed and that there was increased public

awareness of the problems of pollution and other aspects of the water industry. The fact that the media have highlighted the issues is interesting. Newspaper after newspaper—all of them newspapers that support the Conservative party—has expressed the view in editorials that the Government should drop the legislation. They have exposed the fact that not only are there major problems because of pollution in our rivers and estuaries, but that the Government's legislation will worsen the position.

We have heard during the debate of divers at Torbay coming out of the water with condoms on their heads. We have heard about problems in other parts of the country. There has been frequent evidence from hon. Members of the NIMBY syndrome. We should also remember that this week we have had a major pollution problem in the English channel because a cargo of lindane has gone astray.

It is not just in the channel that we have these problems. Within the Yorkshire Water area there is evidence of lindane having been dumped in rivers and estuaries and of other dangerous toxic chemicals having been dumped in rivers and estuaries and of other dangerous toxic chemicals having been dumped in rivers beside populated areas. The way in which the *Yorkshire Post* has exposed in detail what has been going on in the area is commendable. That is how public opinion has been changed during the progress of the Bill. The people have learned exactly what is happening. One major concern has been that the polluters are getting away scotfree under the present system, but that will still be the case with the proposals put forward by the Government.

Pollution is likely to get worse as a result of the Bill. Indeed, it has been seen to deteriorate in the run-up to the privatisation of water. Over the past four years river pollution in Yorkshire has been getting progressively worse. During the 1980s there has been a frightening decline in the quality of our rivers. Figures have already been given in the debate. Ten per cent. of all rivers in Britain are biologically dead. That is a disgrace. The Government have been in power for nearly 10 years but they have been complacent. It is no excuse for them to blame previous Governments.

Mr. Boswell: The hon. Gentleman has said that 10 per cent. of the rivers of Britain are biologically dead. I take it that he is referring to rivers in classes C and D. Will he give the figure for Europe at large? Would it be 25 per cent. of the rivers in the same categories?

Mr. Hinchliffe: I am concerned with the Bill which relates to this country. We could spend all night talking about Europe. I am talking about the fact that 10 per cent. of our rivers are biologically dead. If the hon. Gentleman defends that, or if he is proud of it, I find that incredible. It is a disgrace that so many of our rivers are in that state.

In 1980, 12,500 pollution incidents were registered; in 1987-88, there were nearly 24,000. That is a huge increase in known incidents of pollution. Of course, as we all know, many pollution incidents are not reported. I made the point in Committee that I and many other hon. Members are receiving representations from constituents who are deeply concerned about the local aspects of the legislation.

I was contacted by the West Yorkshire canoe club which is based in Wakefield in my constituency. It asked me what I could do about the fact that many young people want to learn to use canoes but must travel 15 miles from the club to find a river that they can safely use. If a youngster tips out of a canoe into the river Calder in Wakefield, his or her health can be seriously affected. I live right next to the river Calder and young people ask me, "Why can we not fish in our local river? Why are there no fish? As a Member of Parliament, what will you do about it?"

Not long ago it was brought to my attention that the family of someone who had drowned in the river Calder was dissuaded from seeing the body because of the state of the body after being in the river for only a few hours. Those are the issues with which the Bill should be dealing, but it does not do so.

There is clear evidence in the preparation for privatisation that the Government have added to the problems that I concede have existed for a considerable time. Water authorities under the present Government are concerned with financial targets and not with targets to tackle pollution. The water authorities are concerned specifically with budgeting and not with the general issues about which my constituents are concerned in relation to the standard and quality of the rivers in their area. Artificially high profit targets have been set for the water authorities in a deliberate attempt to push up the profits prior to the industry being sold off, thereby making it attractive to potential investors.

Under the Government we have seen the lowering of capital spending and restrictions on borrowing powers, which have meant that it has not been possible to invest in tackling such problems as sewage effluent and other matters about which we are all concerned.

Even more alarming is the evidence during the past few months about the way in which applications for the relaxation of sewage discharge consents are encouraged by the Government to avoid legal wrangles that might complicate the selling off of this precious industry. I heard some time ago that the maximum number of relaxations that the Government would allow would be 1,000. I understand that that figure has now been exceeded. I should be interested to hear from the Minister the number of relaxation of sewage discharge consents. How many are there in each of our areas? Are they temporary or are they permanent? What investment is going into improving that sewerage——

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Mr. Hinchliffe: I saw the hon. Gentleman wander in. Other hon. Members have sat in the Chamber throughout the debate.

Mr. Devlin: I was here before the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate.

How temporary is a temporary discharge consent? How many are there throughout the country? What difference is that making to the quality of our rivers and the amount of pollution arising from sewage works in our rivers?

New clause 1 establishes the important principle of the polluter paying for the damage that he or she causes—and why not? It appears to be plain common sense that they should be made responsible. It is a straightforward reasonable way of making a polluter responsible for the damage that he causes.

Mr. Devlin: That is nonsense.

Mr. Hinchliffe: The hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to speak later. I object to such comments.

Mr. Devlin: Give way then.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I have said why I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman has just wandered in. He was not in the Chamber earlier. He has not heard what I have said.

Mr. Devlin: I was here before the hon. Gentleman was. I have been here all the time.

Mr. Hinchliffe: It is known that pollution is often a byproduct of highly profitable processes, so that the individuals concerned with serious pollution and such chemicals as I have mentioned in areas such as Yorkshire Water are frequently involved in profitable businesses and should be made responsible for the damage that they do to our environment. I believe that the charges faced by the polluters should reflect the extent of the damage that they have done. I do not see how anyone could object to that as a basic principle.

9.15 pm

This measure could reduce the effects of pollution more than any others in the Bill. It is pleasing to note that some Conservative Members support new clause 1. However, it will be resisted by the Government because it would mean in certain circumstances that the water plcs would be charged with meeting the costs of the environmental damage that they cause. As we know, at present it is the water authorities and the water companies that are among the worst polluters.

New clause 2 deals with another issue of serious concern to the Opposition and it was certainly discussed in great detail during the Committee stage. It provides for the subcontracting of certain aspects of the work of the NRA, possibly to the same people working alongside the water plcs. The fact that monitoring and control could be subcontracted to polluting plcs, or the same people concerned with the plcs' functions, indicates that the Government are not in any way serious about the role of the NRA, despite the comments made by such hon. Members as the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle, who says that the new clause is a great innovation by the Government. They have brought in a new body that will have a major impact on the environment. We know that the NRA was not proposed initially by the Government, because the Government favoured the water plcs being involved with self-regulation. The NRA was foisted on to the British Government by outside bodies. That is a fact that no one can contradict.

The Minister for Water and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hinchliffe: The Minister can shake his head, but everyone knows that that is the case. If it was not the case, why was it not included in the initial proposal that the Government brought forward? They have had plenty of time to consider the proposals in detail. The question of getting away from the poacher and gamekeeper issue is frankly nonsense, because the same situation could arise as that proposed in the Bill for subcontracting. I believe that it is the same as giving control of rat infestation to the rats. When we consider the proposals for subcontracting, we can see that it is essential to include new clause 2 in the Bill.

Despite what the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle said, the concept of the National Rivers Authority is completely alien to the philosophy of the Government, who believe in free play of the market and self-regulation. I support the NRA and I believe that it will be useful in the context of a publicly owned water industry. However, the NRA has been forced on the Government in order to get the measure through the House. The proposals on contracting out give the game away completely.

The Bill has been portrayed as a green Bill. If we consider the representations that we have received from various organisations with green concerns, outlooks and interests, it will be seen that it is not a green Bill, but a greed Bill. It is about the greed for profits and dividends. It is about a greed for personal gain. It is not about our environment and pollution, but about people making a fast buck. We should forget the green nonsense, because the Bill is all about greed.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I spoke in favour of the Bill at Second Reading and I have read and heard nothing since to make me change my mind. However, I was committed to other things and was not privileged to join the Committee. I was sad about that, because I was very interested in the Bill, having been privileged as a junior to be involved in much of the early work in the 18 months prior to the last general election. That is why I feel that I can say that when the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) moved what I suppose could be called environmental clauses, he was perhaps unjustly bidding for canonisation. He certainly cannot have been bidding for ministerial promotion—that is very unlikely. The hon. Member for Copeland gave the impression of wearing a halo as he moved this series of Opposition new clauses. If he thought he was wearing one, it was undeserved and, despite the remarks of the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can claim the credit for the National Rivers Authority.

When this measure was being researched and discussed in the last Parliament, the National Rivers Authority was not even under consideration. There was just a river basin entity, as my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) pointed out. I cannot agree with my hon. Friend because, in my view, the present Secretary of State felt that the environmental issues had to be separated out—that the commercial function had to be separated from the controllers and the legislators—and he made the right decision.

The new clauses are simply window-dressing to try to obtain for the Opposition, as the hon. Member for Wakefield tried to do, public acclaim for being interested in environmental issues and wanting the separation of the commercial from the environmental function. That separation is entirely the brainchild of the Secretary of State.

There seems to be no need for the opening subsection of new clause 1. Clauses 99, 100. 101 and 102 appear to fit the bill well. Clause 99 describes the waters that we are discussing; clause 100 sets out the form of classification; clause 101 gives the quality objectives; and clause 102 imposes the duties to maintain those objectives. Clearly, therefore, new clause 1(1) is unnecessary.

Subsection (2) of new clause 1 is equally unnecessary because clause 103 sets out the offences and procedures of

enforcement. Commentators outside have suggested that the punishments for breaches should be tougher. Perhaps the Minister will underline, when he replies, the power that the courts will have and the sort of punishments that are envisaged. That would help to put our minds at rest on that issue.

I see no reason for new clause 2, other than as a piece of window-dressing by which the Opposition seek to achieve some kudos from what the Bill already achieves. Subsection (1) of that new clause is already covered amply by the Bill. Subsection (2) is covered by clause 99 onwards in part III of the Bill. Subsection (3) of the new clause is covered by clauses 3 and 6 of the Bill. Clearly, therefore, we do not need new clause 2.

New clause 15 is really only clause 101 of the Bill but listed in enormous detail. The danger of listing on the face of the Bill the sort of detail that new clause 15 would achieve is that in due course, when the Bill is law, someone will say that something has been left out or forgotten. Clause 101(4) of the Bill deals with the whole subject in a more practical way because the House, through the Secretary of State, can vary the objectives at regular intervals, when hon. Members will have the opportunity to debate such changes to ensure that the public interest is protected.

When dealing with new clause 20, the hon. Member for Copeland seemed determined that the new plcs should not own any freehold land. I find that puzzling. Be they waterworks, buildings or just open land, those items will have to be valued and people will have to make a judgment about what might or might not happen in the longer-term —*[Interruption.]*—and that is the sort of judgment we must all make when we buy something.

I regret that the hon. Member for Copeland is not in his place. He seemed to suggest that the vast majority of the land that the water authorities will obtain is national park land. One might have believed, listening to him, that the water authorities will turn our national parks into housing estates. I understand—perhaps the Minister will make this clear—that only a small part of our national parks is owned by water authorities. Most of the land is privately owned, and I think that the Ministry of Defence owns a large slice of it. But whoever owns it, I can see no way by which planning consents will substantially change our national parks.

I hope that the Minister will reassure us on the question of access. In playing to the gallery, the hon. Member for Copeland, when referring to clause 7(5), referred to free access and free recreation. Britain's 4 million anglers already pay substantially for what they get. It is unfair to suggest that they are getting it free.

Mr. Allen McKay: British anglers pay a rod licence, not an access licence.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Let us not play with words. The hon. Member for Copeland, when referring to clause 7(5), sought to create the impression that after privatisation people would have to pay for things that they now get free. That is patently untrue and I believe the right hon. Gentleman knows it.

In short, it is perfectly clear that everything that is referred to in these new clauses is already adequately covered in the Bill. I therefore have no worries whatever about joining my hon. Friends in voting them down.

9.30 pm

Mr. Martlew: This is a terrible Bill and I am surprised that there are not more hon. Members in the Chamber tonight. I suspect that the reason is that they know that we do not have to worry too much about the Bill because, even if it becomes law, nobody will buy the shares. And they know, of course, as we come nearer a general election, that it is not worth buying them anyhow because we have to take water back into public ownership—*[Interruption.]* We have obviously upset hon. Gentlemen. We must have touched a raw nerve—which is more than the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) did.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman is telling us new things here because the last we heard from those on his Front Bench was talk about beefing up the regulation side but leaving the privatised supply absolutely alone. If he is telling us one thing and his hon. Friends on the Front Bench are telling us another, we need to be told which is the truth.

Mr. Martlew: I am delighted to reply to the hon. Gentleman. I think that the last time he intervened was in Committee and at that time, too, he was crawling. There is no doubt that the Labour party will take water back into public ownership.

In connection with the new clauses, I want to deal with two matters. One is the question of the contracting out of the National Rivers Authority functions and the other is the principle of the polluter paying.

We have already had a great deal of debate on the NRA. We do not believe that it will protect the rivers and water courses of this country, but we accept that it is better than nothing, and it is better than what the Government were proposing before. But we do not believe that the Government should be able to hand over the function of testing the rivers to the plcs. That worries us greatly because it is not a credible alternative for the plcs to do the work for the NRAs. There is an old saying that he who pays the piper calls the tune, but in this case that will not hold water—I am sorry about that. Especially in the North-West water area, there will not be the option for the NRAs to do their own testing because the decision has already been taken that the main laboratories at Dawson house in Warrington will be transferred to the plc. I deliberately asked the chairman of the North-West water authority about this when I visited Warrington last year.

Furthermore, no real attempt has been made to provide alternative laboratories for the new rivers authority; so there is no possibility of the NRA carrying out its own tests in the north-west. The only option it will have for the foreseeable future is to contract it out to the water plc, and that just is not credible. Even if the tests are carried out correctly and there is no hint of doubt, people will not believe this is so if the plcs are doing it.

At the sewage works in my own constituency there is a very good small, well-equipped laboratory for testing the effluent as it goes out into the river Eden. But that is to be transferred to the plc and that laboratory will do the testing for the NRA. That, again, has no credibility. The separation of the two about which we have heard so much from the Government and their supporters is a sham. It will not work. Nobody will believe that one body can be judge and jury. I only wish that the Secretary of State had taken the example of the Home Office and the way it dealt

[Mr. Martlew]

with the situation with regard to the police and the Crown Prosecution Service. They were divided and now have the Crown service dealing with the prosecution and the police dealing with the job of catching the criminals and arranging——

Mr. Mullin: Arranging the confessions.

Mr. Martlew: —arranging the convictions. I would not like to cast any aspersions on the working of our police force.

What we have here, instead of that, is the NRA giving the job of providing the evidence to the criminal. The water plcs will be taken to court but the job of providing evidence will also be given to them. Therefore, my guess is that not many of them will be taken to court and even fewer will be convicted.

I turn now to new clause 1 and the question of making the polluter pay. I agree with that. Too often large companies pollute our rivers and get away with small fines. None of their directors takes personal responsibility and yet they are often guilty of wilful neglect, the consequence of which can mean the killing of hundreds of thousands of fish in many miles of river.

Let us consider the way that companies are treated compared to poachers. Often, high fines or imprisonment are imposed on poachers who have taken 10 or 20 fish. I am not soft on poachers who get everything they deserve, but they do less damage to the rivers than do some of our major industries.

Mr. Pike: In the scenario that my hon. Friend has painted, is it not possible that some industrial polluters could invest in the water plcs? It would be cheaper for them to purchase a large stake in those industries rather than deal with the pollution. They could then carry out the tests for the NRA. Is not that how this Government intend privatisation to work?

Mr. Martlew: Obviously, my hon. Friend has been reading my notes. The polluters are not only likely to invest in the plcs but have already made an investment in the Conservative party. That is why there is some opposition to this clause, because it is well known that big business does not want it.

Pollution in my own area is usually caused by caustic soda, which is used by many industries. They fail to place fail-safe systems round the caustic soda tanks, somebody leaves the valve on and as a result thousands of fish die. In one case, a thousand gallons of fresh cream went down the river, which did not harm the fish but was not good for the print works further down.

Directors must be accountable for their companies' actions. Directors who are wilfully negligent should be brought before the courts and treated in the same way as poachers. We must ensure that when pollution occurs those responsible are not only fined heavily but made to pay the full cost of restocking the river and bringing it back to life. Some compensation should also be given to the angling clubs whose sport on the river is spoilt. That is the way forward.

However, I recognise that if we impose tight standards on factories that have been polluting rivers for many years —many such have been mentioned in the industrial north —it could well mean their closure. Unfortunately—I understand this view—people often prefer a polluted river to life on the dole. Therefore, in genuine cases grants should be made available to such companies to help them to stop polluting the rivers. If those factories are eventually forced to close, the Government will provide derelict land grants to clear the site and plant trees on it and, therefore, it surely makes sense to support those companies with a tradition of polluting the area and which cannot afford the necessary equipment. If the Government gave them financial assistance it would create better factories and clean rivers. I hope that the Minister will take up that point.

The agro-chemical industry also concerns me. More and more farms are causing problems which are not all the farmers' fault. Much of the slurry contamination must be the farmers' responsibility but many of the agro-chemicals —some of which are recommended by the Government —create problems. Only last week the *Hexham Courant* —not coroner—carried an article about an area not far from where I live in Alston. The headline reads:

"Cot deaths linked to sheep dip in river".

A scientist, Dr. Lewis Routledge, who has been monitoring the river Tyne, says that a problem could well result from Government-approved sheep dips running into the river and causing serious health problems to the local community. Within four hours of infected sheep dip going into the river it is running through taps in various parts of Newcastle. The Government should not alway blame the farmer when things go wrong.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield talked about biologically dead rivers—rivers that cannot sustain life. That is not strictly accurate: people may die, but rivers can be brought back to life. All that we need to do is spend money, give it time and have the necessary will. I do not think, however, that the clauses that we have talked about today will enable us to bring those rivers back to life. It is no good saying that the position is worse in other parts of Europe; I am interested only in rivers in the county that contains my constituency.

I have heard Ministers going on about being green. They are indeed green—like the scum on the top of a stagnant pond. The Bill should be taken seriously, and I believe that people will refuse to buy shares in the privatised industry with which it deals. I also believe that they will refuse to vote for this Government in the next election.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: It may be helpful if I say to hon. Members who are now rising that I understand that the Front-Bench Members will seek to rise at 10.20 pm. Will hon. Members bear that in mind so that all who wish to speak may do so?

Mr. Ashby: At the beginning of the last century, people got together to provide much-needed sewers in the cities to take away the effluent. Gradually, in the latter part of the century, the water authorities were built up, and provided the clean water that was so necessary to the urban environment. The sewerage undertakers were at first largely owned by the municipal authorities, while the water authorities were privately owned, later to be nationalised. The two came together in the 1970s. The history of the sewerage and water authorities contains a common theme. In the last century no one provided any real control or set sufficiently high standards for the water that was to be consumed.

It is a sad fact that over the same period of 80 or 90 years we have seen a decline in our waterways, which we all regret. We have seen many waterways die, and we have seen heavier pollution over the past 40 years in areas such as the Fens, much of it due to the deposit of nitrates some years ago. I remember going on the Broads some 30 years ago when they were alive. I remember the joy that I experienced fishing from a boat. I went there several times. I have not been recently, but I understand that it is no longer possible to fish from a boat because there are no fish. That is very sad.

The one theme that runs through the history of public water supply is that there has been nobody to set the standards and to enforce them. At long last, the Bill creates the National Rivers Authority to set standards and enforce them. The Opposition have said time and again that they would like to wave a magic wand so that those standards would be enforced immediately, but such things are not achieved by waving a magic wand or by willing the changes to occur, as has been suggested. Those standards will be achieved only by perseverence and education, by explaining to people, encouraging them and ultimately enforcing standards upon them.

9.45 pm

The National Rivers Authority will provide all that. It is necessary to set out a timetable and a scheme. We must know that after a given time all waterways will have to reach acceptable standards. The National Rivers Authority will have to set a five, 10 or 15-year scheme. All the changes are costly and will take time, but the National Rivers Authority will create a policy to clean up the country.

We all talk about green policies. The Opposition and the Government believe that it is necessary to control pollution and to improve the environment in our country.

Mr. Devlin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ashby: No, time is short.

We are being dogged by the Labour party's opposition to privatisation or profit and to the idea that any private company should own the land and provide the water. The Opposition have forgotten that over the past 80 years public companies have been the worst providers. For the past 80 years there has been a decline in standards and the public companies have been absolutely hopeless at preventing pollution. Only now are we experiencing the consequences of the nationalised industries and publicly-controlled authorities. They are absolutely hopeless for a number of reasons. They do not provide sufficient capital investment. I blamed the Labour Government in the 1970s because there was a decline of something like 50 per cent. because of the country's economy at the time, but all Governments have tried to restrict capital investment by public authorities. All Governments look at any profit made by a public authority and decide to take it back into the Treasury because it is needed for hospitals, tax cuts or some other reason. So the public companies and authorities have been starved of investment and have gradually declined.

The Bill provides us with the only opportunity to break out of the straitjacket. The National Rivers Authority will set the standards, but the Bill will also free those authorities from financial restrictions and allow them to invest. Nobody will want to invest in the public companies or buy shares in them unless they provide an ongoing investment to show that they are strong, powerful companies providing good water supplies, and so on. That would be a spur to higher standards and to the benefit of the community as a whole. Without such a provision, we shall have a stop-go process for years to come and there will be no improvement.

I was astounded when I heard that 65 per cent. of the sewage discharged into the sea in Wales was raw sewage. That is wholly unacceptable. I am looking forward to the NRA setting up a scheme and telling companies, "You cannot go on like this—you have 10 years to clean up your act and see that you discharge only clean effluent into the North sea, or you will be prosecuted thereafter." It is essential that we consider the matter in that way. Clause 110 is important and has my wholehearted support. I reject new clause 1.

Amendment after amendment was proposed in Committee, but when we examined them we found that they were meaningless because the same provisions were already in the Bill. We have heard only scaremongering from the Labour party and there has been little constructive opposition. The important point was made by an Opposition Member who said that the Bill had been well drafted and constructed, but that the one point to which he was opposed was privatisation. We are arguing about the NRA when, in effect, there is opposition only to privatisation.

The weakness of the drafting of new clause 1 can be seen when one looks at clause 110, which deals with the control of the National Rivers Authority over effluent and its powers to prosecute. It says:

> "Where the Authority carries out any such works or operations as are mentioned in subsection (1) above, it shall, subject to subsection (4) below, be entitled to recover the expenses reasonably incurred in doing so from any person who, as the case may be—
>
> (a) caused or knowingly permitted the matter in question to be present."

The person referred to is the one who allows the pollution to take place. Is that not exactly what is proposed in the new clause 1?

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ashby: No—other hon. Members wish to speak and I am about to finish.

Every amendment proposed today has been a graphic example of surplus, and a waste of time because the real opposition is to privatisation. The Bill is excellent and does not require amendment. It provides a strong National Rivers Authority which will do all that we require. For that reason, I shall vote against any amendments and will continue to support this excellent Bill.

Mr. Morley: We have had an admission of failure from the Conservatives today. We have heard a succession of speeches trying lamely to defend a Bill which seeks to put a natural monopoly into the hands of private companies and is a confession that the Government have failed to release the water companies from the wholly artificial straitjacket of financial restraint. There is nothing to stop the Government removing that straitjacket because the Chancellor of the Exchequer is knee deep in money with a £14 billion surplus, with which he intends to pay off the national debt. Some of that could easily have been directed towards the water companies for infrastructure investment. By admitting their failure, the Government are

[Mr. Morley]

throwing the water companies out into the private sector, where higher charges and higher revenues will be required to meet that investment. It is far more unfair to charge consumers, with no differentiation between those who can and cannot pay, than to raise money by way of taxation and surpluses.

The most recent opinion poll on people's attitudes towards water privatisation showed that 96 per cent. of the public were against it. The 4 per cent. in favour must all have been on the Conservative Benches today, lamely trying to defend the indefensible.

New clause 1 embodies the principle that the polluter pays.

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Mr. Morley: I shall not give way because time is short and others wish to speak.

On numerous occasions the Government have claimed to believe in the principle that the polluter should pay, so they should support the new clauses.

The *Yorkshire Post* inquiry found that 140 companies in the Yorkshire Water area were breaking the legal limits on discharges, but only four were prosecuted, although one company was discharging more than 800 times the legal limit. Other companies were found to be breaking the limit every time the water was sampled but were never once prosecuted. That could be put right by a determined Government, committed to environmental and green policies, rather than one following doctrinaire policies with the aim of privatising everything in sight without thought of the consequences for Britain's long-term future or its essential services.

New clause 20 has not been dealt with in any great detail. It deals with the control of the freehold of land which will be ceded to the new companies. That issue is the crux of the Government's privatisation policy. Is it the Government's intention that private companies should control water distribution, quality and sewage, or is it their intention that there should be yet another asset-stripping exercise involving all the land that goes with the water companies? There is no reason why the new water companies will need the freehold of such land to do their job properly. That includes operational land, catchment land, reservoir land, and land for sewerage works. The leasehold would be sufficient to enable them to do their job. If the freehold were held by the NRA, the future of that land would be safeguarded and there would be no attempt to asset-strip it or to develop it in ways that would be unsympathetic to the environment, destroying sites of scientific interest or denying people access to footpaths, whether for sporting activities such as fishing or walking or the many other activities which presently take place on water authority properties.

In supporting new clause 20, I am not speaking simply for myself, or even for the Labour party. The bodies that support new clause 20 range from the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Ramblers Association and various conservation groups. Even the National Farmers Union has expressed concern about the future of land held by water boards. It is concerned about the tenant farmers, many of whom rent or lease their land from the water companies, and who face a real threat.

The Secretary of State recently had to step in to resolve a row in north Yorkshire where the Yorkshire water authority was inviting bids for a valley occupied by tenant farmers. It was offered a bid by the chairman of Barratts over the heads of the tenant farmers. Under regulations and guidelines laid down by the Government, the Yorkshire water authority was under an obligation to accept the highest bid. Fortunately, the Secretary of State stepped in and allowed Yorkshire water authority to dispose of that land to the tenant farmers at the bids they put in, but the Secretary of State could do that only because he controlled the freehold of that land and had the final say over what happened to it. If that land was held by a plc, the company could dispose of it as it wished following privatisation. If the Government succeed, despite the problems that the Bill is in, the private companies could—quite logically from their point of view—simply take the highest bid, which would have been from the chairman of Barratts, and goodness knows what would have happened to the tenant farmers. Their livelihoods could have been wrecked and they could have been kicked out of farms where their families had lived for generations.

If the Government are serious about providing core services—that is what the Bill is all about—there is no reason why they cannot accept this group of amendments, including new clause 20, which will guarantee control over land use. Potential polluters will thus be eliminated and people will have some confidence in privatisation.

10 pm

That links in with new clause 15, which calls for a plan for water and the environment, which in turn fits nicely with new clause 20. There is a case for a National Rivers Authority, although it has been grossly undermined by the fact that it can, and in some cases must, contract out services such as the sampling and checking of water. That is the same argument as we have at the moment with integrated water management—the gamekeeper is also the poacher, which undermines the whole concept of the NRA. If the NRA is to be successful it must have resources. The comments of Lord Crickhowell, who is currently in charge, are a matter of concern because he talks about the need for a "slim" organisation. Two thirds of the NRA staff will be involved in flood defence, which leaves only one third to ensure pollution control and water quality as well as conservation management.

The conservation and leisure guidelines are full of weasel words and get-out clauses such as "will take note", "will have regard to", "if possible" and "where convenient". It is not a tight code to ensure conservation management and leisure access and to defend permissive rights of way. It has no teeth and I suspect that the resources to be given to it will also be inadequate for it to do its job properly.

If the Government are serious about conservation and the management of areas of outstanding natural beauty, which many of the water companies will inherit, of sites of special scientific interest, and of the voluntary nature reserves, into which people have put many years of effort and concern, they ought to accept these clauses, which will ensure that those who despoil our environment have to pay to clean it up. In my constituency Bottesford Beck, an area south of Scunthorpe, was recently polluted—probably by British Steel, although I make no accusation because the Severn-Trent water authority has not yet

replied to my letter to tell me who is the culprit—and whoever despoiled that stream in Bottesford ought to pay to clean it up. As my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) has said, people caught poaching are given quite punitive fines, but those who ruin a river are given derisory fines and nothing in the Bill demonstrates the Government's will or commitment to tackle the problem and to ensure that those who despoil our environment pay to put it right.

I have no confidence in the Bill as it stands or in the way the Government are handling it. I certainly have no confidence in the Secretary of State or in his guarantees about the quality of our rivers and the protection of our environment, and I believe that the public also have no confidence in the Government or their privatisation proposals.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I had been intending to keep the comments which I wanted to share with the House until we reached my new clause 11. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) said something which was inaccurate. Because some people know him to be a barrister, they might reasonably have supposed that he had read both new clause 1 and clause 110 when he said that they were—I think that I quote his words—exactly the same. They are not exactly the same. New clause 1 is mandatory. Clause 110 of the Bill is merely permissive. If anyone cares to read the Bill for themselves they can see it. Clause 110 of the Bill is entitled "Anti-pollution works and operations" and says that if an individual or body corporate causes pollution, the authority shall be entitled to carry out the following works, and later on it shall be entitled to recover the expenses.

That is a discretionary power, which is not exactly the same—I repeat that it is not exactly the same—as what is in, I think, the excellent new clause 1, which makes it mandatory and not discretionary. It states that

"it shall be the duty of the Secretary of State and of the Authority to ensure that in all reasonable circumstances the person who causes any pollution of a river or other water source, whether that person is a body corporate, water or sewerage undertaking or an individual, shall bear the cost of remedying that pollution and of taking steps to prevent any recurrence."

It is necessary to point out to the House that there is an unfortunate distinction, which is a very real difference, between the new clause that we are debating tonight and what is already in the Bill. It is not a duplication of what is in the Bill. It is a transference of the discretionary into the compulsory. That is particularly important in the circumstances to which some hon. Members have alluded—for instance, where the NRA may actually sub-contract some of its functions to a body which has already proved itself hopelessly lacking in will to prosecute. If it is lacking in will to prosecute, will it be lacking in will to recover under discretionary powers?

On the basis of experience to date, certainly, the subcontracted body will not, and we have yet to know whether the National Rivers Authority will. I, of course, hope that it will, but the track record of the alkali inspectorate to date is not such as to give one complete confidence that even an independent body will use its powers to prosecute or, in this case, to recover costs, if it is discretionary to it whether it does so or not.

For those reasons, I think that new clause 1 would effect an improvement in the Bill rather than merely duplicate that which is already in it.

I will not say any more, because it is my hope that we may reach later on—indeed, immediately after this series—new clause 11 which would, if we ever reach it, have the result of transferring by way of interest-free loan the proceeds of privatisation to the works necessary to meet the EEC anti-pollution requirements for water and sewerage instead of those costs falling on the user by way of increased charges, either to pay for the works in the first place or to pay the interest and then repay the principal of loans. But of course I would be in danger of straying out of order if I pursued that further at this moment.

Mr. Mullin: These new clauses do not challenge the principle of privatisation, to which we are unshakably opposed. The clauses mitigate the disastrous effects that hon. Members on both sides of the House believe will result from the privatisation of water. They are, in a way, a test of Government rhetoric. The Government, at all levels, continually insist that they believe, in principle, in the aims of the clauses, yet when it comes to it they always advise Conservative Members to vote against them.

New clause 1 deals with the attempt to enshrine in legislation the principle to which everyone seems to pay lip service, that the polluter should pay. Until now, the underlying principle has been that the consumer pays. That is likely to remain the case unless the Bill is amended because, as the Secretary of State acknowledged earlier, the water authorities are among the biggest polluters. The outrageous behaviour of Yorkshire Water has been adequately exposed in the *Yorkshire Post*. In the area of Northumbrian Water, which is closer to the area that I represent, 36 of the 190 sewerage stations were in breach of the limits in 1986. That is not a very hopeful sign of what might happen after privatisation.

In the area covered by Anglian Water an exciting new concept in pollution has been developed, called the sewage lagoon. Anglian Water has been putting its untreated sewage into the sea. Now, it has done a deal with several Suffolk farmers to dig deep and large lagoons in their fields. It will sink untreated sewage into them. The authority tried to persuade Essex county council to do that, but the county council, God bless it, would have none of it. But in Suffolk they are made of weaker stuff. These large lagoons will cover 40 m by 30 m and be 2·5 m to 3 m deep. A 6 ft high chain-link fence will surround them. It will take 125 lorries to fill them with 500,000 gallons of sewage. The objective is that the content of these lagoons will be sprayed over the fields, which will take 10,000 to 20,000 gallons per acre.

I believe that the first of these sewage lagoons will be at the village of Troston. The sewage is being delivered in unmarked lorries, despite the trouble taken by Anglian Water to design a logo for them. It is not very proud of this particular enterprise. It seems to be in a rush, as no doubt the authority wants to get this out of the way before the National Rivers Authority is functioning. Other lagoons are proposed at Nactow and at Sizewell, to go with its nuclear power station, and at Alderton, which I believe is a heritage coastal village. Those areas are not represented by Opposition Members, but by Conservative Members, so in due course perhaps we can expect to hear something from them. No doubt their constituents who live in those areas will be mightily upset. It does not take a great deal

[Mr. Mullin]

of imagination to understand the dangers to the water supply, not to mention the smell, that the new sewage lagoons will have if one happens to have one in one's backyard.

10.15 pm

As we know, there has been a long history of inactivity on the part of all the water authorities in prosecuting offenders. I shall refer again to the example of Northumbrian Water. Between 1980 and 1986 it prosecuted just seven out of 4,272 breaches of the sewage regulations. That inactivity over a long period is now combined with an arrogance and excessive and obsessive secrecy that does not inspire confidence in the plans for the future after privatisation.

In addition, some of the biggest polluters will be buying shares in the new privatised water companies. Indeed, some are already represented on the boards. They have been put there courtesy of the Secretary of State, who has turfed off elected local councillors and put in, in Northumbria for example, Mr. Norman Pryn who, if one runs one's eye down the list of directors of Northumbrian Water, one discovers to be the deputy group secretary of ICI Billingham, which we all know in the north-east to be one of the major polluters. As one runs one's eye further down the list one runs across the name of Mr. Ralph Iley, who turns out to be the group development director of the Cookson Group plc, which has nothing to do with travel or romantic novels; it is a chemical company.

I cast no aspersions on those two gentlemen—no doubt they do their jobs to the best of their ability—but there is a clear conflict of interest that will be obvious to every hon. Member and to every person of goodwill between the interests of privatised water company and those of the polluter. It is not good enough for the polluters to get a major stake in our industry, which is what now seems to be about to happen. The only way to inspire confidence is to create a strong and genuinely independent National Rivers Authority with the power and the resources to impose serious penalties.

New clause 2 addresses the question of the NRA, when it is set up, contracting back some of its key functions to the water authorities, the activities of which it is supposed impartially to be supervising. This matter came up in Committee on 10 January. I quoted then to the Minister the words of Mr. Bob Smith, who is the director of operations at Northumbrian Water, who told a staff meeting in December that Northumbrian Water would be bidding for many NRA contracts, including the control room, maintenance of telemetry on weirs; the radio system; vehicle maintenance; buying fish; the berth of the fisheries protection vessel; administering the salaries of the NRA staff and, above all, that it proposed to bid for laboratory services. In other words, the samples that will be taken from the polluters that we have been talking about will be tested in the laboratories of the organisation that may well be doing much of the polluting.

When that was mentioned in Committee on 10 January, it brought a number of assurances from Ministers. They said that it was a legitimate point and that we must all think seriously about it. However, when one talks to the staff of the proposed NRA—that is difficult these days because they are scared having received lots of warnings about threats to their jobs—they are not at all confident that the NRA will be independent.

The opportunities for the manipulation of samples are manifest and obvious. They include the time at which one takes the samples, the number of samples taken, whether one's results are published in gobbledegook that is incomprehensible to the average citizen, and what action it is proposed to take.

The Northumbria branch of the NRA will be housed in the same building as the Northumbrian water authority. There will be a close overlap between the managements, and there is already a question of a lack of resources. I am told that the tentative NRA set-up in the Northumbrian water authority area has already asked for greater frequency of sampling and has been told—in the words of one potential member of the NRA staff—to "Sod off." I am told that, even as we sit here, the Northumbrian water authority is looking for ways of reducing consents, and that there is now being drawn up a list of works where standards can be varied without spending any more money. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), in his introductory remarks, rightly recalled—as it pays us all to recall, at regular intervals—the immortal words of Mr. Keith Court, who comes from the home of what we now know as the Camelford poisoner. Mr. Court said that he wanted the best staff because he wanted them to outwit the regulators. If the National Rivers Authority is to enjoy public confidence, it must be seen to be independent of those whose activities it is supposed to be supervising.

New clause 15 raises the most central question of all: what kind of body is the National Rivers Authority supposed to be? Will it be just another toothless Tory quango in the great tradition of the Police Complaints Authority or the Press Council, to become, in due course, the object of public ridicule? Or will it be an independent organisation, free of vested interests, a body with the resources and the will to face up to what we all know to be a major national problem? I have to say that the signs are not auspicious. The Government offer us a lot of interesting rhetoric. Some of us can agree with that rhetoric from time to time, but will it be matched by action? These new clauses contain nothing that contradicts the Government's principle of privatisation, but they put to a severe test the rhetoric about the circumstances in which privatisation will take place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) should not be reading a newspaper in the Chamber.

Mr. Ridley: In my opinion, my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) got it right: throughout the debates on this Bill the Opposition have failed to find any flaws in it. Instead, they have resorted to highly dubious, irrelevant and misleading stunts and scare stories to try to muddle the public and themselves. Indeed, the paucity of thought among Opposition Members that brings these four new clauses up for debate is an absolute tribute to the draftmanship of the Bill. Two of the new clauses are totally unnecessary, and the other two are totally undesirable.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) came in again with his stale, dog-eared file of old quotes, leaks and cooked figures, to which he has treated us ever

since the Bill appeared. He even got a leak, about which he boasted to *The Guardian*, by squinting at his neighbour —one of my civil servants—and reading the papers on his lap. That is the standard of the information that the hon. Gentleman stoops to, and it is typical of him.

Dr. Cunningham: For the sake of greater accuracy, in which the Secretary of State is not interested, perhaps he had better be clear and have it on the record that it was not I who observed on the lap of one of his civil servants the minute which said that all the substance had been removed from his speech. It was someone else who observed it and who conveyed the information to me.

Mr. Ridley: I accept that. It only confirms my view that *The Guardian* is not an accurate newspaper because what I quoted is what *The Guardian* said.

The hon. Member for Copeland has got us into a muddle. On Second Reading he said:

"I say, without any hesitation, that a Labour Government would not allow private monopolies in water to exist—and we shall take them into public ownership."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 345.]

The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) foolishly relied upon that. The only way to discover the policy of the Opposition is if, by chance, it is leaked. It is extraordinary. Their policy is kept so secret that nobody knows what it is until it is leaked. It was leaked to *The Sunday Times* last weekend. I shall be happy to tell the hon. Member for Carlisle what his policy is. He does not know, but I am in the privileged position of being able to tell him. I quote again:

"Instead of renationalising the companies, Labour would create new regulatory bodies with tough new powers and force the industries to improve their services."

That is why we have the demonstration of the new-found realism in the four new clauses; it is to substantiate what the Labour party is trying to maintain—that it now believes in private ownership, together with——

Mr. Martlew *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I shall give way, but I want to finish the point.

Therefore, we come to the NRA. I have to tell the hon. Member for Copeland that I thought up the NRA and announced it before the last election when he did not even know how to pronounce the word "environment". He had never heard of it. For him now to suggest that the NRA should be stiffened in some way in order to show that his credentials are better than they are is absolute rubbish. The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) suggested that the NRA was being foisted on the Government. I can tell him that I foisted the NRA on him. I am delighted that he is so pleased to see it.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) and Leicestershire, North-West, who were right to welcome the creation of the NRA and to believe that it was perhaps the most important environmental protection agency, if I may coin a phrase, that has ever been put before the House. That is how I see it.

Mr. Allan Roberts: If it is such a powerful environmental agency, why is the Secretary of State allowing it to subcontract its regulatory functions back to the private water companies, thus recreating the gamekeeper and the poacher being one and the same again?

Mr. Ridley: I will come to that. I am trying to answer every point made in the debate. If hon. Members do not interrupt, I will have more chance of doing so.

The other muddle that the hon. Member for Copeland tried to put across was that higher standards are required. The Opposition accept that, but then they try to blame the resultant higher costs on privatisation. Privatisation in itself will tend to reduce costs, but I have never denied that higher environmental standards will increase them. In fact, I have gone out of my way from the beginning to make that clear.

I can perhaps help the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). He asked me to confirm what I said before. I will. As I said on Second Reading, an initial estimate of the additional cost to the water authorities of the compliance programmes now required under the European Community drinking water directive, the EC bathing waters directive and the sewage treatment works discharge consents under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 is approximately £2·4 billion. That is equivalent to an extra 7·5 per cent. to 12·5 per cent. in real terms in financial costs over the next 10 years. That is little more than 1 per cent. per year in real terms. As I have said, that is over and above the increases that would have been required without those additional programmes. That is just a ready reckoner so that the hon. Gentleman can assess its scale. He said that he thought that it would cost £1 billion for the country. My best estimate is £2·4 billion, and even that comes out only at the figure that I have quoted.

Mr. Wigley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ridley: Quickly, as I have much more to say.

10.30 pm

Mr. Wigley: I should be grateful for a quick answer. When the right hon. Gentleman made his statement on Second Reading before Christmas, was he not suggesting that the overall increase in costs would be more than 12·5 per cent.? That was most certainly the interpretation of the papers referred to in the *Financial Times*.

Mr. Ridley: It is a quick reference point in the hon Gentleman's memory.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) was a little unfair, because he said that the South West water authority's prices had gone up by 92 per cent. since the beginning of the decade. In fact, that relates to the cash figure. In real terms, the figure is about 23 per cent. That would have been a more accurate figure for him to quote.

I would like to say a word in reply to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), because I cannot allow him to cast aspersions upon the validity of the Bill to protect the interests of fishermen. Fishing is a sport that both he and I pursue. He expressed fears that reservoirs would be commercially exploited to the detriment of local angling bodies. With clause 7, we impose a duty on the companies to put their waters to best use for recreation, and we make clear in the code of practice that that means meeting a wide range of interests and protecting the proper interests of existing established users. Those duties are enforceable under clause 19, and the Secretary of State of the day must have regard to how

[Mr. Ridley]

far the code has been followed in exercising his enforcement powers. If he neglects to do so, he is open to challenge in the courts.

I shall refer the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney to clause 151 of the Bill. That provides that where the Secretary of State approves an order authorising works in connection with the construction or operation of a reservoir, he may include in that order requirements for the provision of recreational facilities for local people. I hope that that gives him the reassurance that he sought.

Mr. Rowlands: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. However, will he simply tell us that there is no way that our reservoirs can become the subject of commercial bidding, as our river waters have become?

Mr. Ridley: I hoped that the protections that I have set out would have the exact effect——

Mr. Rowlands: Yes or no?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, that is right.

I confirm to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) that the planning procedures that at the moment protect land in many parts of the country, especially near Rutland water, will remain inviolate and will continue in force in exactly the way that he has asked. I hope that that is the assurance that he seeks, but I shall be delighted to confirm it in writing if he wishes.

Mr. Allan Roberts: It is not in the Bill.

Mr. Ridley: Planning is not part of the Bill. My hon. Friend asked me a question and I have just as much right to answer it as any other question.

New clause 15 would require the NRA to prepare and publish at some unspecified time in the future a plan for the carrying out of its functions. Some 15 functions are mentioned and, although they are all worthy, one could make the list as many or as few as one liked. However, making plans betrays a lack of urgency. Opposition Members are under the naive fallacy that to produce a plan is to solve a problem. Above all, there is that detachment from the real world of events and actions.

The amendment is pure 1970s or even before. It reminds me of the late Lord George-Brown and his famous national plan. It resulted in inaction. I believe that action is important. In any event, it is not appropriate for a body such as the NRA. Many of its key functions are those of a regulatory authority, responding to applications from others and policing their activities. It must be reactive, able to respond to events, whether they are pollution incidents or flooding emergencies.

One speaker after another from the Opposition Benches wondered whether the NRA would be tough enough and quick enough to move in. If it spent the next five years producing a plan, it would not be tough and quick enough to do that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) rightly pointed out, the fear is that the NRA will have too much power—the mortmain of the industry, he called it—and I was happy to hear the balance between both sides of the House on whether we had the powers of the NRA right. I firmly believe that we have.

I was delighted by the quick mind of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), and the fact that I was able to assure him—as I shall assure my hon. Friend the Member of Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) shortly—that the precise points of new clause 1 are covered by provisions already in the Bill. With characteristic loyalty and enthusiasm, my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch said that he would not be prepared to break his word to the Patronage Secretary and vote against the clause. I was wondering whether, if I said that I supported the clause, he would then vote against it. That is the logic of his position, but as my hon. Friend is not in his place, I need not pursue that further.

The new clause has two subsections. Subsection (1) simply states that the provisions in clause 3, part I of the Bill, for controlling and reducing pollution shall have effect for the purpose of controlling and reducing pollution. I do not argue against that. The Labour party has rightly grasped what the Bill is about. Subsection (2) of the new clause is designed to ensure that, where possible, he who causes pollution pays to have it cleaned up and to prevent it from happening again.

The two subsections have one thing in common: they are both unnecessary, and I need not delay the House beyond the one point that my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton raised. Subsection (1) is little more than a tautology, since the purpose of the control of pollution provisions in chapter I of part III of the Bill is, by definition, controlling pollution. What is more, our declared objective of controlling pollution and improving water quality is built in, clearly and inescapably, to the legislation itself.

Thus, under clause 102, the Secretary of State and the NRA have the duty to exercise their powers under chapter I so as to achieve the statutory objectives set under clause 101. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton had seen clause 101 but had not realised its inter-reaction with clause 102. In the words of clause 101(1), these objectives—which will be set after public consultation—will be

"For the purpose of maintaining and improving the quality of controlled waters".

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: My point was not about the objectives but about whether forcing the polluter to pay was discretionary or mandatory.

Mr. Ridley: That is the point I just answered. There is a duty under clause 102 to make the NRA achieve the statutory objectives set out in clause 101. So it is mandatory, not discretionary.

New clause 2 is designed to deal with contractual agreements between the NRA and the undertakers. I see no reason why these two bodies should not contract between each other, or indeed why the river authorities—the river companies, as they will be—should not contract with the NRA, except in those cases where it would affect the NRA's ability to be clear about standards or to engage in prosecutions.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak) *rose——*

Mr. Ridley: May I finish my point, then I will give way to my hon. Friend?

The hon. Member for Carlisle was particularly concerned about laboratory work and taking samples. I see no reason why contractual arrangements with the plcs

should not include laboratory work provided that there are adequate safeguards to ensure the independence of the NRA.

The hon. Gentleman may not have noticed, but the NRA advisory committee has already put forward a set of safeguards, which we have endorsed. First, all samples must be collected by NRA staff or under direct NRA control. Secondly, there must be guaranteed anonymity of samples so that there can be no question of a person doing the analysis knowing where the sample has come from. Thirdly, there must be proper arrangements for independent audit or cross-checking so that there are frequent checks that the work is being done to the NRA's specification. That is the requirement that he and the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) properly seek and that I am able to give as part of a published document for their benefit.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): On the specific point of the way in which samples are analysed, the Secretary of State has said that there will be anonymity of samples. Surely the laboratories of the water companies will already have their own samples from their own outflows and will know which samples come from those outflows. So there will not be anonymity as far as the technicians from those laboratories are concerned.

Mr. Ridley: That is not true. The NRA has made sufficient arrangements from its own laboratories to be able to safeguard precisely the point that the hon. Lady has raised.

I come finally to new clause 20——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ridley: I have only three minutes left.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I asked my right hon. Friend to give way earlier and he said that he would do so.

Mr. Ridley: I hope my hon. Friend will understand. He has not been present during the debate and I have to reply to other hon. Members who have spoken.

New clause 20 is an act of land nationalisation proposed as a new clause on Report by the Opposition. It is indeed an extraordinary proposition: that we are able to trust a company, subject to the full and proper regulation which we shall provide, to provide drinking water and dispose of sewage—functions of great importance—but we cannot trust it to own an acre of land. Just as the provision of water and sewerage services will be regulated, so already——

Dr. Cunningham: The Secretary of State says we cannot trust private enterprise to own an acre of land. It is not quite that simple. We are talking about selling to private enterprise 500,000 acres of land in national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and sensitive environments. The Opposition certainly do not trust private enterprise to look after that well.

Mr. Ridley: I am absolutely delighted that this Bill achieves the privatisation of nearly 500,000 acres of land. I am sure that my hon. Friends are just as pleased as I am. I can well understand the hon. Gentleman's sourness and chagrin that his backdoor nationalisation plan to get hold of this land is frustrated by this Bill—*[Interruption.]* This is what it is all about. It is about the Opposition wishing to nationalise as much land as possible. They have not heard of planning permission. They have not understood that land cannot be developed without planning permission, whether it belongs to a water authority, a privatised water company, the Government or a private individual. To ignore the strict paraphernalia of planning controls, particularly in a national park, shows the ignorance of the hon. Member for Copeland and the Labour party. Does the hon. Member for Copeland really want to change the NRA into a vast property company which is able to develop or sell land?

The Labour party's motive is not to protect the land —if that were so it would opt for planning. Its motive is to keep in public ownership as much land as it can. Clause four rides again—new clause 1 will kill it.

10.45 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor: As the Prime Minister might say, the case for the Bill has been badly presented—again. The Secretary of State chose not to serve on the Standing Committee on the Water Bill, so today was his first opportunity since Second Reading to make an impact on the Bill. Following his performance this evening, we well understand that he can have a negative impact on the Bill and I wish him and his Minister well for any future opportunities that they have to present it to the country. The more the Government talk in the terms used by the Secretary of State today, the more the Opposition will benefit from the Government's privatisation plans.

Perhaps we should not be too surprised at the Secretary of State's contribution. The Prime Minister recently praised him for being a brilliant artist and civil engineer. I cannot comment on his artistic talent—my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) assures me that he is a good artist—but I trust that in his retirement he will find plenty of time to practise that hobby. I was interested to read in the *New Civil Engineer*, the magazine of the Institution of Civil Engineers, that the Secretary of State —*[Interruption.]* The Prime Minister has been talking about the Bill and about the Secretary of State's talents. As we missed him in Committee, we should spend a minute——

Sir Anthony Grant: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is this relevant to the new clause?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) will have regard to what has been said.

Mrs. Taylor: I have a great deal of regard to the relevance of civil engineering to the water industry. As one who is married to a civil engineer and knows the work of the profession in this industry, I was interested to read that the Secretary of State has not been a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers since the 1970s. Clearly, the Prime Minister is nearly as far behind the times as the Secretary of State.

I shall return to the specific amendment about which the Secretary of State eventually said a word or two. The Opposition support the new clauses because they wish to strengthen the National Rivers Authority and to make it work in practice. We should not forget how the NRA came about. When the Secretary of State spoke earlier, it seemed as though his mind was playing tricks on him. He seemed to think that the NRA had emerged from his own mind, with no suggestions from anyone else. Perhaps he has

[Mrs. Taylor]

forgotten that the original water privatisation proposals made no mention of the National Rivers Authority. It was only when the Labour party and other environmentalist and conservationist groups put pressure on the right hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Lady must do better than that. She may not be aware that I did not make the original proposals.

Mrs. Taylor: The right hon. Gentleman is right about that, but he took them over and I did not notice him dissenting from the original Conservative proposals. Anyone who believes that the Government or their Ministers are green has a lot to learn. I am sure that, on reflection, the Secretary of State—and certainly the Minister—will wish that these privatisation proposals had suffered the same fate as the previous ones, and had been withdrawn late one Thursday evening to put Ministers out of their misery.

The National Rivers Authority was introduced into the proposals only to make them less unpalatable, and to appease all the interest groups which were so opposed to them. At present the authority is not strong enough. Opposition Members are not alone in saying that. Anglers, environmentalists, conservationists and the Council for the Protection of Rural England—all of whom have studied the Bill carefully—agree with us, as do one or two Conservative Members. They support the principle of the NRA but feel that it is too weak.

There is no doubt about the need for a strong body to counter the pollution problem. Incidents of pollution have doubled in the past 10 years under the present Government, and river quality has declined for the first time since records began. We feel—this is why we have tabled new clause 1—that it is time to get tougher with the polluters and to stop turning a blind eye to the problem.

We have heard this evening of problems in many different parts of the country. I consider my part of Yorkshire to be typical. Last year, 140 companies broke their consents with regard to pollution. Many of them were big companies such as British Steel, British Coal, BP, Tarmac and many large chemical firms. Some exceeded their permitted limits by 100 times, but only a tiny fraction were prosecuted. As the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) pointed out, on a national basis only 1 per cent. are prosecuted.

Mr. Ridley: To a large extent I agree with the hon. Lady, but if she wants those things put right, why does she oppose the Bill when that is what it will do?

Mrs. Taylor: The Secretary of State is well aware of the offer that the Opposition have made, and have repeated on several occasions. We will support the establishment and, indeed, the strengthening of the National Rivers Authority because that, rather than privatisation, is the way to deal with pollution.

In recent years many polluters have made the simple decision that it is cheaper to flout the law—even if they are caught—than to invest in avoiding pollution. We all pick up the bill in our water rates while the polluter gets off lightly. The Government's attitude, agreed with the water authorities, has been to try to persuade the polluters to be good boys, but that strategy simply has not worked. Now the Government are pushing it further by not allowing the National Rivers Authority to take decisions. The Government are pre-empting the role of the NRA by inviting water authorities to reduce standards of sewage treatment plants in advance of privatisation and the establishment of the NRA.

In a letter dated 21 November 1988, the Department invited water authorities to apply for relaxations for many treatment plants which were breaching consents. Last month, a near-frantic letter pleaded with local authorities to submit plans not for the improvement of those treatment plants but for relaxations to let treatment plants in breach of consents off the hook. Although we questioned the Minister frequently in Committee, he has given no date by which he guarantees that improvements in those treatment plants will be achieved. In all our discussions in Committee and in the answers that the Minister has been forced to supply, little attention has been paid to the reasons why sewage treatment plants are unable to meet their targets and are breaching their consents. It is often trade effluent which overloads the system. New clause 1, which establishes the principle that the polluter pays, will help to prevent that. On selected occasions Ministers have used and promoted that principle, but they are not consistent and cite it only when it suits them.

Some Conservative Members have reservations about the principle that the polluters should pay. This evening we learned that the hon. Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw) has reservations even about the existence of the National Rivers Authority. That is not surprising as he is chairman, or at least a member of the privatisation steering committee which has been advising and assisting the Conservative-appointed chairmen of the water authorities on how to deal with privatisation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland pointed out earlier, the water chairmen are gearing up for privatisation. It is therefore not surprising that the hon. Gentleman resists new clause 1. A letter from the secretary of the Water Authorities Association states:

"Any further strengthening of the regulatory framework now put forward would have significantly adverse consequences for the successful management of the privatised company."

The CBI has been briefing Conservative Members and its latest brief makes clear what it wants:

"We are seeking to ensure that the Government does not create a situation which would be completely unacceptable to all those discharging trade effluents".

That gets to the nub of the Government's resistance. A strong NRA and a strong regulatory framework will affect profits. The hon. Member for Pudsey was more honest than the Minister about that.

Perhaps the Secretary of State was more honest than he has been throughout the proceedings of the Bill when he intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland. When my hon. Friend referred to new clause 20, which suggests that the water authorities' land should, if privatisation goes ahead, pass to the National Rivers Authority, rather than to the water companies so as to ensure that the land stays in the public sector, the Secretary of State asked what was to stop the NRA developing the land. His first thought was not whether the Bill would provide better protection for the land, but whether the NRA would be able to develop the land. The Bill is about making money out of developing that land. The Secretary of State let the cat out of the bag this evening. He should

retitle the Bill because it is not about water privatisation, but about the privatisation of the assets of the water authorities.

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order [6 February] and the Resolution this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair,* That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 222, Noes 316.

Division No.126] **[11 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adley, Robert
Allason, Rupert
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek

Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Haynes, Frank
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Stuart
Hood, Jimmy
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 2

REGIONAL RIVERS ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Amendment made: No. 9, in page 3, line 14, at end insert 'and it shall be the duty of the Authority in determining the regions for which advisory committees are established and maintained to ensure that one of those regions consists wholly or mainly of or of most of Wales'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 3

TRANSFER OF THE WATER AUTHORITIES' FUNCTIONS ETC.

11.15 pm

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I beg to move amendment No. 113, in page 3, line 36, at end insert—

'(1A) No scheme made under Schedule 2 to this Act shall have effect where it would operate to terminate, vary or otherwise affect the application of any management agreement or restrictive covenant which existed at the transfer date in relation to land or other property, except insofar as any such modification is necessary to give effect to the agreement or restrictive covenant.'.

This is one of a series of amendments that we shall move because we have not had the assurances that we believe we needed from the Minister in Committee. When we discuss amendments tomorrow relating to access to land, it will become clear that privatisation is about selling off assets, not about the green initiatives with which the Government have tried to pull the wool over our eyes.

The amendment is intended to ensure that existing management agreements and restrictive covenants governing the use of land carry over from the present water authorities to the new plcs. The amendment would ensure that such arrangements were included in any land transfer scheme. The Opposition wish that we had not had to table these amendments, but, as I have explained, we had to because we were given no assurances on this matter in Committee.

Organisations such as the Ramblers Association, the Peak Parks and the Council for the Protection of Rural England, about which we have heard a great deal this evening, are concerned about what is going to happen. Their concern has intensified, and has been set out in the excellent report, "Liquid Assets". My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) will speak about these issues later.

The debates in Committee gave rise to questions about management agreements to do with recreation, access and wildlife; such agreements are by definition discretionary. We do not want the agreements to be discretionary: we want them enshrined in the legislation so that we can be absolutely certain that management agreements between local authorities, voluntary organisations such as the RSPB and water authorities continue after privatisation.

The Minister said in Committee that the concessionary use that we are concerned about would be determined at a local level, through the planning procedures about which we have heard so much from the Secretary of State. Why could the Minister offer us no guarantees about the continuation of these agreements? Why was it not possible for him to assure us that the management agreements that were so willingly entered into by the voluntary organisations and local authorities with water authorities would continue?

The Minister also said in Committee that what we already have constitutes a sound basis for the continuation of policies. We have already heard from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary that there is little scope for undertakers seriously to alter predecessors' policies. Why should he mention that unless he is concerned about it? We are given further cause for concern by the fact that the code of practice in clause 9 has no teeth, as we established in Committee.

The code incorporates a prescription that policies for opening up land will continue. The Opposition are genuinely concerned that very important management agreements relating to all aspects of our countryside including hedging and wildlife, as well as the important issues of access that we shall consider in detail tomorrow, are in danger of being lost. If the Government were genuinely concerned about conservation and what happens to our countryside, especially the countryside closely connected to the water supply, rather than just two areas that the Minister has identified, it would be a simple matter for the Government to reach an agreement, so that an amendment could be moved tonight to ensure that any concessionary arrangements were included in land transfer schemes. We would then be in a much better position to judge the true intentions of the Government for the privatisation of the water industry.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Thank you for calling me to speak on this important group of amendments, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It would be almost tempting to agree with Her Majesty's Opposition in their amendments were it not for the fact that on Thursday 2 February at 9.30 pm a considerably better new clause was proposed by my hon. and good Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) which the Minister undertook to study carefully. My hon. Friend and I sponsored new clause 17 in Committee.

The Minister for Water and Planning took away the new clause and most kindly undertook to consider it favourably. His exact words were:

"I cannot undertake here and now that we shall ultimately adopt this or a similar proposal, but we shall consider it in a positive spirit. I have considerable sympathy with it . . ."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D,* 2 February 1989; c. 798.]

Of course, the Minister will recall that in my constituency I have a large area of Dartmoor national park. I also have a particular area of outstanding natural beauty called Burrator reservoir. Other right hon. and hon. Members have national park land in their constituencies. Within that national park land in the United Kingdom, 130,000 acres come under the national water authorities. It is that land that we are concerned about.

I wholeheartedly back the privatisation of water. It is most important that the water industry should be split up in the tripartite way that we have proposed. But I am concerned that, despite our reassurances, the general public are still worried that access to areas of great natural beauty will be constrained under the Act, and that their recreational facilities, which for many people are surprisingly limited, will be curtailed. Their recreation is surprisingly limited, although people living in big cities of course go out by car and perhaps by bus, and enjoy enormously the beauty that they find in the national parks, which of course include the Broads.

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

I am worried, therefore, that this public concern will not be adequately met and not be properly taken on board unless the Minister is able to come back on these important points, especially in the context of our new clause 17 in Committee, rather than the group of amendments before us.

South West Water, for example, is led by an outstanding chairman in Mr. Keith Court, who will be a most able and brilliant chairman of the new public limited company. Gordon Bielby will head the National Rivers Authority.

Excellent agreements have been built up with national park authorities, water bailiffs and staff at all levels of the various organisations that also deal with national park land. I want that understanding to be codified. I do not want it to be only a grace-and-favour arrangement. It is important that the national parks and the Broads authorities are properly consulted on parts of their land that are of special beauty or that have special recreational facilities for the public. I badly need such provisions to be written into the Bill.

I call on the Minister when he replies to give me a reassurance that these public anxieties have been properly understood and that they will be matched by suitable regulations. I am confident that the Minister is listening extremely carefully and that he will respond in a wholly positive way. After all, the Secretary of State is a natural and proper conservationist who has a full commitment to the preservation of the countryside and to the recreational facilities that the public so rightly enjoy within the confines of the national park boundaries and of the Broads.

Mr. Wigley: I, too, have national park land in my constituency. Much of the land in Wales that is owned by the Welsh water authority falls within the category of "national park land" or "land of outstanding natural beauty", where public access is a matter of considerable concern.

I do not rise to put again the arguments that we had in Committee, but to follow on from our previous debate on new clause 1 when the Secretary of State possibly stunned his hon. Friends and certainly shocked the Opposition when he said that the main purpose of the legislation was the privatisation of 500,000 acres of land. Perhaps he was a little careless in his choice of words, but that is what he said. If that is so, we are concerned about the implications for land which is held by water authorities and will be privatised and for land which is either in national parks or of high amenity value to the general public.

Will the Minister tell me whether, in the circumstances that I am about to describe, the new water plcs will have the right to act in the manner that I am about to describe? Let us suppose that the plcs felt strongly that it was important that the land be preserved as a public amenity, albeit with safeguards for their own needs to draw water from that land, and that the plcs wanted to transfer that land from their own ownership and management to that of another public body such as the National Trust, or to set up trustees of their own just to look after the land rather than regarding it as part of a commercial package. Would they have the right to do that? We need assurances about that in view of the Secretary of State's statement when he replied to the previous debate. It is particularly pertinent to amendment No. 113, which relates to rights of access and the conditions that will be transferred when privatisation takes place.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Amendment No. 113 causes me a good deal of uncertainty. I am principally concerned about the land around many of the reservoirs in my constituency in the Lake district which are crucial to the supply of water to many urban conurbations, especially around Manchester.

The history of this is that much of the land—I am thinking especially of Haweswater—was acquired under the Manchester Corporation Act 1919. I am also thinking of the 22,500 acres that were acquired from Lowther Estates, which owned land in my constituency. As I understand it, the 1919 Act gave a right of pre-emption enabling Lowther Estates to purchase all or any of the area acquired by Manchester corporation at that time, if it were ever sold. That was extremely important.

What is uncertain at the moment—this is extremely important in terms of access and all the other matters with which the amendment deals—is what the position of land of that sort will be after this legislation comes into operation. From the point of view of access, conservation, and so on, the record of previous owners is exemplary. For instance, at the instigation and with the encouragement of Lowther Estates, land within and just outside the area has recently been made an SSSI. Over the years Lowther Estates has worked extremely closely with the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission, and I submit that its record is exemplary.

11.30 pm

I pay tribute to the Minister for his extreme kindness in making sure that I received this evening a reply to a letter about this matter that I sent to him in January. I regret that the reply does not make clear the legal position in respect of the rights of pre-emption that were granted over this land when it was originally sold to Manchester corporation in 1919. This is an extremely important matter, which ought to be put right. I can assure the Minister that if he cannot explain the situation—I fully appreciate that he may have difficulty doing so today—a good many questions will be asked in another place.

The basic concern of Lowther Estates is to ensure that the rights of pre-emption that were enshrined in the original sale in 1919 are maintained. My understanding is that if such an assurance can be given there need be no uncertainty about the future of the property. As I have said, Lowther Estates has an exemplary record in respect of conservation of the environment and other such matters. This is a serious problem. Before making up my mind about the amendment, I must have answers to the questions that I have posed.

Mr. Allen McKay: I am sure that, even at this time of the night, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have recognised the importance of this amendment. Parts of the constituencies of most hon. Members who have taken part in this debate consist either of national parks or of land adjacent to national parks. I am one such Member: part of my constituency is adjacent to the High Peak district, which is enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of people from all over England between this time of the year and when winter sets in—and, indeed, after winter has set in.

When the Minister talks about a code of practice, he is being very optimistic. A code of practice is effective only if

people are prepared to obey it; it is absolutely useless when someone decides that it is no good to him. We have difficulty keeping statutory ways open by a code of practice, never mind voluntary ones. Time after time hon. Members receive complaints about statutory rights of way being ploughed over, built upon or built around and people have to get access by different ways from the statutory rights of way that have been there not for decades but for generations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) and I had the privilege of going to Ladybower in the High Peak district, which hundreds of thousands of people will visit this year for various reasons. When we consider Ladybower, we realise the fears of the people about the effect of the Bill on rights of ways. Preparations are already being made to put a turnstile there and thousands of people will be denied access unless they pay. From that single point people go horse riding, rambling and cycling; sometimes they go by car. Access is by voluntary agreement with the rangers, the local authority and the water authority. By courtesy of Yorkshire Water the rangers have a place on water authority land. All that is in danger.

We have to protect rights that have been negotiated and that have been in existence for generations. Rambling associations, fishermen's associations, motoring associations and horse-riding associations are all concerned about the issue because, like us, they realise that decades of planning and negotiation will go out of the window. It is already happening. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury and I would on normal occasions have been able to go through the dam wall to see one of the marvellous pieces of architecture in the dam. Because we were Members of Parliament, we were denied access, lest we might refer to it in the debate. Already Yorkshire Water is putting up fences where there have never been fences. That is what is happening now. What will happen if the Bill mistakenly goes through, particularly without the amendments?

Mr. Boswell: I question whether the amendment is technically well conceived. I am no lawyer but it seems that the whole complex of agreements is such that some will be legally binding on successors and others may be extinguished on a transfer on sale. The Minister may want to comment on which are which.

Whether or not that is the case, I think it would be agreed on both sides of the House that there is concern that the arrangements that have been available on water authority land should, where possible, continue into the successor privatised undertaking. There will be a variety. Some will be basically related to conservation; others will be related to recreation and access, which is by no means always the same, or an easily compatible user. Some will reflect management agreements which are designed to embrace the whole range of interests and reach a compromise between them. I stress that my hon. Friends and I are at least equally interested in maintaining that structure for the benefit of the public.

Where we might differ from the Opposition is in relation to our interpretation of the code of practice set out under the Bill. I remind the House that the code, which seems to have been widely praised, although in certain cases there is still scepticism as to its effect, provides the reference book for the operation of the general duties which are set out on the face of the Bill and which we feel are most important and sufficient for the purpose with which we are concerned.

I respect the Minister's assurances in Committee and the way in which he responded to our debates there. For that reason I am hopeful of a satisfactory outcome to this exchange tonight. I mentioned in Committee the possibility of building into the code some kind of anti-frustration clause whereby it would be impossible to use the occasion of a sale to frustrate the code. Will the Minister consider those points and respond accordingly?

Mr. Morley: The amendment is a reasonable and considered amendment which we have discussed in Committee. I hope that some conservation Members, who have expressed their concern and their reservations about the Bill as it stands, will be tempted to support the amendment. As the Bill stands, it does not have the sort of safeguards that, for example, the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) quite rightly wants to see for his own area in the Lake district.

The content of the code of conduct is extremely good. What is contained within the code is fine, but the problem is the very first page, which says:

> "The Code is designed to assist relevant bodies in performing their duties. But it cannot set out in full detail what those duties entail. Relevant bodies must themselves consider what full regard for these duties involves in the circumstances of each particular case.
>
> Failure to apply any guideline in the Code will not of itself constitute a contravention of the environmental and recreational duties in the [Water Act 1989], nor will it give any rise to any criminal or civil liability."

In effect, the code is worthless in terms of making people enforce it.

The water companies can get around the code by simply setting up a subsidiary company that they would argue is not part of the operational function of the water plc. Then the code, even with its weaknesses, will not apply. Already the Yorkshire water authority has set up such subsidiary companies so that they will not come under the guidelines on conservation and access as laid down by the code.

There is nothing new about covenants. I expect that many hon. Members have bought houses that have covenants attached to them—such as restrictions as to running a business—which are passed on from sale to sale. There is nothing technically impossible about involving the covenants, and how they are used and the situations in which they might be relevant are discretionary. Where they may be relevant is in guarding against damage to conservation areas and in guaranteeing access. That includes such matters as agricultural and forestry changes, which, incidentally, are not covered by planning.

In previous debates we have heard that planning protection will safeguard some uses of disposed land. We already know that the planning safeguards are not adequate to protect such land—for example, of scenic beauty—from certain kinds of development. They certainly would not protect it from forestry, which does not come under planning, or from farming methods. If there is an area of land next to an embankment, where one is concerned about wild flowers, or maintaining the water level in water meadows for those flowers or for the breeding species of birds, the water level and how it is managed is crucial. There are at present many voluntary management agreements all around the country operated in particular by local naturalist trusts that are affiliated to the Royal Society for Nature Conservation. They, of

[Mr. Morley]

course, have outstanding areas of national importance that include the Lake district and the national parks, but they also have regionally important sites, such as Meldon reservoir, Tamar lakes, the West Pennines, Draycott water and Rutland water.

Rutland water demonstrates the conflicts that are going on. Anglian Water has already threatened court proceedings against the Nature Conservancy Council over the extension of fishing rights and the way in which fishing rights are used. Anglian Water has been trying to maximise its revenue, having been short of revenue over the years—as a result of the cash limits imposed on it—by seeing what can be achieved commercially. That has led to conflict with the Nature Conservancy Council and the local naturalist trusts.

That state of affairs is inevitable if we move towards the greater commercialisation of land, and the Secretary of State has expressed delight at the way in which the Bill will result in the privatising of thousands of acres of national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty. About 34 per cent. of the land holdings of water boards are in national parks. The Secretary of State's view on that comes as no surprise because he put forward the idea of privatising nature reserves. I do not know what he thought would be done to exploit privatised nature reserves commercially. Perhaps he had in mind hire-a-hedgehog or rent-a-rabbit schemes.

11.45 pm

I hope that hon. Members who have not expressed concern over these matters will not allow themselves to be fobbed off by Ministers saying that they will give these issues consideration. That is what I tell my children when they want me to put my legs on the coffee table and throw a blanket over them to make a tent. I tell them I will think about it: I fob them off. The Minister must not use those tactics to get out of his responsibilities.

People are concerned to safeguard access, management agreements and nature reserves, so we need this type of covenanting arrangement. Of the nature reserves which now exist on water board land, some are SSSIs with some protection, others are leased from the water companies and have some protection until the leases run out, most are on one or two-year leases which are renewable and many are simply management agreements. The latter work on the basis of an understanding between the local naturalist trusts or conservation bodies which manage an area and conserve it, run it, plant it, maintain water levels, clear out the weeds and generally act in ways that are beneficial to the area.

Covenants would safeguard those arrangements. By such means, if those areas of land were sold, even by a third party, the nature conservation groups could have first option on buying that land. We are not being unreasonable in asking the Secretary of State to include such covenants in the Bill. By giving nature conservation groups that right, the land would be protected for ever.

Many rights of access are permissive. In the Peak district, for example, where 15 per cent. of the land is owned by water authorities, there are more than 40 miles of permissive paths. They have no legal standing and the public are allowed to use them only by permission of the local water company. The Lake Vyrnwy catchment area, which is owned by Severn-Trent, has 50 miles of footpaths, only one third of which are public rights of way.

Time does not permit me to go into this matter in greater detail. I hope the Minister will accept that the case for covenants is overwhelming. That principle could be accepted by the Government without even denting the philosophy—which I totally reject—behind the Bill. Every Conservative Member can vote on this issue, aside from that philosophy, to ensure that areas of nature reserves are protected, that permissive paths are guaranteed and that some safeguards exist for the millions of people who use these areas for their leisure and to protect the environment for future generations.

Mr. Howard: I will begin by setting at ease immediately the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley). I do not propose to say that I shall take this amendment away and think about it or consider it, and perhaps I should explain why.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) justified her desire to debate this amendment this evening by reference to the absence of assurances during the Standing Committee. We did not debate this amendment in Committee and when I explain its terms it will be apparent to the House why.

The amendment before the House would require that no scheme for the division of water authority assets between the NRA and the appointed companies should have the effect of terminating or otherwise amending any management agreement or restrictive covenant relating to the land transferred. The fact is that schemes of transfer under schedule 2 of the Bill, to which the amendment is specifically directed, are exactly what the Bill says they are. They are simply schemes for the apportionment as between successor bodies of assets, rights and liabilities. Of itself a scheme does not and cannot vary those rights and liabilities. Rights transferred cannot be strengthened; nor can they be weakened. Any legal obligation binding on the water authority now will bind the relevant successor body. No such scheme can possibly have the effects which the amendment seeks to prevent. To say, therefore, that the amendment is wholly unnecessary is to put the matter very politely indeed.

By way of reassurance, let me deal with the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), who asked for an explanation of the kind of arrangements that would be unaffected not only by the schemes to which this amendment would relate but by privatisation overall.

First, I hope I need hardly say that all the protections afforded by national park, areas of outstanding natural beauty or other designations will fully continue. Beyond that, any management agreements made between the water authorities and the national park authorities will continue unaffected by the transfer schemes. They will be inherited by any successor in title in the future. The same is, of course, true of SSSI designations and of arrangements under them, which can only be terminated by the Nature Conservancy Council in its specific legislation. In the same way, any contractual arrangements between water authorities and, for instance, county naturalists trusts or other conservation bodies will pass with the land affected to the relevant successor body.

I recognise, of course, that there are many arrangements, such as those for the management of local

nature reserves on water authority land, which may be on a temporary or short-term basis. But the circumstances in which they can be terminated or reviewed will be no different under the successor bodies from what they are under the water authorities today. The NRA and the appointed companies will be under the same strong environmental duty of furthering conservation and providing for access and recreation as are the water authorities now. What is now done in pursuit of those duties will remain valid under the Bill. The concerns underlying this amendment are, therefore, wholly misplaced.

I take the opportunity to make clear beyond any doubt the Government's commitment to ensuring the continued protection and conservation of the land transferred to the successor bodies and public enjoyment of it. In environmental terms, much of the most important part of that estate is within the national parks. I know that in the past the water authorities and the national park authorities have worked closely together on projects for protection of landscape, conservation of wildlife and promotion of public amenity. The Government are committed to ensuring that such co-operation continues.

Accordingly, in Committee, as my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) has reminded us, we welcomed the amendment put forward by her and my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), in association with the council for the national parks, to impose special notification and consultation procedures in respect of significant changes in use or management of water industry land in the national parks. We shall in due course be introducing an amendment to the Bill to give full effect to that proposal.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): A large part of the most used national park in Britain is in my constituency and 15 per cent. of the land is owned by water authorities, so it is crucial for my constituents to clear up what the Minister has just said. If I heard correctly, he said that legal agreements, contractual arrangements and so on would be fully protected. Since there is so much misunderstanding on this, can he make it absolutely clear that voluntary agreements, the permissive walks in the Peak district national park and so on will all be protected under the Bill? Then I shall rest easy.

Mr. Howard: I understand my hon. Friend's concern about these matters. He arranged for a delegation from the Ramblers Association to come to see me recently, and this was one of the points that we discussed. Tomorrow, the House will have before it two amendments which closely respond to the concerns expressed by the Ramblers Association and make it clear that the duties in the Bill will extend to the sort of arrangements to which my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) has just referred.

We are still considering the precise terms of the amendments to which I referred earlier in response to amendments put forward in Committee by my hon. Friends the Members for Torridge and Devon, West and for Dorset, North. It is possible that, in some respects, we may go beyond that proposed by my hon. Friends. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hopes to make a full statement on that before long.

I understand the concern of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and hope that he will appreciate that the point to which he referred in his letter to me—I am sorry that I have been unable to give a full response before now—raises important and complex legal issues, which are under careful consideration. I understand the importance for him and his constituents of an early reply on those matters, and I shall do my utmost to achieve that.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) asked for a specific assurance about whether the plcs—the successor bodies to the water authorities—would be able, if they wished, to transfer land, for example, in national parks, to other public bodies or local conservation bodies. I am happy to say unequivocally that they will be able to do that. They will be private sector bodies, free to dispose of their assets in that way should they wish to do so.

The hon. Members for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) and for Glanford and Scunthorpe both referred to the code of practice. The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone was unimpressed by the code's provisions and suggested that they would not have any significant effect. I should remind him that it is a statutory code, which has full force under the Bill and full account of it can be taken by the Secretary of State when deciding whether enforcement action should be taken against the relevant companies. If the Secretary of State does not take action after, for example, the code has been repeatedly breached, any citizen can take action against the Secretary of State, whose responsibilities are subject to review by the courts.

At the beginning of my observations, I said that the terms of the amendment were unnecessary because the schedule 2 schemes were simply for the transfer of existing assets, rights and liabilities, and no management agreements or covenants protecting water industry land would be affected by them. More than that, the concerns and fears underlying the amendment are misplaced and wholly misconceived. We are committed to ensuring the continuing conservation of public amenity of the water industry estate under the successor bodies. The Bill provides fully for that, and this amendment would add nothing to the means by which it is achieved. For those reasons, I ask the House to reject it.

Ms. Walley: We have listened carefully but still share the concerns which have been expressed by hon. Members from both sides of the Chamber. There is genuine concern about voluntary agreements. We are concerned not specifically with contractual agreements, but with voluntary ones. At this stage in the Bill's consideration, it is remarkable that the Minister can stand at the Dispatch Box and say that he will come back to hon. Members in due course. How long must we wait for confirmation from the Minister on this?

Mr. Howard *rose*——

Ms. Walley: No, I shall not give way because there is not time.

We are concerned about conservation and about the tremendous work mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) on voluntary agreements. We want to ensure that the preservation of flora and fauna can continue, and will not be jeopardised, despite what Conservative Members have to say.

Mr. Hawkins: That was not a vague undertaking from my hon. and learned Friend the Minister. Amendments are down for discussion tomorrow—Nos 57, 61 and 62, I believe—which meet the requirements about voluntary and permissive agreements. My understanding is that my hon. and learned Friend gave a strong undertaking that they would be covered. I hope that that is true; if it is—as I am sure it is, or he would not have said so—I welcome it.

It being Twelve o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the order [6 February] and the Resolution this day, to put the Question already proposed from the Chair,*That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 206, Noes 318.

Division No. 127] **[12 midnight**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dafyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen Adams.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John

Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Deputy Speaker *then proceeded to put forthwith the Questions on amendments moved by a member of the Government up to the end of clause 6.*

Clause 5

CUSTOMER SERVICE COMMITTEES

Amendments made: No. 23, in page 5, line 34, leave out from 'appointing' to 'shown' in line 36 and insert

'persons to be members of a customer service committee the Director shall have regard to—

(a) the desirability of the persons appointed being persons who have experience of, and have'.

No. 24, in line 40, at end insert

'and

(b) the desirability of the committee including one or more persons with experience of work among, and the special needs of, disabled persons and of persons appointed by virtue of this paragraph including disabled persons.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Clause 6

GENERAL DUTIES WITH RESPECT TO WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE SERVICES

Amendment made: No. 14, in page 6, line 4, leave out from 'exercise' to end of line 7 and insert—

'(a) in the case of the Secretary of State, the powers conferred on him by virtue of provisions contained in Chapter I of Part II of this Act or in section 37, 67, or 155 below; and

(b) in the case of the Director, the powers conferred on him by virtue of provisions mentioned in paragraph (a) above or by virtue of section 40, 42 or 70 below.'.
—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Further consideration of the Bill, as amended, adjourned.

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), to be further considered this day.

Rent Officers

12.12 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): I beg to move,

That the draft Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 23rd February, be approved.

It will be for the convenience of the House also to consider the following motion:

That the draft Rent Officers (Additional Functions) (Scotland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 1st March, be approved.

The orders are an essential adjunct to the measures in the Housing Act 1988 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988, deregulating private lettings. The measures came into force on 2 January in Scotland and on 15 January in England and Wales. For lettings beginning since the Acts came into force, landlords can charge a market rent. It is clear that in many areas market rents will be considerably higher than fair rents. *[Interruption.]* It is equally clear that many tenants will be unable to pay the higher rents from their own resources. The Government have, therefore——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. There is noise from sedentary Members and from hon. Members at the Bar of the House. Will hon. Members not taking part in the proceedings please withdraw?

Mr. Trippier: The Government have, therefore, given a clear undertaking that housing benefit will be available to qualifying tenants paying rents up to open market level. Let there be no doubt about our total commitment in that respect. However, a tenant who has all or most of his rent met by housing benefit does not, obviously, have the same incentive to bargain with his landlord to keep the rent to a reasonable level as would be the case if he were paying it from his own pocket. We do not believe that the Exchequer, which provides up to 97 per cent. direct subsidy on housing benefit, should be expected simply to underwrite any rent that the landlord demands. Therefore, it is essential to have an independent check on the rents being paid from the public purse to ensure that those are not significantly above market level—in other words, above the rents being paid by tenants who are not in receipt of benefit.

The task of operating such a check is to be given to rent officers and the purpose of the orders is to lay down how it will be carried out. Besides considering claimants' rents, rent officers will also look at the size of their accommodation. We do not believe that full Exchequer subsidy should generally be available where a claimant is living in unduly large accommodation. Local authorities have long had powers to limit benefit in such circumstances.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): On that most offensive part of the order, will the Minister tell us the size of his property, how many people live in it and how much subsidy he has from the public purse?

Mr. Trippier: Before the hon. Gentleman draws the attention of the House to that, he may care to consider the precise lettings policy of his local authority. It fits very neatly into what is proposed in the order. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that I am not in receipt of housing benefit. Therefore, it would be fairer to debate

—I shall try to develop this theme—the precise housing allocation policy of his local authority. It is so akin to what we are proposing in the orders that the hon. Gentleman might regret his intervention.

Given the prospect of higher rents in the regulated sector, it is desirable to apply a control directly on subsidy. Under the terms of the orders, local authorities will, as from 1 April, refer to the rent officer most cases where a claim for housing benefit is made by a private tenant or licensee with an agreement beginning on or after the date on which deregulation took effect. The only significant exceptions to that requirement will be tenancies with a rent set by a rent assessment committee and, other than in very rare cases, lettings by registered housing associations.

The first requirement on the rent officer will be to consider whether the claimaint's rent is at or below the level of rent prevailing in the open market. If it is, the rent officer will inform the local authority accordingly. However, if the rent is above market level the rent officer will determine what a reasonable market rent will be for the property and notify the local authority of that rent. The rent officer will then assess the claimant's accommodation against the size criteria set out in the orders. If the accommodation exceeds the criteria, the rent officer will determine a market rent for a notional property which does not exceed the size criteria but which otherwise corresponds as closely as practicable to the claimant's actual accommodation.

The rent officer's determinations will in all cases relate not directly to the benefit itself but rather to Exchequer subsidy. Where the rent officer is satisfied that the claimant's rent is no higher than market level and that his accommodation is within the size criteria, the local authority will be able to pay benefit knowing that subsidy will be available on the basis of that rent. Where the rent officer decides that the claimant's rent is above market level or that the property exceeds the size criteria and thus determines a lower rent than the claimant is paying, it will be up to the local authority to decide on which basis benefit is paid.

Authorities will continue to be precluded from restricting benefit in cases where the claimant comes within one of a number of vulnerable groups, basically the old, the disabled and those with children, and it would be unreasonable to expect him or her to move. In such cases direct subsidy will be payable on the benefit awarded on rent above the level determined by the rent officer at a rate of 50 per cent. In other cases no subsidy will be payable above the market rent determined by the rent officer for the premises in which the claimant is living.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am sure that hon. Members know exactly what the order is about, but I am not one of them. Do the size criteria permit a spare bedroom for relatives or friends coming to stay?

Mr. Trippier: We accept that there are carers who may wish to live in accommodation with people within the vulnerable groups I have just catalogued.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) asked, perfectly reasonably, whether the size allocation would allow for a spare room for guests, such as in the case of a single parent with partial custody of a child, who may visit at weekends or on odd occasions. In many instances a spare room is absolutely essential and is not a luxury. We would be reassured if the Minister would make it clear that a spare room is permissible within this order.

Mr. Trippier: Although, as a general rule, we do not believe that the taxpayer should subsidise spare accommodation, we fully accept that some housing benefit claimants may need a spare room. The housing benefit regulations are designed to protect these people. No benefit restrictions can be placed on the elderly, the sick, the disabled or people with children if the local authority is satisfied that cheaper, suitable alternative accommodation is available and the local authority considers it reasonable to expect that person to move.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Trippier: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, this is a very short debate. I will give way for the last time.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to the Minister. He used to deal with small businesses; he seems to be dealing with small houses now. Will the Minister tell me—because I am interested in motivation in my professional capacity—where this plan originated? Did he think it up? Which of his civil servants thought it up? Who suggested it to him? Where did it come from? Who is the architect of this mischievous plan?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that there is such a thing as the collective responsibility of Ministers, which stretches from the Department of the Environment to the Department of Social Security. We were, of course, unanimous in the decision we arrived at, which is why it is enshrined in this order.

The orders provide for a right of appeal against a rent officer's determination in the form of a facility for a local authority to apply for a case to be determined by an experienced rent officer from outside the registration area in which the case was originally dealt with. The redetermining officer will be required to take advice from one or more—usually two—other experienced rent officers, one of whom will be from the original area, though not the office which previously handled the case.

This is the system we propose. Its aim is to safeguard the Exchequer against paying for benefit on rents which are unreasonable. It does not represent a back-door form of rent control. It in no way dilutes our commitment that housing benefit will be available up to market rent level; on the contrary, it offers a guarantee that the housing benefit system will genuinely keep pace with the market and that claimants will have their reasonable needs met.

12.22 am

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): This is one of the nastiest bits of legislation from a Government who have specialised in nasty legislation. That is why we are debating it late at night, because the Government are embarrassed about it and would be even more embarrassed if it were reported in the media as it should be.

Under the new rules, rent officers will decide what a reasonable market rent is for housing benefit subsidy purposes. The trap is evident straight away, in the concept of a "reasonable market rent". The Government have had difficulty with their concept of a market rent in recent years. Now they have suddenly decided there is such a

[Mr. Clive Soley]

thing as a "reasonable market rent". I wonder if there is a reasonable price for a packet of tea, a house, or anything else in the market.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): In the sale of goods legislation, where there is a dispute as to price, there are provisions for the determination of a reasonable price for a packet of tea or any other commodity. The concept of reasonableness is well known throughout English law.

Mr. Soley: If the hon. Member is stupid enough to believe that people decide the price of packets of tea in the way that he describes, he is living in cloud-cuckoo-land.

Housing benefit paid above the level determined will not attract full subsidy and local authorities will be under pressure to restrict it. From 1 April, local authorities will refer new private sector claims to the rent officer who, in addition to deciding the reasonable market rent, will have to decide whether the accommodation is too large for the claimant's reasonable needs. That is a step back to the 19th century and will frustrate progress towards reducing overcrowding.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman uses a lot of amazing expletives and makes—as he often does—a dramatic presentation, but he tends to forget that the local authority allocation for Hammersmith, to which he has presumably never objected, is one bedroom for a couple, one bedroom for two children of the same sex, one bedroom for two children under six and one bedroom each for children of six and over of opposite sexes. How different is that provision from that of the orders?

Mr. Soley It is very different, because those figures are the minimum that is aimed for. Under successive Governments—not just Labour Governments—local authorities have risen above them and I am pleased that they have done so.

I am delighted that the Minister intervened when he did. He described my words as colourful, but they are not my words. They are the words of the London Boroughs Association—a Tory-controlled organisation which is supported in its view by another, the Association of District Councils. Both organisations regard this legislation as wicked. They see it as a return to Victorian times—the word "Dickensian" was rightly used. This is an offensive piece of legislation and the Minister knows it.

The orders are unbelievably cruel. They must be considered in relation to the Department of Social Security regulations on housing benefit, which provide that housing benefit subsidy is payable to local authorities only up to the rent level that the rent officer says is reasonable. There are some exceptions to that rule, and the Minister touched on them. There is, for example, the 50 per cent. of housing benefit paid above the rent officer's assessment for claimants over 60, for those incapable of work or for those with dependent children. When a person dies, exemption is granted for a period of 12 months.

Let us imagine two elderly people who have separate bedrooms, perhaps because the man suffers from emphysema—a not uncommon condition. Many people of that age need separate bedrooms for a variety of reasons. If one of the two dies, after a period of just 12 months the surviving partner has the choice of looking around for somewhere smaller or paying extra rent. The only way out of the trap is if the local authority pays the difference, but under the regime that the Government have imposed on local authorities no one believes that they will be able to do that. The Minister cannot pass the buck by talking about collective responsibility. No one with any respect would have introduced an order like this. He is telling elderly people with more than one bedroom that if one of them dies the other will have to get out or pay extra rent.

I will explain the extent of the evil. A son or daughter may be looking after an elderly parent. If the parent dies, the carer has 12 months' grace before having to move to a smaller place or pay additional rent. But if the elderly parent, instead of dying, is admitted to full-time residential care, there is no period of grace—the carer must leave immediately or pay the additional rent. It is significant that a Minister can introduce such an idea and not feel utterly ashamed of himself.

Elderly couples will have to share rooms. Grandparents cannot have a visiting room. My hon. Friends were right to point out earlier that people will not be allowed a spare room unless they pay extra rent. Two children of the same sex under 18 years of age will have to share a room, so a 17-year-old studying for examinations will have to share with a three-year-old. The Government apparently see nothing wrong with that, although they are pushing it through late at night to avoid embarrassment in the media. The size of the room is not even specified—it may be a box room, or one that will take just two bunk beds, with a 17-year-old in the top bed and a three-year-old in the bottom bed. What sort of society or Government does that?

Mr. Corbyn: A Tory Government.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): A capitalist society.

Mr. Soley: A rent officer may say that instead of the rent of £80 per week set by the landlord the reasonable market rent is £60. In those circumstances, unless councils make up the difference—nobody pretends that they will be able to do so, for the reasons that I have given—the only option for the tenant will be to pay up or move out. That is why the Conservative-controlled Association of District Councils and every local authority and housing body says that this measure will lead to misery and increasing homelessness.

People will become homeless in these situations because, of course, the private rented sector is primarily involved. If an elderly couple have to get out of this sort of situation, they will go down to the local authority, which has to house them at the ratepayers' expense. That is why I say that it is a wicked measure which does anything of this nature.

The measure will also add to harassment. When a landlord wants someone out, he can put up the rent each year by more than the tenants will receive in benefit so that they have to pay the extra or get out. That is why the order is so nasty.

The test of unnecessarily large accommodation will be set as the maximum number of rooms for a particular family size. It is worth looking at the way in which it is set out in the order. It is no use the Minister trying to dodge the issue by referring to local authorities, because he knows that they set minimum standards which they then exceed. Schedule 3 says:

"One bedroom shall be allowed for each of the following categories of occupiers . . .

(a) a married couple or an unmarried couple . . .

(b) an adult,

(c) two children of the same sex,

(d) two children who are less than 20 years old,

(e) a child . . .

The number of rooms . . . suitable for living in"

are allowed in the following way:

"if there are less than four occupiers, one".

There will be one additional room to that bedroom. And

"if there are more than three and less than seven occupiers, two".

In any other cases, three rooms are allowed. That really is sick.

The order is all about preventing excessive demands on the benefit system by claimants whose choice of accommodation is unreasonable, in the Government's view, or where the house or flat is in an unnecessarily expensive area. In other words, if tenants pick a house or flat in an upmarket area, they can expect to pay the rent or get out. That will create ghettoes.

I asked the Minister in an intervention how many rooms he had, and how many family members shared those rooms. I am sure that he has a spare room for visitors. What is more, if he bought his house and got mortgage income tax relief, he has had a big fat subsidy from the public purse. The Minister says that he does not believe that taxpayers should subsidise spare bedrooms, but they are subsidising his. They are subsidising the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Prime Minister, and every Conservative Member—and probably Labour Members too. We do that for those who own and buy property, but when it comes down to those who rent in the private market we suddenly say, "No visitors for you—and you are not allowed to sleep in separate rooms or have separate rooms for your children unless you pay the price and fork out the extra money yourself." Where is all the talk about choice from the Tory party now?

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend did not mention the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who is to reply to the debate. Will my hon. Friend be fair to the Minister and admit that the taxpayer is subsidising only one of his houses?

Mr. Soley: Let us be thankful for small mercies.

In another place, Lord Caithness said on the Housing Bill:

"I put it to the Committee in this way. Where one has a international market such as that which exists in central London, is it right that the state should, for instance, fully subsidise the housing benefit of someone living in a penthouse flat in Mayfair? That is the kind of criteria that we are looking for."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 11 October 1988; Vol. 500, c. 742.]

That may or may not be right, but if it is right for those whose rent is being subsidised, it is also right for those who are buying and being subsidised for buying. We either subsidise housing costs, or we do not. We should not decide that those who rent are second-class citizens who do not deserve the support of the state.

I have not touched much on housing associations, but they are relevant in certain circumstances. The Minister should give some thought to the clarification that the housing associations require on some of these issues. They are worried about suitable alternative accommodation being available.

Mr. Trippier: I am trying to follow the hon. Gentleman carefully. Is he saying that it is Labour party policy to scrap mortgage interest relief—[*Interruption.*] It is not a stupid point. Anyone listening to the debate would draw that inference from what the hon. Gentleman has said so far.

Mr. Soley: The only person who would draw that inference would be one who was educationally subnormal——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): That is an insult to the educationally subnormal.

Mr. Soley: No, it is not an insult. Plenty of people who are educationally subnormal are quite nice people. I will introduce the hon. Gentleman to some one day—indeed, he may not have to go all that far to meet them.

The Minister is trying to wriggle out of the problem. He knows that what we are talking about, and what I have been talking about for a long time, is a subsidy system which is fair within and between the rented and purchase sectors. We must move towards that in such a way as not to throw either rent payers—[*Interruption.*] The Minister should listen for a moment and stop throwing his head back. He must understand that whether people rent or buy they should not be thrown into economic distress by the absurd actions of a Government who have shoved up interest rates to such an extent that the average person paying the average mortgage in England or Wales was paying £81 per month more in January 1989 than in January 1988——

Mr. Trippier *rose*——

Mr. Soley: Is the Minister about to tell me that he regards that as a good policy for people who are buying?

Mr. Trippier: I am about to tell the hon. Gentleman that he should calm down and stop losing his temper because he is devaluing the currency of what he is trying to communicate to the House. We are anxious to hear from the hon. Gentleman precisely what his and his party's policy would be—[*Interruption.*] The hon. Gentleman should put forward a constructive alternative. What is it?

Mr. Soley: I have told the Minister on a number of occasions, and I will tell him again now. It is reform of housing finance so as to make it fairer within and between the rented and purchase sector introduced in such a way as not to throw either rent payers or mortgage payers into economic distress. That is not a problem. There are several ways in which we could do that.

The Minister knows that he is bringing forward this order because his own Secretary of State admitted that the Government were in trouble with housing finance. That is because the market in the south is in such a state that if one allowed housing benefit to rise to meet market rents the cost would approximate to that of mortgate interest tax relief. That is why the Government's housing policy is in such a mess.

We know that selling and buying houses is far more profitable than renting them. That is why the private rented sector is declining and will continue to decline. If the Minister still does not understand that, I ask him to understand it now, because it is the whole point of the order.

No one can possibly justify what is being done in this order. It is literally cruel. When Conservative-controlled

[Mr. Soley]

associations say that it is Dickensian—they all say that what is being done is cruel and is causing homelessness, anxiety and stress—how can the Minister go ahead and do it without any sense of compassion whatever?

12.40 am

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): I wish the Minister would defend what is proposed, but he would be defending the indefensible. It is ridiculous that at half past midnight we are discussing a matter that affects so many people, many of them among the most vulnerable in the low-income groups. It is ridiculous that we should be dealing with this order at this late—or early—hour, two days before the beginning of the Easter recess.

The draft Rent Officers (Additional Functions) (Scotland) Order stems from the Housing Act 1988, and it certainly confirms that I was right in voting against that legislation. This instrument gives rent officers power in terms of size of dwelling, rent level and services provided, but it also raises some important and worrying considerations to which I hope the Minister will address himself. Better still, the Scottish housing Minister should deal with those matters before this debate ends.

The draft order confirms the new role of the rent officer in determining, for housing benefit purposes, "reasonable" rents in respect of premises let under assured tenancies. I note, and wish to draw to the Minister's attention, the view of the Scottish Council for the Single Homeless that the proposals concerning size criteria and occupation levels are simply contrary to declared Government policy. As recently as 3 March the Scottish housing Minister was promoting a more flexible use of housing stock and commending housing providers who were managing stock imaginatively. But the Department of Social Security regulations appear to undermine that policy completely, at least for people on benefit—often those in the greatest housing need.

I remind the Minister that approximately 80 per cent. of Scotland's housing stock is three-apartment or larger, and that about 50 per cent. of the people on waiting lists are single persons. Many housing agencies where there is a surplus of large dwellings offer three-apartment, or even four-apartment, houses to single people. The problem is that DSS regulations would make this impossible in the case of people dependent on housing benefit. In this connection the Minister should address himself to several specific problems.

It is clear that the purpose of this order is to introduce constraints into the existing rent calculation criteria. Will the Minister make their meaning clear? Will he explain how, for example, the rent officer will decide what is a "reasonable" rent? Can he deny the rumours that, where a single person occupies a three-apartment house, the rent officers will have power to identify a reasonable rent for that house and then simply allow only two thirds of that amount to be paid in housing benefit as one room is unoccupied?

If a couple and their teenage son occupy a three-apartment house, and if the son leaves home, will the rent officer refuse the remaining couple full housing benefit? These matters are very important to people on very low incomes whose lives depend on such decisions. What will happen in the case of someone who, it is decided, is intentionally homeless? If a person were to accept a tenancy, and if the rent officer were subsequently to decide that the property was too big, or that the rent was unreasonably high, could the tenant be deemed to be intentionally homeless were he to be evicted owing to contractual arrears arising because housing benefit simply did not meet the full rent—a situation that the tenant might have been totally unable to anticipate? People are quite entitled to know the specific details of the Minister's response.

Where people sharing a flat have joint and several liability for the rent, what will happen if one of them leaves the flat? Will the remaining people be entitled to housing benefit for the increased share of the rent, or will they have to meet the cost from their own pockets?

These points have been raised by the Scottish Council for the Single Homeless, and they should be on record and should be answered by the Minister. The answers may be crucial to the survival of many projects aimed at housing young single people. If tenants have to meet the cost themselves, the further development of such projects may be hampered. My local authority is anxious to do something to meet the major problem of housing the homeless, specifically the young single homeless. The order will not help; indeed, it will hinder progress. It is not clear what criteria will be used by rent officers to assess housing benefit levels for residents in old-fashioned hostels. Surely it must be recognised that residents require more than a cubicle in which to live. Allowances must be made for the cost of proper staffing and service charges. As the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said, the criteria as stated would mean that a 17-year-old student living at home might have to share with a younger sibling. Is that what the Government expect? In Glasgow it is the norm for students to live at home while at university or college.

The Government are setting housing norms which will take housing provision and standards back in time instead of making progress by raising standards and conditions. If the Government implement the order, they will have a great deal to answer for. *[Interruption.]* An independent Scotland would probably have done better than the Government are doing.

Why is there not a system of outside independent appeal? Under the order appeals will be in-house. Why is there not provision for an independent system of arbitration?

I have raised some specific questions, which are justified. I hope that they will be answered by the Minister because the order will affect many people on low incomes. Families will be affected. I would like to see the Government raising standards, but the order confirms my suspicions and my opposition to the Housing Act 1988. If this is the best the Government can do, it is not good enough. I hope that the House will oppose the orders for many of the reasons so adequately stated by the hon. Member for Hammersmith. I will be happy to join him in outright opposition to these inadequate orders.

12.47 am

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I support the measures put forward by my hon. Friend. I did not intend to speak. *[Interruption.]* I listened carefully, and in silence as usual, to the arguments from Opposition Members. It

is a sign of their bankruptcy that they start their normal barracking when somebody gets up to defend a reasonable measure.

As I was saying, I did not intend to speak. I wanted to listen carefully to the points being made. As I listened to all the points that the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) was making and the fire with which he spoke, it became clear that there was much less in what he was saying than the passion he was using to put it forward.

Anybody looking at the housing scene must recognise that there has to be a limit to the amount of subsidy on housing benefit, both in terms of cost because of the area —*[Interruption.]* It is a Library briefing note; even Opposition Members are allowed to read those. There has to be a limit to the amount of money that can be used from the public purse for housing benefit to subsidise the cost of accommodation.

The speech of the hon. Member for Hammersmith on behalf of the Labour party was precisely the style of speech, with the same approach to rented housing, that has dogged the party for many years.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's points. I am impressed by his gall in defending the measure. Will the hon. Gentleman pick up a copy of *Hansard* tomorrow and take it to his surgeries and show it to his constituents who are in rented accommodation and who are complaining about the effects of the measure? If he did, they would say to him, "How did you have the gall to stand up in the House and support such a measure?"

Mr. Hughes: What I shall tell my constituents is that last year's Housing Bill and the one going through at present will provide increased private rented accommodation and housing association rented accommodation, and I was part of what the Government did to improve housing conditions in the capital in the long term.

I want to refer to the gall of the Labour Front Bench. Their approach has been the same as the one that has done disservice to the people of London for so long. The hon. Member for Hammersmith was saying, "It does not matter what size your accommodation is, we will provide the housing benefit." What he was laying out as a scenario of Labour policy was, "We will provide any amount of benefit to anyone living in rented accommodation." Anyone who has canvassed in the east end of London knows that that is the same falsehood that the Labour party has been using for generations to con people in the east end of London into voting for it.

The reality is that that sort of housing policy has never been the truth. It is that sort of policy that has led to some of the worst conditions in the east end of London. It is shameful that we are hearing that that will be the Labour policy for at least the next generation. There will not in fact be a housing policy that deals realistically with the accommodation that could be made available.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Can I take it from what the hon. Gentleman is saying that the policy being presented by the Tories is based on a London situation that will affect Scotland and the rest of the country? That appears to be the theme that the hon. Gentleman is developing.

Mr. Hughes: That is very rich coming from the hon. Gentleman. I have listened to most of his speeches in the debates on the current Local Government and Housing Bill, and he has based every argument on Wakefield.

Mr. O'Brien: Bradford.

Mr. Hughes: I am entitled as a London Member of Parliament, having spent years in local government in London, to base some of my arguments on London. Hon. Members will make their speeches about other parts of the country. I shall talk about London, because I have seen the disgraceful housing conditions caused by Labour's policies in London.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman has been talking about east London. Does he realise that the Government's policies are reversing nearly 50 years of public housing policies for the metropolis and that the social effect on people in east London is to drive young people from the towns in which they were born because they cannot afford to live there? The Government are destroying communities that make this country and of which the hon. Gentleman should be proud. However, he is ignorant because he comes from Harrow. He does not understand.

Mr. Hughes: I do not know where the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) came from originally, but my wife's family are real east-enders and know a great deal about what is going on in the east end. We get from the hon. Members representing the Newham constituencies the sort of middle-class pretensions of latter-day "Johnny come lately" east-enders, which realy makes east-enders sick. Real east-enders recognise that such people are a bit of a joke when they consider their real living conditions.

I recognise that, certainly in the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Southwark, generations of Labour control did nothing to help the situations that have been pointed out to me by the hon. Member for Newham, South. Young people have voted with their feet and have left those boroughs—indeed, his own borough—for generations before this Government came to power. The hon. Gentleman knows that the Tower Hamlets borough council, under the control of his party, did not allow any private building in that area. When the GLC put 34 maisonettes on the market for sale, 1,600 people queued overnight to try to buy them.

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend will have heard the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) give his reasons why the private rented sector had declined so much. It has declined from 50 per cent. immediately after the war to 8 per cent. today. That has happened because of the Rent Acts, which the hon. Member for Hammersmith supports and which we are deregulating, and a massive expansion of municipalisation, which Opposition Members have always supported and to which they have no constructive alternative.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. He is of course absolutely right.

I regard the order as a realistic approach to what can be provided. But I understand that missing from the instrument, although it was in the 1987 consultation paper, is a definition of room sizes, and I am concerned about the sizes of rooms that can be counted as habitable rooms. It

[Mr. Hughes]

has been suggested, for example, that a box room might qualify. A more detailed test, perhaps taking account of floor space, might be helpful.

People recognise that what the Government are introducing is fair and reasonable. The suggestions of Labour Members may sound attractive, but people know that a Labour Government never could or would implement their promises. But that does not matter much because they appreciate that the Labour party will never achieve office and hence will never have the opportunity to impose their policies.

12.57 am

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): This is one of the most mean and vicious pieces of legislation that I have witnessed since coming to this place. The Minister represents a neighbouring constituency to mine. I hope that the Government will have second thoughts about what they are proposing and will withdraw the order and allow further time for debate.

The Association of District Councils says in the document that it has submitted that it had only five days in which to consider this proposal. Considering that the Chancellor had a £14 billion surplus, the Government cannot claim that there is any urgency, financial or otherwise, to introduce a measure such as this. If the Minister considers that a problem exists, he should have further discussions with the local authorities in the coming year and then introduce a more sensible measure.

In his introductory remarks, the Minister spoke of fair rents, market rents, reasonable market rents—meaning presumably that market rents, even if they were considered to be reasonable, would be higher than fair rents—and unreasonable market rents. For a Government who believe that the solution to the housing problem lies with a free market and an increase in the private rented sector, this is an appalling piece of legislation.

Considering the changes that the Government are forcing on local government in housing, with another housing measure going through this year, I have no doubt that tonight's order represents a foot in the door prior to assessing council house rebates in a few years from now. I urge the Minister to appreciate that many people have no choice of size of property or even location of that property.

Time after time the Government talk about choice, but people's choice is determined by ability to pay and, depending on where they live, they may find it impossible to get the appropriate sized property. It is appalling that, when the Government are considering people's homes, they should talk about rooms of a certain size or rooms that are not needed.

The Minister did not like what my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said, although he did not overstate the case, but the hon. Gentleman must recognise that there must be fairness of treatment for people, whether they are renting or buying houses. I do not know how the Minister can justify a person buying a house bigger or more expensive than is necessary and getting the maximum subsidy, and even tax rebates in some cases, and at the same time support this order. That shows the point that the extreme Right wing of the Tory party has reached in 1989.

I ask the Minister to think again. He said it was a matter of collective responsibility. He did not want to say who was responsible. But even if it is collective responsibility, it will always be his name that is remembered as that of the member of this Government who moved this appalling motion tonight. He should think again and, before it is too late, say that he is prepared to withdraw it and talk with the local authority associations.

1.2 am

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I just want to ask the Labour spokesman who will wind up this debate four questions. We heard from the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) no intimation of what Labour party policy is in this area.

First, does the Labour party have any policy or any limit on the housing benefit which can be given to an individual or spent as a proportion of total Government expenditure?

Secondly, is there any property size limit which the Labour party would impose on housing benefit claimants?

Thirdly, would it place any limit on the areas which housing benefit claimants might move to, given the size and cost of properties?

Fourthly, if there are no limits on any of those three matters, can the Labour spokesman who sums up tell us what he says to Labour councils which allocate properties to families based on the size of the family, and ask families to move if they are occupying properties of a size they do not require?

1.3 am

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): At least the hon. Members for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) and for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) have the gall to stand up and attempt to involve themselves in this debate. For that reason alone they will both be honourable candidates for the order of the brown nose.

To answer the hon. Member for Pembroke, the Labour Government would not be operating in a housing market as chaotic as the present market. It is as simple as that.

The hon. Member asked to what level housing benefit should go. The answer is the level it is required to go to in order to provide people with decent homes in which to live and accommodation that we would find acceptable for us to live in. That is the sort of standard that we should impose upon other people. That seems to me to be sensible and rational.

What worries me about all this is the stench of hypocrisy that pervades it.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The hon. Gentleman and I are serving on the Local Government and Housing Bill Committee, and indeed he is the Whip for the Labour party. The Labour party criticises the £8,000 limit for claiming housing benefit. What limit would the Labour party have?

Mr. Banks: I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) since the question was essentially directed at him..

Mr. Soley: As usual, the question is irrelevant. As I have said on a number of occasions, what we must do—and have frequently said that we will do prior to a proper reform of housing finance—is to ensure that rents are

assessed independently of the landlords so that we do not fall into the trap in which the Government presently find themselves, with housing benefit rising through the roof.

Mr. Banks: I do not honestly believe that, other than those on the Front Bench, any Conservative Member has read and understood the order. The reluctance of Conservative Members to support the Minister is all the evidence we need to know that Conservative Members do not know what it contains. They just want to get through it, get away and disappear home. It is appalling when the House passes such measures at this time of night. There is something very contemptible about the way in which the Minister has brought this to the House. The Government are trying to slip it through the House at this time, rather like thieves in the night—knowing very well that it will be given very little, if any, press coverage.

The first time that most people will realise how this order is to affect them will be when it smacks them straight between the eyes. They will not read about it in the newspapers, or hear about it on the radio or television. The Government have also ensured that the timetable is so short that there has not been enough time to consult, advise and inform. That is deliberate and contemptible. I am surprised that the Minister has allowed himself to be used in this way.

The deregulation of the private rented sector and the introduction of the assured tenancies for new, private and housing association tenants, under the 1988 Act, has meant that rents are increasing rapidly. The Government have argued that this will not stop people on moderate incomes from finding accommodation because they will receive housing benefit. What the Prime Minister said at this afternoon's Question Time shows that she does not know about the reality—she does not have the personal experience and the factual information is not provided for her. In this afternoon's Prime Minister's Question Time she unintentionally misled the House.

We now know that benefits will escalate, and to solve that problem—which is largely of their own making—the Government have allowed local authorities to decide how much benefit to pay to the tenant. They have also changed the rent officer's role, from one of setting fair rents under the old system, to one of setting the level of subsidy that a council can receive on the benefit which it pays.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith gave an example where, if the rent of a flat, as set by the landlord, was £80 but the rent officer says that a reasonable market rent is £60, that is all that the council may receive from the DSS. The council is then in the unenviable position of having to decide between paying the full amount and asking the rate or poll tax payers for the extra £20, or paying benefit of £60 and leaving the tenant to find the extra £20, or risk eviction and homelessness. Many councils—especially those in London where rents are generally much higher than elsewhere in the country and where many local authorities are rate-capped—will pay benefits only when they can be sure of receiving subsidy.

The Government must face the implication of deregulation and make full subsidies available—which is what the Prime Minister was suggesting this afternoon. They should not expect hard-pressed councils to pick up the tab and tenants to suffer. If landlords are to be prevented from exploiting the benefit system, there must be either rent control or the Government must dispense with hypocrisy and set a ceiling over which no benefit should be paid.

Mr. Corbyn: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Social Security Standing Committee discussed this matter at great length? One concern that emerged, which Ministers were unable to answer, was whether, if a local authority paid the difference between a housing benefit allocation for the rent level and the real rent level, this would be permissible expenditure. Could local councillors be threatened with surcharges for spending money in order to keep people in private rented accommodation to avoid them being thrown on the streets and becoming homeless and thus ineligible for rehousing under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 because they would be deemed intentionally homeless?

Mr. Banks: That illustrates the nature of the order.

I am reading deliberately, because I still cherish the thought that one or two Conservative Members may realise how appalling the order is and start asking questions. Perhaps I am being charitable. Even the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes)—because he was reading his brief and learning from it as he made his speech—suddenly fixed on the question of room size, and suggested to the Minister in a more reasonable tone that perhaps he should consider it. That is a fair question, and I hope that the Minister will answer it when he sums up.

"In most cases, except where the council cannot legally restrict benefit which applies to vulnerable and elderly people, benefits will be paid only up to the level set by the rent officer.

Tenants, many already with little money, will undoubtedly undergo hardship.

However landlords have listened to the Government's rhetoric and because of the Housing Act have greater ability to levy higher rents and obtain the eviction of tenants.

In London about 10 per cent. of all households accepted as homeless by London boroughs—3,000 families—are homeless because they have lost a private tenancy. This has been constant since 1980, during which time the sector has declined rapidly. Therefore homelessness as a result of eviction, rent arrears etc. constitutes a growing proportion of those living in private rented accommodation. This measure will create an even larger problem for private tenants and many housing association tenants too.

The result will be that people with lower or moderate incomes, as well as the young and unemployed, will increasingly face eviction and possible homelessness."

Let us consider the concerns about unreasonably large accommodation. No Member on either side of the House would be prepared to live in the conditions that the order will impose on private tenants. If we are not prepared to endure the restrictions that we are placing on others, why should they be prepared to accept those restrictions? Why should we have the gall and hypocrisy to inflict them on them?

I hope that, even if the order is passed, when hon. Members read it again they will put pressure on their own Front Bench—perhaps even privately—to redress some of its blatant injustices. The timetabling is bad: there has been no time to consult. Local authorities have not even had time to set up the necessary software on the computers to make their calculations. We shall simply have more muddle and confusion to add to the suffering that the Government have already inflicted on those in both the private and the public rented sectors.

I ask the Minister to reconsider—even at this late hour—and to announce that he will withdraw the order from further consideration.

1.12 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): In my view, this is an inevitable consequence of the Government's policy of moving from subsidising public sector housing to supposedly trying to subsidise individials. There is much sense in such a move, but it is a humane and tenable policy only if the subsidies offered to those individuals are properly and generously given.

This order will rebound against the Government in the weeks, months and years to come because it is iniquitous and unfair. Certainly it contradicts any attempt to make flexible use of the available housing stock. The point was made earlier that the configuration of available empty housing stock in Scotland suggests that, by and large, it is larger rather than smaller. That means, for example, that it is difficult if not impossible to accommodate the almost 50 per cent. of waiting lists in Scotland which consist of single people, matching need with supply.

There is a very great question mark in my mind about whether the order will save money in the longer term. Certainly it will greatly increase bureaucracy, which is worrying. Ultimately, the money saved will not be worth the implementation of that bureaucratic edifice. The order will certainly affect the standards of accommodation available to vulnerable groups of people on housing waiting lists. The order should have set minimum standards. Almost inevitably, it will lead to increased homelessness. If more people become homeless, more people will have to go into bed-and-breakfast accommodation and that will increase the cost to the Exchequer.

We had some interesting debates on the Housing (Scotland) Bill 1988 in Committee and on the Floor of the House about the appeals system which would deal with the part of the legislation covered by the order. I have seen many appeal systems in social security and other legislation, but this is the worst by a long way. I can think of no justification for using the term "appeal system" in its accepted sense in this context. The system is totally and completely unjustifiable and should be re-examined.

I am most worried about the effect of the order on vulnerable groups. In previous legislation there were safeguards for vulnerable groups—that no deduction should be made if the household contained someone over 60, someone incapable of work, a child or a young person unless suitable cheaper accommodation was available and it was reasonable for the local authority to expect the claimant to move. No such safeguards exist in this order.

It may be of interest to the House that on 11 October a Minister in the other place said during the debate on the Housing Bill that

"the interaction between the subsidy controls and the need for local authorities to consider the position of elderly and disabled claimants who might find it difficult to move to smaller or cheaper accommodation has to be very carefully considered."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 11 October 1988; Vol. 176, c. 750.]

It would be interesting to hear from the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), when he replies to the debate, exactly how the position of those vulnerable groups has been considered under the order. The hon. Gentleman holds collective responsibility for what was said in the other place by the Earl of Caithness, so we wait to hear what safeguards have been put in place to protect vulnerable groups.

The order will affect the tenants' choice provisions and will act as a considerable disincentive. The provisions apply to assured tenancies and not to local authority tenants. If someone has a spare room and decides to opt out and enter an assured tenancy, he may be lumbered with contractual arrears due to under-occupation, so public sector tenants with spare rooms would be stone mad to consider exercising choice and moving to another landlord if they are on housing benefit.

In conclusion, the result of the new order will be to increase homelessness among those already disadvantaged by being in particularly vulnerable groups with none of the safeguards of previous legislation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Surely the hon. Gentleman's point about assured tenancies would not apply to ownership co-operatives or housing associations.

Mr. Kirkwood: I accept that. I was talking about the position of a person with a local authority tenancy who moves to an assured tenancy with a spare room. If I have got that wrong, I shall be happy to be put right.

This is one of the worst orders that I have come across in my six years in the House. It is a disgrace and the Government should consider nothing short of withdrawing it.

1.19 am

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I want to make one point about the position of elderly couples, of whom there are many thousands in my constituency. Their children have grown up and moved away, so they find themselves with at least one spare room. I have read the order carefully and there is scope in it for the difference between their real rent and the reasonable rent to be subsidised up to 50 per cent. It seems to me —and I am asking for clarification on this—that the Government are asking local authorities to meet the other 50 per cent. Is it not the case that, under the order, many thousands of elderly couples, through no fault of their own, will find that they cannot cover their rent fully and they will be forced to leave flats and areas where they may have lived all their lives?

It is one thing to say that local authorities encourage such pensioners to move. To my knowledge, no local authority forces pensioners to move out of the home in which they have lived for 40, 50 or 60 years. Under the order, thousands of pensioners, especially in London, may find themselves forced to move out of the only home that they have known for 50 years to save money. I want an assurance for my pensioners in Hackney that nobody will be moved out of his home under the terms of the order.

Mr. Trippier: I want to deal quickly with three points. It is obvious to the House that I shall not be able to deal with all the questions raised, but I shall try to deal with most. First, there is a misunderstanding about the order. Comparatively few people will be paying rent above what will be assessed as the market rent. By any standards, the market rent will be relatively high and we have accepted that.

Secondly, there is a misunderstanding about the payment of 100 per cent. of subsidy to the market level. It is only if those elderly people are paying rent above the market level that the subsidy will drop to 50 per cent.

Thirdly, the local authority can subsidise the rent itself, so it does not mean that people have to make a contribution, and that goes on in many cases at present.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I shall give a concrete example from Cardiff, which was discovered by a ward councillor in the past week. An elderly pensioner widower had lived in the same two-bedroomed terraced house for 50 years on a controlled tenancy. The rent had been increased by the landlord to £160 a month and, because the house was under-occupied, the man's housing benefit had been assessed at £60 a month. How is a pensioner supposed to meet that £100 a month difference? The pensioner was in tears as he explained this, after receiving his £15 weekly allocation. He could move to a local authority flat, but he would not be any better off and there are almost no local authority flats. The two-bedroomed terrace house he rents is £100 more expensive than the housing benefit he is receiving.

Ms. Abbott: The Minister has said that when only 50 per cent. subsidy is available, the local authorities may provide the other 50 per cent. of the difference. The point I am trying to make to the Minister—and his colleagues may be able to fill him in more than I can—is that many London local authorities will be hard put to make up that difference. I am not persuaded by anything the Minister has said that there will not be many pensioners in London and other local authorities who will find themselves forced out of their homes.

I took the opportunity earlier to look up the details of the family seat of the Dukes of Hamilton. It is called Lennoxlove. It ill behoves some Front-Bench Conservatives, who have not one spare room but hundreds of spare rooms in their family houses——

Mr. Tony Banks: Spare castles.

Ms. Abbott: —to lecture the pensioners of Hackney and pensioners in working-class areas about how many rooms they are supposed to have.

1.24 am

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): I noted with interest the brief intervention of the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) who sought soft landings for kids in safe play areas in a ten-minute Bill last week. I wonder what he thinks about the hard landing that many thousands of pensioners will experience as a result of the order.

Since 1979 the Government's housing record has been despicable. Little or no municipal housing is being built, less private housing is being built and those in the south-east complain about high housing costs because there are not enough houses. The lack of housing leads to increased demand and higher prices. As Conservative Members have said, the order seeks to deal with problems in the south-east, but it will also hammer thousands of people in the rest of the country, particularly in Scotland.

We are told that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), does not have the courage to come to the Dispatch Box tonight, and I am not surprised. However, I invite him to do so to tell us what will be the effect of the Scottish homes legislation which enables council tenants to have a private landlord. Will they be telling people who take up that option that if they have a spare room in their house they will lose their housing benefit?

This is a despicable measure. It should be condemned by everybody. I am sure that Conservative Members in the Chamber tonight do not understand the terrible damage that they are doing to the poorest and least advantaged people in Britain. This is a despicable measure from a despicable Minister and we hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will come to the Dispatch Box and defend it.

1.26 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The order owes nothing to the housing needs of the British people. It is not designed to do so. It is just another example of the Tory Government slaughtering the housing needs and hopes of millions of people on the altar of the market economy, with all its gobbledegook about market forces and who will set and pay rents.

I shall not say that this is a landlord's charter; it is worse than that. It is a profiteering landlord's charter. The rent officer will no longer be an independent objective person who ensures that a fair rent once fixed is adhered to and to whom one can appeal if a landlord tries to increase such a rent. People, particularly in London, will be harassed out of protected tenancies by con merchants and thrown on to the streets so that the private rented sector, the free market, can allow the level of rent to rise to its natural level—the highest that can be obtained.

The Minister knows perfectly well what the effect of the order on people in receipt of housing benefit will be. In the past, such people could obtain a tenancy from a private landlord with the assurance that their housing benefit would meet that rent and the landlord would know that he could collect such a rent. Landords will now know that if the rent that they are charging is above the level decided on by the rent officer as the market level, the housing benefit will not meet those needs so that the tenant may not be able to pay the full rent. It is very likely that the local authority will not be able to pay the difference even if it wants to, so, yet again, unemployed people and those on low incomes in receipt of housing benefit will be deterred, if not prevented, from obtaining housing on the private rented market.

When the Minister talks glibly about market rents, he knows perfectly well that the levels that his Department is now working on are way out of date. He talks of rents of £50 and £60 a week for one-bedroomed flats in the private sector in inner London. He should go to my constituency and look in some of the accommodation agencies. In their windows there are one-bedroomed flats going for £100 a week or more in the private rented sector. The effect of their deregulation has been to force up private sector rents, to have people thrown out on the streets, and there will be greater homelessness and profiteering by landlords.

The fact that the Minister claimed that the local authority of my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), who made an excellent speech, was doing the same as the Government shows his ignorance of what local authorities are doing. They try to have minimum criteria, which ought to be possible to achieve, whereby children of vastly different ages do not have to share a room, whereby parents do not have to share a room with their children, and whereby there is

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

some respect for people with a serious illness, such as septicaemia, so that they can have a separate room in their flats.

Under this order there will be a rabbit-hutch formula, whereby poor people in receipt of housing benefit will be forced to live in disgracefully small, sub-standard accommodation.

Mr. Pike: Is it not true to say that, when local authorities lay down their criteria, one of the things that constrains them is the increasing pressure from the Government, which makes it impossible for local authorities to meet the demand? That has to be borne in mind when one is considering any criteria that the local authority have with regard to their allocations policy.

Mr. Corbyn: Precisely. My local authority does its best to meet the housing needs of the people of the borough. It cannot do it. No London borough is capable of even fulfilling its statutory housing obligations at the present time. As the situation gets worse, the definition of intentionally homeless gets wider and wider, so that local authorities do not have to take people into bed and breakfast or hostel accommodation. Most of those people who tonight are sleeping on the streets around Waterloo station, the National Theatre and along the South Bank, who are begging at the main stations of this city, who are sleeping over the grilles of tube stations on Charing Cross road, not long ago had somewhere to live.

Those people are the victims of market forces, the victims of what this Government are doing and believe should be done to poor people, who cannot afford the landlords' rent. That is what it is about. The Minister has an arrogant smirk on his face tonight, the arrogance of a man who has thrown people on the street, who knows full well that the measures he is putting through this House tonight, in the dead of night, will cause untold hardship.

This country is very rich indeed and has enormous resources. If this House and this Government wanted to, resources could be found to provide a house for everybody in this country. There need be nobody sleeping on the streets; there need be no homelessness and no evictions because people cannot meet the kind of rents being demanded. What is required to do that is control on profiteering, and funding for local authorities to enable them to build what is required. It needs a Government determined to put in train the construction of the council houses needed for rent, rather than the pitiful level of 15,000 which have been completed this year.

It is with great anger that I ask the House tonight to vote against this disgraceful order, one of the most disgraceful orders I have seen during the time I have been in this House, and one which will cause untold misery throughout this country. It is a disgrace that it should be debated in the middle of the night, when the media are not here to report this travesty of justice.

1.33 am

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): My first question is whether the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), will be replying to the debate or not. He seems to be indicating that he is not. That is an absolute disgrace. It is an insult to the people of Scotland and to Scottish Members of Parliament, and it is yet another abuse of Scottish legislation put through this House by the Government. In fact, it is the second example in 24 hours because earlier today we debated major changes in water legislation in Scotland in just an hour and a quarter. The Scottish Office Minister is too much of a coward to come to the Dispatch Box——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman knew perfectly well when I spoke to him yesterday that it was possible to hold a separate debate, in which case I would have moved the motion and replied to the debate. However, the orders have been taken together.

Mr. Maxton: Had I known that the Scottish Office Minister would not be replying to the debate, we would have had a three-hour debate and kept Tory Members here until 3 am.

Mr. Foulkes: Four Scottish Members have participated in the debate—my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) and the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh). That makes it imperative that the Minister should reply. He has been here throughout the debate, so it is perfectly possible for him to do so. All that the English Minister needs to do is to pass over his brief.

Mr. Maxton: It is disgraceful that the Scottish Office Minister will not reply. However, it is not untypical of Scottish Office Ministers or of the Government—particularly when they are pushing through a measure that is so obviously based on what happens in London and has nothing to do with Scotland. If the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), think that he can reply to the points raised by Scottish Members, he is mistaken. He knows nothing about Scottish housing legislation or about how this legislation affects Scotland. The whole affair is beyond belief.

This is one of the most hypocritical pieces of legislation that I have seen for a long time. I sat through the legislation that brought in the poll tax for Scotland. I remember that the Government based almost their entire case for that on the little old lady who had been widowed and lived on her own, paying the same rates as the family next door. No one in the Government suggested then that she might be better off moving into less luxurious accommodation. The Government gave her a massive subsidy—up to £1,500 in my constituency—by introducing the poll tax. Well-heeled widows living alone get massive subsidies, but poor widows on housing benefit have their benefit slashed and have to look for somewhere else to live—or find enormous sums of money to avoid doing so.

The Minister can keep looking at his watch for as long as he likes. I shall talk right through and he will not get the opportunity to reply to the debate.

Mr. Trippier: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you give us guidance so that we can clear up whether a Scottish Minister should reply to the debate? Am I not correct in saying that it is within the purview of any hon. Member to object to two orders being taken together, and that if even one Opposition Member had objected, the orders would have been debated separately? I challenge the

hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) because I believe that he knew that if the orders were taken together the Scottish Office Minister would not reply.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I can confirm what the hon. Gentleman says. The House decided at the beginning of the debate that the two orders would be taken together.

Perhaps I may tell the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) that it is customary, though not obligatory, to allow the Minister who introduced an order to reply to it.

Mr. Maxton: I could not care less what the customs are in this matter. I have points to make about Scotland.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to say that he could not care less what you have said? After you explained what the conventions of the House are, I distinctly heard the hon. Gentleman say that he could not care less what you said. That is a disgraceful way in which to treat you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Member for defending the Chair, but I did not take it in that way.

Mr. Pike: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. Is it customary for a Minister seeking to open and reply to a debate on an order to ask for the permission of the House in any event?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not so in the case of an order of this kind, when a Minister who opens is entitled to reply without seeking the leave of the House. Mr. Maxton.

Mr. Maxton *rose*——

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not also a custom of the House, although not perhaps in Standing Orders, that when an order or a Bill is before the House that applies both to England and Scotland, and where hon. Members representing both countries have fully participated, and a Minister from the second nation is present, it is courteous for the Minister for the other nation to wind up the debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is a matter for Ministers rather than the Chair.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not an abuse of democracy that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) should first challenge my hon. Friend the Minister to answer various questions, and say that he had no intention of telling the House the Labour party's policy, and now deny the Minister the opportunity of answering the questions raised by both Opposition and Conservative Members?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I repeat that it is customary for a Minister who has introduced an order to be allowed to reply.

Mr. Maxton: It is customary, but there are no rules that say it has to be the case. I shall answer one of the questions posed by both the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) and the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett).

We were asked whether we were prepared to allow any increase in housing benefit, whatever the cost. I will tell him. On 1 April this year, private landlords in Scotland who, up to now, have been asking for a combined rent and rates——

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you confirm that the debate is due to end at 1.42 am? The consequence of the Labour Front-Bench filibuster is that my hon. Friend the Minister will not have a chance to reply to the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I confirm that the debate must end at 1.42 am.

Mr. Maxton: The point I was making, when the hon. Gentleman interrupted, was that on 1 April there will be landlords in Scotland——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 134, Noes 96.

Division No. 128] **[1.42 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*

Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Dorrell and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 23rd February, be approved.

Motion made, and Question put,

That the draft Rent Officers (Additional Functions) (Scotland) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 1st March, be approved.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

The House divided: Ayes 129, Noes 95.

Division No. 129] **[1.53 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilshire, David
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*

Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Haynes, Frank
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Community Hospitals

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

2.3 am

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): My interest in the subject of community hospitals has been stimulated by the proposals of the Gloucester health authority, which seeks to close the Berkeley and Tetbury hospitals in my constituency. Those are hospitals that are greatly valued by the communities which they serve. The communities have responded generously, both to the modernisation and the upkeep of those hospitals, largely through the sterling efforts of the leagues of friends. Moreover, the communities were originally given these hospitals by local benefactors in the last century, although it would seem that, with a piece of Socialist spite, the property was confiscated from them in 1948.

The level of public concern for these hospitals is shown by the fact that at recent public meetings protesting against their closure about 1,000 people attended the Tetbury and over 600 turned up at Berkeley. The purpose of this debate is not to criticise the Gloucester health authority, which is one of the best in the country, but rather to challenge the basis on which the assessments of the working party which was set up by that health authority were made.

I appreciate that if I dwell solely on constituency matters I shall receive virtually the standard response from the Minister, which is that small community hospitals make an important contribution to the NHS but that it is for individual health authorities to determine the appropriate pattern of district services. In doing so, they will balance the benefits of community alongside those of larger district hospitals in the light of changing circumstances so as to secure from the available resources the best possible value and level of service provision for all the local communities that they serve.

I have seen that answer on a number of occasions, but I hope tonight to hear a little more, and I respectfully suggest to the Minister that the Government should have a policy towards community hospitals beyond the bland statement that they make an important contribution to the NHS, because some are under the threat of closure or have closed for reasons which give cause for concern.

The role of community hospitals was perhaps best defined by Dr. Rou in the *Health Service Journal* dated 26 February 1987, when he said that

"patients suitable for admission to the community hospital may broadly be described as patients who, while requiring hospital care because they cannot be managed at home, do not require the facilities of a district general hospital or the services of a specialist team."

Indeed, the working party of the Gloucester health authority paid a generous tribute to the work of the community hospitals before proposing their closure. Can anybody suggest that there is any reduced demand for their services? Elderly people should not have to travel upwards of 20 miles for treatment that they could receive locally. In particular, the terminally ill must prefer to spend their final months or weeks in their own localities where their friends and families, and the vicar, can visit them and the doctor they know can treat them.

Can the Minister confirm that the NHS reforms that are currently being instituted—and should be pursued—include the belief that the NHS should be more

[Mr. Roger Knapman]

consumer-orientated? If so, the protection of community hospitals should have top priority, for the reasons I have outlined.

But it is not just in Gloucestershire that such concerns exist. The Association of General Practitioner Hospitals considers that there are about 400 general practitioner hospitals in Britain but would like to see that number increased to between 1,000 and 1,500. Yet fears have been expressed about the closure of such hospitals. They are indeed tempting targets, likely to be thought of as peripheral to those who believe that they can spend the money in a more effective way.

We are realistic enough to realise that the roles of community hospitals are not set in tablets of stone and that many operations are exceedingly complicated and can be carried out only at the district general hospitals with, among other things, modern anaesthetic equipment. So, seen from the eyes of a health authority, such proposals can make sense; it is much easier for it to conduct its business under one roof and centralise its activities in one district general hospital.

It was reported in the *General Practitioner* dated 5 February 1988:

"In hospitals which use nurses to work in theatre, in casualty and on the wards, a drop in operations can quickly make it easy for the district to cut staff, argue the theatre is not viable and ultimately the whole hospital is not cost-effective."

I would say that that summary entirely fits the pattern that has occurred in my constituency. Such proposals are directly contradictory to the views expressed in the DHSS report "The Way Forward", admittedly now some 11 years old, and more recently "Towards good practices in small hospitals" by Dr. Charles Shaw. The reason for this is best illustrated by the background paper "Community Care", which is available in the House of Commons Library. On page 3 of this paper it is shown that the principal agencies involved in community care are social security, health, social services, housing, the voluntary sector and the private sector.

Does my hon. Friend agree that all those parties are concerned with health provision, including the care of the elderly? The reality is that if the health authorities are able to close community hospitals many of their elderly or geriatric patients will then be looked after and paid for by other services, and this is the crux of the matter. Health authorities have a duty to manage their budgets in the most efficient manner, but do they take into account the effect on other agencies, such as the Department of Social Security? The inescapable truth is that they do not. Therefore, the right answer for the health authority is often the wrong one for others affected—wrong for the taxpayer, wrong for other providers of health care and, above all, wrong for the people in the locality concerned.

Community care and community hospitals are inextricably linked. In most areas we have an aging population, some of whom require regular treatment, and they should not be required to travel long distances to obtain that treatment.

Can my hon. Friend confirm that the cost of care in community hospitals is about 60 per cent. of that in district general hospitals? That seems to be the experience in Finland, where I believe a study has been made. It is also estimated that 40 per cent. of all operations could be undertaken at community hospitals. Do the health authorities have the flexibility to analyse these matters and use the community hospitals more frequently, thereby taking pressure off the district general hospitals? What is our policy towards community care? Surely our response to the Griffiths report should be known before any more community hospitals are closed.

Towns with community hospitals are often treated like a pampered minority. But I suggest that in rural areas community hospitals are a natural and necessary focal point for medical care and community care in that district. Of course, economies can be made. In too many towns we have the doctors' surgeries in one street, provision for elderly people in another and the community hospital elsewhere—in other words, scattered all round the town and all the premises requiring staff round the clock. Sheer common sense dictates that huge savings could be made by concentrating these on one site wherever possible.

In conclusion, can my hon. Friend confirm two main points? The first is that no more closures of community health hospitals will be made before our response to the Griffiths report is known—I gather this may be known soon. The second, and perhaps most important, is that when health authorities justify such closures by savings —I suggest often illusory savings—these figures will be considered only in the context of overall health provision and the financial effects on other providers of health care will be considered.

A former permanent secretary remarked:

"If you are not confused about community care and community hospitals it shows you are not thinking clearly."

I feel confident that my hon. Friend will help to lift the fog.

2.14 am

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I rise to support my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) because I have similar constituency interests. I have small hospitals in my constituency. I wish to take this opportunity to remind the Minister of the enormous fund of goodwill that exists in rural areas for these small hospitals. My hon. Friend has drawn attention to the fact that, in the main, they are generously supported by leagues of hospital friends. In an earlier debate this week we were reminded that this nation is very charitable and the hospitals in our community have, on many occasions, been the beneficiaries of the charity for which the British people are renowned.

In my constituency—I am sure that this also applies in other constituencies—small hospitals are a focal point of community life and we should not underestimate their importance. In the countryside there is a sense of community and belonging which has long since been lost in many of our towns and cities and will not easily be regained.

I endorse all that my hon. Friend has said about the low cost of these hospitals. He suggested that they may be up to 40 per cent. cheaper than the bigger ones. They are certainly more homely, which is an important feature for their patients, and they are also more compassionate. They are capable of dealing with minor accidents, convalescent cases, patients needing respite care and—as my hon. Friend has mentioned—the terminally ill. They play an important and vital role in our community.

If these hospitals are allowed to close they will never be replaced and their demise would be the loss of an

inestimable asset. We should consider this matter carefully and not leave any stone unturned in our efforts to keep them open.

2.16 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) on securing time for a debate on the future of community hospitals. I also listened with great interest to the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill). I know of his strong constituency interests in community hospitals. I also noted the interest of my right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Mr. Cope), in whose constituency Berkeley hospital fell prior to the last boundary changes.

In opening the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud asked me to spell out Government policy on community hospitals and this is an excellent opportunity to do so. He will not expect me to make a specific statement about the two hospitals in his constituency, for reasons which I will outline later. Not only for the record, but for the purposes of this brief debate, I shall outline Government thinking on the role and importance of these hospitals.

Ministers have said on a number of occasions that small, non-specialised hospitals have a valuable role to play in providing a limited range of services, if that is what is needed locally. Local needs and wishes, the health authorities' assessment of them, and their own priorities will decide the future for each community hospital. Health authorities must ask themselves: is the hospital popular with the local community? Is its current function appropriate to today's circumstances? Is it cost-effective? Before any decisions are made the pros and cons of small community hospitals must be considered.

The advantages, as I see them, are as follows. First, relationships with local people and primary care services are easier where the hospital is seen as part of the local community being served. If it is serving geriatric patients, that means that they are able to stay in their local community. Secondly, recruitment of some categories of non-medical staff may be easier. They do not usually have to travel far to work and they soon become familiar with the hospital, the services it provides and staff already working there. Thirdly, not all in-patients will need the full range of investigation and treatment available in larger hospitals. Fourthly, journeys and access will be easier for relatives and friends as well as for patients. Fifthly, such hospitals encourage local voluntary support—and I very much agree with what both my hon. Friends have said on that score. Sixthly, communications between management and staff are less complex. Finally, GP beds can provide continuity of care directly from the GP's surgery to the hospital. I should explain that a GP bed is not under the control of a consultant, and that the GP usually provides the medical care.

However, some disadvantages should be borne in mind. First, small hospitals will not have the full range of diagnostic equipment and specialised treatment that may be required if complications develop, meaning that patients may have to be moved elsewhere. That is particularly true of maternity, in which regard I have a continuing responsibility to reduce the level of infant post-natal mortality. It is undeniable that the larger district general hospitals have a better range of facilities to resuscitate infants born with complications than some of the smaller community hospitals.

Secondly, there may be uneconomic duplications of services and specialised staff on a number of different sites. Thirdly, they may not provide all the experience and variety of training that nursing staff require. Fourthly, they may not provide all the experience that junior medical staff require as part of their training, leading to the royal college's withdrawal of training recognition of posts and consequent medical staff shortages. Junior doctors may also be required to work very long hours to provide cover because they do not have the benefit of the size of staff of a large acute hospital.

Staff costs are higher where there is travel between two or more sites because medical and other specialised staff are on site only part-time. That could result in a reduction of quality in clinical services. Finally, there is the risk that staff may become professionally isolated and inward-looking.

Of course, not all those factors will apply in any particular case: each proposed new community hospital or proposed closure of an existing hospital must be considered on its merits. It therefore seems to me that the trend, which undeniably exists, away from small hospitals for acute in-patient care—I stress the word "acute"—will continue, except for the following clinical purposes. My hon. Friends may agree with this.

First—I am now referring to categories of care that it is appropriate to provide in smaller community hospitals—there is minor surgical and medical treatment not requiring sophisticated supporting services, which can often take place under GP supervision. Secondly, there are day surgery facilities—although again day surgery is not for the inexperienced, and difficulties may be caused by the lack of sophisticated back-up facilities. Thirdly, there is the possibility of some long-stay geriatric provision. In general, however, geriatric acute care should be based at the district general hospital, although I agree with my hon. Friend that for non-acute geriatric care there is an almost overwhelming case for including the local community hospital. Fourthly, there is recuperation and rehabilitation nearer home following major surgery at the district hospital, thus releasing beds in the hospital and reducing lengths of in-patient stay there.

Small hospitals may contribute to the health care of the elderly in three ways: through rehabilitation, continuing care and "respite" care. For patients who do not need the full range of medical services, small hospitals away from the district general hospital site may offer a quieter, less formalised environment and easier travelling for both patient and visitors—who may themselves be elderly. For rehabilitation units, small hospitals can provide a base for the various remedial therapy services.

Many patients in long-stay care essentially need nursing but not specialist medical care. Given that their long-stay bed effectively becomes their home until they die, health authorities are urged to provide this service in a homely setting rather than within the rigidities of a hospital ward. The beds may be provided in a private nursing home under a contractual arrangement, in a nursing home within the National Health Service or in a small hospital, depending on what is appropriate to meet the needs of the patient, and the relative cost advantages.

Small local hospitals no longer needed for other services may be suitable for adaptation to services for the

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

elderly. I very much agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud that small hospitals can provide those services. I also agree that we should not isolate expenditure on community hospitals from that on primary care—that is care provided by the doctor—social services or social security payments.

Indeed, the essence of good care for elderly people is frequently a continuation of support from all those services. The Griffiths report is, of course, mainly concerned with care in the community rather than in hospital. My hon. Friend is well aware that we are actively engaged in working up our own proposals and hope to be in a position to bring forward our plans in the near future. I cannot give my hon. Friend the assurance he seeks that there should be a moratorium on closures of any community hospital, but I can say that we shall take into account the wider aspects of community care in any decision on an appeal against closure which comes to Ministers and I hope that my hon. Friend will be satisfied with that assurance.

Turning to the procedures that are normally followed in any proposed hospital closure, district health authorities should consult widely where changes are being proposed to the local pattern of hospital provision and services. GPs, other health interests and professionals, the community health council, local authorities and voluntary bodies should be included. They will need to take into account not only the age and suitability of the buildings concerned, but also costs of repair and adaptation, future running costs, local patterns of travel and employment, likely availability of suitable trained staff, including medical and nursing recognition for training by the royal colleges, and existing links between the hospital and its local community, including links with local voluntary bodies. Any proposals for closure or significant changes in services provided which have been objected to by a community health council must be decided upon by Ministers.

Earlier in my remarks, I set out the criteria that we believe are relevant in considering the value of local community hospitals, and I hope that district health authorities will bear them in mind during the consultation process.

In the south-west, the regional health authority sees a vital role for its community hospitals which are so important, especially in rural areas. The regional health authority has, however, asked districts to review the effectiveness of their smaller hospitals, and that is a perfectly appropriate request. As my hon. Friend knows, I cannot comment on individual closure plans unless and until they are appealed to Ministers. However, in conclusion, I can say that we shall always treat any appeal carefully and after proper regard for all representations made.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 22 March 1989

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 6 April.

ASSOCIATED BRITISH PORTS (HULL) BILL *(By Order)*

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (NO. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

HYTHE, KENT, MARINA BILL *(By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND (VICTORIA) BILL *(By Order)*

WENTWORTH ESTATE BILL *(By Order)*

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE SOUTHBANK BILL *(By Order)*

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL *(By Order)*

REDBRIDGE LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 6 April.

CITY OF LONDON (VARIOUS POWERS) BILL
Ordered,
That the requirement of S.O. 168 (Charges affecting public revenue to be printed in italics) shall be dispensed with in the case of the City of London (Various Powers) Bill.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Unified Development Plans

1. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the proposed unified development plans; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Water and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): The arrangements for the preparation of unitary development plans, including my right hon. Friend's strategic guidance, are well advanced. Responses are still being received to the draft strategic guidance for Greater Manchester.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that it is much better if planning decisions are made locally whenever possible, and that the Government's record is much better than that of the Labour Government in this respect? Does he also agree that when unified development plans are in place there should be far fewer appeals to the Secretary of State?

Mr. Howard: Unitary development plans should certainly improve matters further, and I expect them to lead to a much greater say for local people in the taking of planning decisions.

Mr. Conway: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that local plans have particular significance for towns of historic importance—of which Shrewsbury is one, being among the top dozen on the Department's list of towns of specific importance? Shrewsbury, like the city of Durham is surrounded on three sides by a river and thus has particular planning difficulties, so the inspectors' recommendations to my right hon. Friend in respect of local plans are particularly important and should receive far greater credence.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the importance of historic towns such as Shrewsbury. The local plan provides the framework for giving local people a greater say in these matters. The sooner all local planning authorities make progress in the preparation of these plans, the greater their voice will be.

Water Privatisation

2. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairmen of the water authorities to discuss water privatisation.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): On Monday.

Mrs. Mahon: Has the Minister seen the letter sent to Members of Parliament by Gordon Jones and the chairmen of nine other water authorities? If so, does he agree that water has deteriorated under their stewardship? They have never fought for the industry, and now they are saying that it would be better off privatised. Does not the right hon. Gentleman believe that they have a vested interest in privatisation, and should he not ask them to resign, given that they have not looked after the industry?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for drawing attention to the excellent and impartial briefing that the water authority chairmen issued for the Report stage of the Water Bill. The fact emerges clearly from that, as I am sure the hon. Lady will agree, that maladministration by the Labour Government is primarily responsible for the wretched condition of some rivers, including those in her area.

Mr. Heddle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that because of their incompetent management of the economy the Labour Government drastically cut investment in the water industry and in sewage treatment? Does he agree that the better way to get cleaner rivers, better beaches and new sewers is to denationalise the industry and release it from Treasury control?

Mr. Ridley: I entirely agree. It is a tragedy that we are having such a problem cleaning up the legacy of Socialism, which is to be equated with pollution on every occasion.

Mr. Winnick: Can the Secretary of State explain why, despite the massive amount of Government propaganda and his undoubtedly brilliant persuasion, the overwhelming majority of people in this country wholly reject the irrelevant, stupid nonsense of water privatisation?

Mr. Ridley: I am afraid it is true that the matter has been handled neither well nor accurately by the Opposition.

Mr. Rathbone: When my right hon. Friend met the chairmen, did he draw comparisons between the way in which the French independent water companies have raised the standards of water in their country and the sad performance of water companies and authorities in this country?

Mr. Ridley: It is not without interest that France—which, under its present Administration, is not loath to nationalise—has set its face against interfering with the highly successful performance of its privatised water industry.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: When the Secretary of State met the chairmen, did he discuss spending on advertising? Does he agree that it is wrong for the chairmen of publicly owned water authorities to refuse to say how much public money has been spent on selling the Government's privatisation policies? Do not the paying public have a right to know? Or does the Secretary of State think that, in anticipation, of privatisation the appointees concerned should stop behaving like public servants and start behaving like the Government's political lackeys?

Mr. Ridley: No, I do not agree. The water industry has every right to publicise its achievements and its wares and to make clear to the House what it believes to be the best way of achieving the increase in standards and efficiency that the country wants. It is strange that the hon. Lady should whinge and twinge because a publicly owned industry does not agree with her very foolish policies.

Housing (Marginal Land)

3. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to increase the availability of marginal land for housing.

Mr. Howard: The allocation of land for housing is primarily a matter for local planning authorities. However, authorities are encouraged to make maximum use of derelict or underused land in urban areas, and only last month we announced proposals by which local authorities in rural areas could permit low-cost housing for local needs to be built on land where planning permission for housing would not normally be granted.

Mr. Stern: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for that reply. Is he aware that in Bristol it is almost impossible for a young couple on average or below average earnings to obtain any form of housing in or near the city? Does he agree that removing any possible planning obstacle to the development of difficult and therefore probably low-cost land would help the housing problems in our cities?

Mr. Howard: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. I hope that the authorities in Bristol and elsewhere will study closely our recent announcement, which should go a considerable way towards alleviating the problem.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Is the Minister aware that under his proposals he is trying to persuade the local authority in Stockport to find more land for housing than the local authority wants? Is he aware that between my constituency in Manchester and that of his hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) a considerable area is currently used for golf courses or poor quality farm land? That area constitutes an ideal breathing space between the cities of Manchester and Stockport. Will he ensure that permission is not granted for building on that land, which would deny many people access to land on which they enjoy walking?

Mr. Howard: All applications for planning permission on that land and elsewhere should be dealt with on their merits and in accordance with the circumstances of the case. That is the basis on which they will be dealt with.

Mr. Steen: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that there is no need to take marginal land or green field sites for housing when there are more than 80,000 acres of vacant and under-used public land on the registers? Those registers are eight years old. Although the Government keep saying that they want to do more, the registers continue to grow and more land will continue to come on to them unless my hon. and learned Friend does something about selling the vacant, derelict or dormant public land.

Mr. Howard: I am sure that my hon. Friend would not want to ignore the substantial amount of land that has been taken off the register. We are making substantial progress. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the opportunities that exist, which are being rapidly exploited.

Homelessness

4. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend the homeless persons legislation to give local authorities a duty to make accommodation available for people under the age of 18 years who are homeless.

15. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new proposals he has to combat homelessness.

Mr. Ridley: My review of the homelessness legislation is not yet complete. I will announce the result as soon as I am ready to announce my conclusions, but it would be premature to speculate on whether any changes are to be made to the legislation.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Is the Secretary of State aware of the vicious circle confronting young people in London? They cannot get jobs because they have no homes, and they cannot get homes because they have no jobs. They end up—to use a phrase with which the right hon. Gentleman is familiar—"skippering", or sleeping rough. Given that the Government have billions of pounds to spare, will the Secretary of State assure the House that on completing his review he will address head-on the problem of youth homelessness in London? Will he ensure that positive measures are taken to address the present appalling position so that many of the young homeless in our capital are housed later this year and in the future?

Mr. Ridley: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that we should do nothing to tempt young people to leave home, particularly when they do not have a home of their own to which to go. That is half the problem that we already face, and the hon. Gentleman's suggestion would exacerbate it. Over the past year, an additional £74 million has been made available to local authorities to deal with the most acute problems of homelessness, together with approval of £40 million additional housing association capital receipts to be spent on schemes focused on helping homeless families. That is a major contribution, despite the fact that there are still far too many empty council houses which could be used.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Is not the increase in homelessness a direct result of Government policies, as manifested by high interest rates, which lead to mortgage defaults and repossessions? Is it not due also to the Government's failure to allow local authorities to build houses for rent, which less well-off families so urgently need?

Mr. Ridley: The percentage of households rendered homeless as a result of mortgage arrears is declining, from 10 per cent. of those for whom local authorities accepted responsibility to find accommodation in the third quarter of 1987 to 7 per cent. in the third quarter of 1988. That does not bear out the hon. Gentleman's allegation.

Mr. Wells: Does my right hon. Friend agree that to make housing available to those under age 18 would encourage the break-up of families and lead to a serious situation in which young people would be encouraged to leave home and come to the capital looking for accommodation?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There would be some encouragement for young people to leave home in the mistaken belief that it might be a way of jumping the queue for council housing. I hope that young people will not think that. I equally concede, as would my hon. Friend, that there are a number of genuinely homeless people who cannot return home, and it is those whom we should seek to help.

Mr. Colvin: Is my right hon. Friend aware that it costs £180 per week to house a homeless family in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in my constituency, yet there are areas of derelict land—often in local authority ownership—and builders with low-cost housing schemes which together could provide accommodation for young homeless families at a lower cost per week than that of bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Will my right hon. Friend's Department be favourably disposed towards planning applications and, in particular, to appeals in relation to schemes of that nature?

Mr. Ridley: I have tried to take further measures to help in that kind of situation, with the announcement in February that local authorities can give planning consents for low-cost housing for local people as well as meeting their general housing provision obligations. That does not have to be in the most rural areas. It is one of the many routes already available whereby local authorities can secure extra housing provision, at the capital expense often of the private sector or of the Housing Corporation. I urge them to use it.

Mr. Soley: Why has the Minister created such an acute shortage of low-cost accommodation in Britain?

Mr. Ridley: I do not believe that I have created any such shortage. I believe that the shortage of housing resulting from a very restrictive planning policy pursued by many local authorities in the south of England has contributed to it. If there were enough houses for everyone, it would be possible for everyone to be housed, but in a housing shortage low-income families are inevitably last in the queue.

Land Registers

5. **Dame Janet Fookes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many requests he has received to include specific vacant sites of under one acre on the land registers.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): Since 1985 to the end of February 1989, requests have been received for registration and disposal in respect of a total of 225 sites, of which 46 were for the registration of sites smaller than one acre in size.

In 1988, the amount of land on the land registers decreased by 6,175 acres.

Dame Janet Fookes: I welcome the information given by my hon. Friend. Does he agree that the position regarding land would be clearer if all sites under one acre were included on the register and a supplementary register were kept of privately owned land, bearing in mind that the present register is for publicly owned land only?

Mr. Trippier: Under the present arrangements, the figures reflect that there has been considerable success in the removal of all land, public and private, from the register. The Ordnance Survey 1988 survey shows a further reduction of 4,199 acres of vacant land, a significant improvement on the previous year. That demonstrates that the policy is very successful.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that many of those small plots of land are covered with litter? Will he ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to inspect every one of those sites, taking with him a little bag and the Prime Minister? Then he can bag it and bin it and stick her in it.

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman makes his own contribution to the amount of rubbish by the speeches that he makes in the Chamber. I do not imagine that he is making a very good job of setting an example in his own constituency as he certainly makes a significant contribution to the rubbish here.

Housing Associations

6. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of home starts by housing associations at the latest date for which figures are available; and what is the level expected to be reached as a result of the increase in funding for the Housing Corporation announced in last year's Autumn Statement.

Mr. Ridley: A total of 14,651 approvals had been given by the Housing Corporation in the current financial year up to the end of February. In 1991-92 the corporation expects to approve more than 32,000 homes for rent and sale.

Mr. French: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the figures that he has given are ample proof of the housing associations' ability to provide affordable housing for those in need? Does he accept that the huge increase in public funding provided to the Housing Corporation, coupled with private finance and the management skills within the housing associations is enabling those housing associations to achieve an impact on local provision which has not been emulated by many local authorities?

Mr. Ridley: The figures show that the gross provision for the Housing Corporation programme was £1,328 million for 1991-92—an 80 per cent. increase on the original provision for the current financial year. That has since been increased by a further £40 million because of greater than expected capital receipts. That is a massive expansion. I agree with my hon. Friend that it should make a very great contribution, particularly as it is possible to target it on the areas of greatest need.

Mr. George Howarth: Will the Secretary of State confirm that in areas of low values or high costs housing associations are having difficulty making private finance work and that the only way in which they can make it work is by reducing standards?

Mr. Ridley: The areas of greatest need are not the areas of lowest cost. When I said that it is important to target finance, I had in mind the comments made by the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends, that the main problem of shortage of rented houses arises in the south-east and London. That seems to tie up very nicely.

Mr. Key: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his housing associations policy, which is reaching the village communities that we are anxious to preserve in rural constituencies. Will he confirm that private finance was introduced in a new way to the housing scene under the Housing Act 1988? Is he aware that locally politicians are anxious to promote new concepts of private finance, which they opposed when the Housing Bill was before the House, and that a scurrilous and dishonest campaign is being led by the Democrats in Wiltshire?

Mr. Ridley: The latter, including the adjectives, would not surprise me in the least. I confirm that we hope that by 1991-92, about 80 per cent. of schemes will be mixed funded. Total public provision will not only be increased by 80 per cent. it will be greatly enhanced by whatever private finance can be attracted to swell it still further. This is by far the best way to obtain value for money. I hope that all authorities—even Liberal, Democratic or whatever they are called—will realise the importance of these new measures.

Housing (Leicester)

7. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the housing investment programme allocation to Leicester city council for 1989-90.

Mr. Trippier: Leicester city council has been given a housing investment programme allocation of £8,555 million for 1989-90. It plans to add £43 million to this from capital receipts, most of which will be spent on improving and repairing the council's housing stock.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware that that is a reduction in real terms of 26 per cent. in the allocation for the current year and will cause the gravest problems to the council's renewal strategy programme for private housing? Does he appreciate that there are 10,000 applications on the housing list representing 25,000 people? Does he accept that this disgraceful gutting of the council's housing programme yet again is unacceptable and intolerable?

Mr. Trippier: I am sorry to have to argue again with the hon. and learned Gentleman. He chooses to ignore the amount of money—£43 million—drawn in by the local authority in capital receipts under the exercise of the right to buy, which is Government policy. He also chooses to ignore that amount of estate action funding that has been made available. It is only recently that Leicester city council has been prepared to work in partnership with the Department on that scheme. The hon. and learned Gentleman further chooses to ignore the fact that the council could increase right-to-buy sales and thus draw in further capital receipts. The hon. and learned Gentleman seems to be interested only in council housing and does not recognise that the substantial increase that we have given the Housing Corporation will enable more housing associations in Leicester to build more houses for those on low pay.

Mr. Jim Marshall: If the Minister will cool down, I am sure that he will recognise that in my constituency and that of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) there is a specific problem with Boot houses, which were built more that 60 years ago and have been found to have serious structural faults. As the Minister knows, Leicester city council has a demolition and rebuilding programme. Without doubt, leaving all political comments aside, it will experience severe problems. Will the Minister give a guarantee that, in specific and agreed circumstances, if a programme such as the demolition and rebuilding of Boot houses is placed in jeopardy he will be prepared to consider each case and, if necessary, allow increased additional expenditure?

Mr. Trippier: I am prepared to look at the problems with Boot houses in Leicester. I have already had one meeting in Leicester with Leicester city council. I am sympathetic to the problems the council faces with Boot houses and I have already made it clear that we would

assist, wherever possible, with the additional private finance that the council is trying to secure. I understand that it is being successful in that regard. I still believe that, with the flexibility of the estate action programme, it is possible to help with the renewal programme in that part of Leicester. If the city council wishes to talk to me again with the hon. Gentleman or his hon. Friends, I am only too happy to meet it.

Mr. Tredinnick: Can my hon. Friend confirm that Labour-controlled Leicester city council has the worst record for reletting council homes in the whole of the east midlands?

Mr. Trippier: I can confirm that.

Mr. Janner: The hon. Gentleman knows nothing about it.

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend seemingly knows more about Leicester than does the hon. and learned Gentleman, whose constituency is in the city. What my hon. Friend has said is not fantasy or fiction, but fact. Leicester has the highest percentage of void stock. The total is 1,220, which is in excess of the number of homeless people registered in the whole county.

Neighbourhood Councils

8. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he proposes to give to local authorities intending to devolve power to neighbourhood councils.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Selwyn Gummer): My guidance is to embrace the high aspirations, but to avoid the chaotic practice of Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Taylor: I welcome the Minister's statement about neighbourhood councils, as he accepts clearly that they are a progressive way to devolve power to the local communities. As the Minister knows, the rules about proportionality in the Local Government and Housing Bill may affect neighbourhood councils and he has said that he may take some action. Can he say what action he will take to ensure that the Bill does not conflict with the desire to devolve power?

Mr. Gummer: We are discussing the matter with local authority associations and have concluded that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will have powers under the Bill to make such regulations as are needed to enable neighbourhood councils to operate on a different basis. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will do his best to encourage the neighbourhood councils in Tower Hamlets to organise themselves so that we know how much they are spending and whose money it is.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the people of Tower Hamlets thought that nothing could be worse than the old-fashioned carthorse of Labour control that had done so much damage to Tower Hamlets for so many years? But they were wrong. When the Liberals took control and introduced the neighbourhood councils, the people realised that the Liberals could be worse than the Labour party.

Mr. Gummer: There is a major difficulty about helping Tower Hamlets at pesent because the council cannot tell us with any certainty about the financial pickle it is in. Until we know how big the pickle is, it is difficult to give advice.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Minister saying that all parish councils, town councils and community councils mirror Tower Hamlets? Will he apologise to the local authorities associations, which he says he has met on this very issue, because there are a number of local authorities that we believe are doing a splendid job? The Minister should agree and appreciate the work that those authorities are doing. He should not assume that such councils mirror the scurrilous information he has been given by his colleagues.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman cannot have read the question, which is about neighbourhood councils and not parish councils, of which I am thoroughly in favour and of which there are many in my constituency. The technical expression "neighbourhood councils" refers to councils such as those in Bethnal Green, Bow, Globe Town, Isle of Dogs, Poplar, Stepney and Wapping. The hon. Gentleman should read the question before he asks one of his own.

Planning Appeals

8. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last reviewed the guidelines for granting costs against planning authorities when his Department gives planning permission on appeal.

Mr. Howard: A thoroughgoing review preceded the issue, in February 1987, of the current guidance in circular 2 of that year. The practical operation of the guidance is kept under continuing review.

Mr. Rathbone: Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that the present guidelines may give too much leeway to Government inspectors? Will he note that appellate costs are too often given against a council when permission is granted on appeal and that they often completely overlook important planning considerations and negate the proper functions of the planning authority?

Mr. Howard: If that were so, the councils concerned would have a remedy by way of judicial review. My hon. Friend will be aware that in two recent and important cases my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made what will undoubtedly turn out to be substantial awards of costs against developers. I assure my hon. Friend that the policy is applied in an even-handed manner.

Mr. Haynes: Not many moments ago, a Conservative Member congratulated the Secretary of State; I reckon he is useless, and I mean that. I should like my local authority to become involved in planning for housing. Are the Secretary of State and the Minister for Water and Planning aware that we have not built any new properties in Ashfield since 1979, when that lot over there came into power? It would be nice to be able to use planning procedures to build for the youngsters who queue up at my surgery on Saturday morning and who cannot get properties in which to live. The Secretary of State ought to be ashamed of himself.

Mr. Howard: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will refer his local planning authority to the Government's policies, including those announced last month, which will give it

ample scope to make proper provision for land for development to provide houses for the very people to whom he has referred.

Sewage

11. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much untreated raw sewage is poured into the sea each year.

Mr. Ridley: About 14 per cent. of the sewage from England and Wales is discharged to the sea where it is treated through the disinfecting actions of salt water, sunlight and waves which together break down the bacteria as effectively as inland treatment. That is why the Royal Commission on environmental pollution concluded in its 10th report that with well-designed sewage outfalls, discharge of sewage to the sea was not only acceptable but environmentally preferable in many cases to alternative means of disposal.

Mr. Kennedy: I thank the Secretary of State for that detailed reply. I realise that this matter falls within the ambit of the Scottish Office, but it also has general environmental interest, given the outfall area. Will he note that Highland regional council is currently backing a limited water sewage water treatment scheme locally, which is opposed by Ross and Cromarty and Inverness district councils and which has not so far been the subject of an environmental impact assessment? The Secretary of State for Scotland has refused to call it in. As the Prime Minister now poses as the green goddess, will the Secretary of State for the Environment invoke her name to encourage the Scottish Office to take a more responsible line, given the possible pollutant effects of the scheme?

Mr. Ridley: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. I would like to make the general point, however, that the best environmental option might well be to put the sewage out through a long sea outfall. That is what the experts recommend in many cases.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I am sorry to tell my right hon. Friend that I see no chance whatever of persuading my electors in north Wales to accept that answer. The plain fact is that sewage is being washed back on to our beaches, and we want to know how the new Water Bill will improve matters.

Mr. Ridley: I agree that there are many completely inadequate short sea outfalls, many of them dating from the Victorian era. That is why we have a major programme to extend outfalls to between 2 and 3 km out to sea so that the disinfecting action of the sea has time to act on the effluent before it can float back to the beach.

Mr. Pike: Does the Secretary of State realise that if he gives answers like that, people will not believe for one moment that the Government have any commitment to green solutions or to dealing with problems of pollution? Will he note, in particular, the opposition in Lancashire to the proposed extension of the Rossall sewage outfall near Fleetwood, to which there is overwhelming opposition and will he say that he is not prepared to let the North West water authority's proposal go ahead?

Mr. Ridley: Without reference to that particular application, which is before me at the moment, let me say something serious to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). Let me tell him that the alternative is inland sewage treatment works, which produce sludge which must be disposed ofeither in fertilisers, or by dumping on land or at sea or by incineration. This involves the discharge of high concentrations of bacteria in the area of the seaside resort although such works are difficult to site at seaside resorts. Disinfection is a possibility, but so far there is little experience of its use and there is concern about its possible effect on the marine biota. If the hon. Gentleman does not want a long sea outfall in any particular case, will he say which alternative he wants, where he would site that alternative sewage works and how strongly he would defend the destruction of molluscs, animals and fish in the sea due to the disinfection? He must be a little more scientific and a little less shambolic.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is it not a little inconsistent—but also rather typical of certain people—to complain on the one hand about poor water quality and sewage on beaches and in the next breath to complain about the higher water charges that are necessary to clean up the mess left by years of under-investment by the public sector water authorities?

Mr. Ridley: With regard to that sort of doublespeak, I have a leaked letter from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I shall quote a sentence from it. It says:

"Major increases, many in excess of 30 per cent., are being imposed on 12 million consumers who are being obliged to pay substantial additional costs as a direct consequence of privatisation."

That is not the case. The major environmental improvements requested by the Opposition are the cause of the increases in water charges. The hon. Member for Copeland knows that, and he should withdraw his offensive remark.

Dr. Cunningham As the Secretary of state has now admitted that large amounts of untreated domestic sewage flow into the seas around Britian, will he tell us whether the Prime Minister was confused in her interview on the BBC "Nature" programme, when she said that no untreated sewage went into the sea around Britian? If she was not, had she again been wrongly briefed?

Mr. Ridley: Was the hon. Gentleman confused when he wrote to the Prime Minister and said that the cost of environmental pollution could be put down to privatisation? When he withdraws that comment, I shall answer his question.

Beaches

12. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the number of beaches which do not conform to European Economic Community standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: We have received a number of representations about bathing water quality. As I announced on 22 February we are making good progress in cleaning up our bathing waters—two thirds of which now meet European Community standards, compared with 55 per cent. in 1987. We are the only member state in the Community to be developing a programme for achieving full compliance.

Mr. Brown: Although recently there have been some long overdue improvements to bathing waters, is it not clear that the Government have been complacent for too long? The Government should remember that there are many floating voters who expect the water around the coast to be at least to the standard of the average European country. However, some 300 million tonnes of raw sewage a day are being pumped into the coastal areas around Britain, in addition to the dumped toxic chemicals. That is an untenable position. If the Government are turning green instead of blue, it is about time that they did something about the problem. After all, it is not an issue to be sniffed at.

Mr. Howard: Before the hon. Gentleman accuses the Government of complacency, he should reflect on the fact that the Community's bathing water directive was promulgated in 1975, when it gave two years for the designation of bathing waters. However, when the Opposition left Government in 1979 not a single bathing water had been designated.

Mr. David Shaw: Will my hon. Friend consider the beaches at Dover and Deal? Will he in particular— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Tony Banks: Who did the hon. Gentleman's research?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Shaw: Will my hon. Friend consider the fact that the beach at Deal has problems because the Opposition, when in power, did little to improve it, especially when a Labour Member was representing that constituency? Now that a Conservative Member represents that constitutency, will my hon. Friend consider the representations of that Member and ensure that the beach at Deal is improved in the near future? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has done very well.

Mr. Howard: I am sure that my hon. Friend has made his representations to the Southern water authority. Substantially more money is being made available for the improvement of bathing waters and more still will be made available when the industry is in the private sector.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the Minister confirm that in his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown) he misled the House by saying that the British Government are the only ones who have presented a plan to Brussels for the improvement of the bathing beaches of Britain, because, up until yesterday afternoon, the Commission informed me that it was expecting a plan from the British Government by the middle of March, but that it had not received it? Furthermore water authority officials have been told not to speak about investment programmes for the beaches, as I found out when I telephoned the Welsh water authority last week.

Mr. Howard: When the hon. Gentleman checks *Hansard* tomorrow he will find that he has accused me of saying something quite different from what I said.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Can my hon. and learned Friend tell me how we stand in the European clean beach league and how much progress we have made since the Labour Government cut sewage disposal expenditure by 50 per cent.?

Mr. Howard: I wish that I could tell my hon. Friend how much progress we have made, but as they did not designate any beaches or keep any records it is impossible to make such a comparison. Our position in relation to other European countries is improving substantially and the pace will quicken when the industry is in the private sector.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Does the Minister accept that none of our south-coast beaches will conform to EEC standards if the lindane in the container that has sunk in the English Channel leaks into the sea? To what extent are the beaches and the marine environment at risk from the accident? What action have the Government taken to deal with the threat? Has there been a dispute between the French and British Governments over it? Where was the ship going before it sank and why were those deadly cancer-causing chemicals being transported? What was their intended use? Will he follow the Japanese and Swedish example by banning the use of lindane in Britain?

Mr. Howard: I do not see how banning the use of lindane in Britain would have had any effect on what happened in the Channel the other day. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the French authorities are doing their best to recover that cargo and I hope that he will join me in wishing them all success.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that it is ridiculous for Opposition Members to complain about the present state of the water industry and then to argue that there should be no change in that industry? Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that all the Labour party complaints underline the case for privatisation?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has been wandering round the country pointing at various dirty rivers as though to suggest that that in some way undermines the case for privatisation; but it makes the case for privatisation. That is the way in which we shall gain the extra resources necessary to achieve the improvements in our water environment that we all want to see.

Water Rates

13. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the average percentage increase in water rates in 1989-90.

Mr. Howard: The estimated increase in all water and sewerage charges is likely to be about 11 per cent.

Mr. Michie: How can the Minister pretend that privatisation will not cost the consumer more money when West Kent has put up its rates by 42 per cent. and has informed its consumers that 21 per cent. of that rise is due to the possible cost of privatisation and will have no effect on the improvement of the quality of the services or the water?

Mr. Howard: I have looked carefully at West Kent's figures and most of the increase to which the hon.

Gentleman refers is the result of ownership and accounting changes, which could take place at any time. The proposals in the Water Bill will put in place an entirely new system of regulating prices. If the hon. Gentleman wants to see the prices of such companies controlled he should join me to ensure that the legislation is on the statute book as soon as possible.

Dame Peggy Fenner: Will my hon. and learned Friend assure me that in respect of the charges being made by the West Kent water authority—which the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) has no locus to represent—he will make sure that next year it is not able to put on 42 per cent. on the basis that it must pay—I appreciate that it will have to do so—for the EC regulations?

Mr. Howard: I assure my hon. Friend that in assessing any price rise which may be applied for by the West Kent company next year, we shall be able to take into account its increase this year, and we shall certainly do so.

Ms. Walley: Does the Minister appreciate that the need to make profits will be the overriding issue and that that must be borne in mind when considering the level of water rates? Does he further appreciate that it is unfair that the standing charge proportion of the water rate should have been increased so disproportionately that in some cases it has made it more difficult for low-income households to pay their water bills?

Mr. Howard: The Director General of Water Services will be able to look into all such matters when the Water Bill becomes law. Will the hon. Lady join me in ensuring that it is on the statute book at the earliest possible moment?

Planning Decisions

14. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take further measures to ensure that planning authorities reach decisions more quickly.

Mr. Howard: There is considerable scope within the existing system for planning authorities to reach decisions more quickly. In the longer term, our proposals for streamlining the system should make it easier for them to reach speedy decisions.

Mr. Hunter: The White Paper draws attention to the fact that planning delays can increase costs for individuals and companies, but it does not go into details on why local planning authorities should be more efficient and streamlined under district development plans than under the existing local plans. Can my hon. and learned Friend explain?

Mr. Howard: We shall substantially reduce the delays associated with the preparation and approval of structure plan by attaching greater weight to the local plan. We shall ensure that local people have a greater say and that there will be greater certainty in the process, and I hope that that will lead to fewer appeals.

Mr. Eastham: The Minister and his hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) talk about streamlining and speeding up the machinery. Is it not a fact that for several years the Government have been cutting local authority expenditure on manpower and that that must result in fewer planning officers and civil engineers, who are essential for considering planning applications? Is it not a fact that if there are fewer personnel to process applications, the machinery will be slower?

Mr. Howard: If local authorities, including those in Manchester, spent their money on more appropriate purposes than those on which they in fact spend it, they would have ample resources to devote to making the planning system work more efficiently.

Mr. Dykes: Does the Minister agree that it is equally important for local authorities to be coaxed by the Government into providing wider consultation with local residents on planning matters and giving them more time in which to register their approval or objections? Is he aware that far too many rapacious and greedy developers, such as Charles Church in my area and in the home counties, are, unlike decent developers, appealing automatically and putting in another application at the same time? Is he further aware that when the appeal is carried in their favour they make supernormal, huge profits in building socially useful housing such as luxury apartments costing £300,000 each? When shall we get a greater balance between the interests of local residents and decent developers?

Mr. Howard: The way to achieve the best balance is to have as many local plans in place as possible. That is my advice to my hon. Friend, and I hope he will make sure that his local planning authority acts accordingly.

Mr. Loyden: Will the Minister agree that it is time for planning legislation to be reviewed in view of the fact that many planning authorities are compelled—for example, by high unemployment and general deprivation, particularly in inner cities—to reduce their planning levels to the point where they must concede that a development that may not be in the interests of good planning is nevertheless required for commercial development and the provision of jobs? Will he further agree that it is time that the trend that planning is following was arrested in the interests of the long-term planning of our towns and cities?

Mr. Howard: We have been reviewing the planning system. We announced the results in our White Paper in January.

Rate Increases

16. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average rate increase for 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: It looks as though domestic rates are likely to rise by an average of 8 or 9 per cent., but the London borough of Ealing has agreed a rise of 32 per cent.

Mr. Greenway: Is it not preposterous that the London borough of Ealing should have proposed a rate rise of 32 per cent. this year, having passed a rise of 65 per cent. no more than two years ago? The current increase is accompanied by £12 million cuts in essential services such as street cleansing, refuse collection and the opening of borough libraries while there have been increases in the gay and lesbian staff unit. Is my right hon. Friend aware that there have been no refuse collections in some parts of my constituency since before Christmas? Is not that a disgraceful indictment of the borough in which the leader of the Labour party lives?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend will have noticed that the residents of the borough in which we both live have shown their feelings about the rate rises by an 18 per cent. swing in a by-election to elect a Conservative rather than a Socialist. I have to tell my hon. Friend, though, that the London borough of Ealing is not the worst. Brighton has put up its rates by 57 per cent., although Conservative-controlled Hove next door has cut its rate by 100 per cent. and is not levying a rate at all.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister tell us what the rate increase for Westminster is? Will he also tell us what he would say about a Labour-controlled local authority that sold off its cemeteries for 15p, that was gambling on the stock market and that was totally corrupt and inefficient? What would St. Gummer say about that?

Mr. Gummer: The rate increase in Westminster is 10 per cent. as against 32 per cent. in Ealing. If I lived in Westminster, the services and the quality of the services that I got would be very much better than those in the London borough of Ealing, where they are very bad indeed.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in Wandsworth the rates are still the lowest in inner London? Does he agree that much of that is due to the fact that Wandsworth has led the way in competitive tendering? When the services have gone out to the private sector there have been savings of 33 per cent.; even when they have stayed in-house there have been savings of some 25 per cent.

Mr. Gummer: The Audit Commission certainly supports my hon. Friend. I am interested to see that the effect of competitive tendering is spreading everywhere. When I met Councillor Bookbinder in Derbyshire, he admitted that the effect of competitive tendering, which he was against and which he had a whole committee to try to stop, was already bringing down the costs of his services, much to the dislike of NALGO and NUPE.

Mrs. Mahon: Is the Minister aware that if Calderdale, a hung council, had back the rate support grant that has been taken off it since 1979, it would have been able to have a nil rate rise this year?

Mr. Gummer: I am aware that Calderdale has put up its rate in a disgraceful manner, and that it did so with the support of the Liberals who ran their usual operation, which was to pretend that they were against the rate rise but then not to vote on it—and therefore enable the Labour party to get it through. That is the sort of thing the Liberals go in for.

Mr. Holt: Would my right hon. Friend care to put himself in the position of a ratepayer in Langbaurgh? When the rate demand fell on the doormat this week the ratepayers found that their district authority had the highest rate in England and that their town councils were charging them 2p in the pound. Is he aware that in Cleveland county we have the highest rate poundage on top of that, at 299p in the pound—21p in the pound higher than any other county? Does he agree that when we have a change of control in Cleveland after the council elections in May the people in that area will have a much fairer deal?

Mr. Gummer: The only person who is in favour of Cleveland county council is Mr. Bookbinder, the leader of Derbyshire county council. Because Cleveland's rate rises have been so great, it has pushed him off the top of the list, where he has been for some time. Cleveland has replaced Derbyshire as the highest-rated county in England. My hon. Friend will note that the higher the rates, the more likely the council is to be run by Labour, and that on average it costs a person £100 a year more to live under a Labour council than under a Conservative council.

Chlorofluorocarbons

17. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made in his efforts to replace chlorofluorocarbons in refrigerators.

Mr. Ridley: By the end of this year, European manufacturers of domestic refrigerators and freezers expect to reduce by 45 per cent. the CFC content of their products controlled by the Montreal protocol. New replacements for the CFCs, both as refrigerants and in the insulating foam, have been identified and should be commercially available early in the 1990s, subject to the satisfactory completion of toxicological testing and environmental evaluation. HCFC-22, which is much less damaging than the protocol CFCs, is already widely used in commercial and industrial refrigeration.

Mr. Wallace: I thank the Secretary of State for his very informative reply. Has any consideration been given to the possibility of imposing a requirement that the CFC package on refrigerators that are currently on sale should be detachable? Does his Department intend to give any financial assistance to local authorities to enable them to prepare and build disposal facilities for CFC elements that come from refrigerators?

Mr. Ridley: Recycling the coolant in the motors of refrigerators and the foam in their doors is very complex. It will probably be better to concentrate our efforts on producing substitutes, so that we may stop using these substances in the first place. But a lot of research is still going on; I do not think that we have yet come to a definite answer.

Harland and Wolff

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): With permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement about Harland and Wolff. We announced in May 1988 that we were prepared to consider approaches from those interested in acquiring the yard. Since then a number of possibilities have been pursued. These have recently been narrowed down to two serious contenders, BT Shipping and a management-employee buy-out team led by Mr. John Parker, the current chairman of Harland and Wolff, and supported by Mr. Fred Olsen through two of his leading companies.

I can now advise the House that, having considered the proposals made by these two contenders, I have today approved, on behalf of the Government, heads of agreement for the sale of Harland and Wolff plc to Mr. Parker and his MEBO team, backed by Mr. Olsen.

The management-employee team and the Olsen companies will subscribe for £15 million of share capital to a new company. The company will then acquire the assets and the business undertaking of Harland and Wolff for approximately £6 million, net book value. The Government will advance to the new company £60 million of loan stock, on a repayment basis linked to performance.

Terms have been agreed under which the new owners will complete the single-well oil production system vessel for BP and the auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel for the Ministry of Defence. The Government will provide grant assistance of £38·75 million towards the cost of rationalising the activities of the yard—including new capital expenditure.

Under this agreement, Olsen companies will order three Suezmax tankers of about 150,000 tonnes each. I have agreed to offer intervention aid on them within the limits permitted by the European Community. The initial orders will provide work for the yard until the end of 1992.

The new company will therefore receive from the Government repayable loan stock and grant towards rationalisation of £98·75 million and intervention aid on new merchant orders.

Furthermore, to enable the company to raise performance guarantees necessary for the financing of its operations in its early years, the Olsen companies have agreed to make a recourse commitment for use by the new company to support predelivery ship financing. The Government will match this.

The existing liabilities will remain with the old company and the Government undertakings in respect of these liabilities of Harland and Wolff will not extend to the new company.

Beyond the terms of the heads of agreement, the Government will not provide any other special support to the new company except intervention aid and other grants normally available to other private sector companies in Northern Ireland. In this respect, I plan to repeal my powers in relation to the yard in public ownership contained in the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries (Northern Ireland) Order 1979.

The terms of the agreement are subject to contract and also a number of conditions including the approval of the European Commission, with which initial discussions have been held, and the agreement of the Norwegian authorities. Critically also, it depends on achieving the support of Harland and Wolff employees. In particular, they will be invited to invest in the new company. To this end, a prospectus will be issued by the new company in the summer. Completion is planned for early September.

In respect of funding, provision was set aside in the Northern Ireland block for support to Harland and Wolff under present arrangements, and I hope to be able to cover the costs of disposal from within the block without any disruption of other Northern Ireland programmes.

I am pleased to make this announcement today which offers the hope of a much brighter future for Harland and Wolff. This famous yard has experienced a steady decline in employment over many years, and the chances of its survival were bleak. This proposed transfer to the private sector under a management and employee buy-out led by the present chairman, Mr. John Parker, and reinforced by the strength and well-established reputation of Mr. Fred Olsen and his companies, offers the chance of a new beginning and comes at a time when there are signs of an improvement in the shipbuilding market.

A lot of us have worked hard to try and make it possible for Harland and Wolff to have this new chance—none more so than Mr. John Parker, who deserves great credit for his unstinting efforts. The challenge now is whether he will get the support to bring it to reality. This is not the end of the challenge. This is just the beginning for all those in Harland and Wolff to show that they can succeed again in the tough and competitive world of shipbuilding. I believe that the management and employees at Harland and Wolff, together with Mr. Olsen and his colleagues, are ready to meet that challenge and we wish them well.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): First of all, I thank the Secretary of State for making his announcement before Easter and at last putting an end to all the speculation about the future of Harland and Wolff. We all welcome the end of the uncertainty. However, it will come as no surprise to the Secretary of State that we believe that the Government's whole approach to the privatisation of Harland and Wolff has been handled in a particularly clumsy and insensitive manner, which has directly contributed to the low level of morale among the work force and to the loss of highly skilled staff, not just from Harland and Wolff, but from the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole.

Additionally, we feel that the decision that the Government made in the middle of last year to withhold intervention funding and their refusal to permit the existing company to tender for new orders seriously undermine the existing company's position and will make it that much more difficult for the new company to succeed.

Nevertheless, we recognise that, once the Government had made the decision to privatise—I repeat that my party deplores that decision and that we still continue to oppose that policy—they had a difficult choice to make between the rival bids. However, the Secretary of State will recall that, in our debate a few days ago, I made it clear that the official Opposition preferred, and always have preferred, a management-employee buy-out as we believe that it offers the prospect of greater security for the future of the company, especially in the longer term.

I should like to ask the Secretary of State some specific questions. He referred to preliminary discussions with the European Community. In those discussions, did he receive

any guarantee from the Commission that it would not block the financial arrangements being made for the privatisation?

As regards the short-term viability of the new company, does the Secretary of State recognise that there is a time lag of 18 to 19 weeks between when the orders for steel are made and when they are actually delivered at the yard? I am sure that he does. Therefore, will he, in the particular circumstances of Harland and Wolff, give permission for orders to be made now so that work may begin on the construction of the three Olsen tankers as quickly as possible in September? If permission is withheld until the new company comes into being in September, it will be at least the new year—January 1990—before any new steel work can begin on the Olsen tankers that will form the short-term basis for the viability of the new company.

Will the Secretary of State also give permission now for the company to tender for orders before the new company comes into existence in early September? Will he also seek to ensure that all the work force are involved in the discussions surrounding the buy-out, particularly in the light of today's press reports that a minority of the work force are apparently frustrated by the lack of information surrounding the buy-out? I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree that, if the venture is to succeed, it must have the full support of both the management and all the employees. We urge him to use his best endeavours to ensure that all the work force are fully involved in the discussions and the preliminaries leading up to the company.

Finally, may I also pay tribute to Mr. John Parker for his valiant work, both on behalf of the company and its employees to seek to ensure in the past—and I am sure, in the present—the viability of Harland and Wolff. I should also like to extend our thanks to the work force who, over the years, have seen the number of employees decline quite dramatically, but who still feel that there is a future for shipbuilding at Harland and Wolff in Belfast and who will support the new company with enthusiasm.

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman's opening comments were absolutely incredible. He described as clumsy and insensitive the outcome of something which not many in the House would have dreamt was remotely possible—the successful privatisation of a shipyard which, under the Labour party's policy of nationalisation, was heading straight for closure. The hon. Gentleman can read the book and see that, when the yard went into public ownership it had 10,000 employees, now it has barely 3,000. Not many people would agree that that was a recipe for continued success.

The hon. Gentleman talked about insensitive handling. My hon. Friend the Minister responsible for industry had to take a lot of flak in Northern Ireland, while working extremely hard to guarantee the yard's successful future. Many people did not understand one of his most difficult problems, which was that if new commitments—new orders which might not have fitted the new strategy of the yard's potential owner—were made during the period of negotiation, they could well have frustrated any chance of privatisation.

I hope that the House will speak with one voice. This is a new beginning and a new oportunity for Harland and Wolff. Success is not guaranteed—many problems are still to be faced. There must be consultations with the work force. The hon. Gentleman, who has paid tribute to Mr. John Parker, knows that that will be his task and, also, that Mr. Parker has sought to keep people informed of what he is trying to do. It is precisely because he has been able to put together a management-employee buy-out that we are here today, hoping to celebrate the launch of what we believe can be a successful undertaking.

There is as yet no guarantee from the European Community. We have held initial discussions that appear encouraging, but we cannot be certain about that until the final proposals can be put to the Commission. It will need to examine them and see whether they fit in with Community policy. We are hopeful that they will.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appreciate the importance of this statement, but we shall be dealing with the Water Bill, which is under a guillotine motion, and a ten-minute rule Bill today, so I ask for brief questions.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Will the Secretary of State accept that many of us have misgivings about privatisation, particularly in the shipbuilding industry, but that we have long recognised that this was not a matter of privatisation or public ownership—it was a matter of survival? In that context, not only those who live in east Belfast and work in the shipyard but the whole community in Northern Ireland will welcome the fact that the period of uncertainty has been brought to an end.

Will the right hon. Gentleman take it from me that a large section of the work force feel that they do not know enough about the detail of the management-employee buy-out, and that it is now essential that the details are made clear to them and the proposal is sold to them? Will he help Mr. Parker to sell the proposal to the work force and tell us whether he is satisfied that the dowry that has been handed to Harland and Wolff is large enough to capitalise the firm in the early stages of its growth?

Is the right hon. Gentleman satisfied that there will be easy and immediate access to MOD orders and to intervention funding, not just for the three ships for which orders have already been received, but for further orders? I join in the Secretary of State's tribute to Mr. Parker, and I pay tribute, too, to the management team and the work force in Harland and Wolff, who have acted responsibly during the protracted period of negotiation.

Mr. King: I certainly recognise that this has been a period of acute worry for the work force and all involved in Harland and Wolff. One would have hoped that the period could have been shorter, but I think I am correct in saying that it is only seven weeks since Mr. Olsen showed his interest in being involved. If the House understands the complexity of heads of agreement and all the other matters that have to be covered, it will agree that that is a remarkable tribute to my officials who have worked on the agreement—officials do not always receive praise in this House. I hope that the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) will recognise the work that they have done together with the management of Harland and Wolff under Mr. Parker's leadership, and that he will recognise the contribution of Mr. Fred Olsen and of Mr. John Wallace and his colleagues in the Olsen group of companies in bringing this to an effective conclusion.

The hon. Member chooses not to distinguish between privatisation and nationalisation, and says that he does not want to argue about them—he is interested in survival.

[Mr. King]

Under nationalisation and public ownership the yard was headed in one direction—extinction. Its hope of survival and expansion stems from the fact that it now has the possibility of private sector involvement. The personal commitment of management and employees is hugely important, but so is the personal commitment of a well-respected outside shipbuilder.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Is the Secretary of State aware that there will be general satisfaction at this promising outcome? Does he agree that the commitment of Mr. Parker and the management and work force is a welcome development, and that the involvement of an industrialist of the international standing of Mr. Olsen will bring great confidence and a boost to industry throughout Northern Ireland?

All three political parties representing Northern Ireland wish to express appreciation of the personal efforts of the Secretary of State and of the painstaking trouble he took at all stages of the delicate negotiations. I include in that appreciation the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers).

It would be only right for me to say that I hope that the task of the Secretary of State was made a little easier by the joint approach of the three political parties which represent Northern Ireland in this House. It would be churlish if I were to omit the part played by SDLP colleagues in those meetings and negotiations. Will the Secretary of State convey our appreciation of the central role played by the Prime Minister and assure her that we, the elected representatives, will fully honour the understandings that were reached when we met her on 23 February—I choose my words carefully—and will do all in our power to assist the management and the work force to make a success of the commitment into which they have now entered?

Mr. King: I am very grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I appreciate his kind words about whatever part I have been able to play and particularly his kind words about the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), who has had to take a lot of flak over this, as the right hon. Gentleman is aware, but has stuck to his guns. I congratulate my hon. Friend on that.

I also appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's comments about the discussions that we were able to have, and those with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. There is no doubt that coming together in that way was helpful. I hope that the lessons can be learned of the value of co-operation in areas where there is value in such co-operation. Northern Ireland speaking with one voice was a much more encouraging sign than some of the noises that we hear from time to time.

The important word which the right hon. Gentleman used was "promising". That is right, because this is not a signed, completed contract. This is the beginning of the challenge in which we all have a part to play; I include the hon. Member for Belfast, East in that, although I did not acknowledge that in my comments to him. We all have a part to play and I hope that we can ensure that this promising start reaches a successful conclusion.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has endorsed the goodwill and trust of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry which reported to the House on Harland and Wolff, and also endorsed the confidence of the work force. I trust that the work force will respond, because it exhibits a very high degree of technical quality. While we wish Mr. John Parker and his team and Mr. Olsen every success, will my right hon. Friend assure us that the Government will, without hesitation, make it clear to the Commission in Brussels that we expect its endorsement for the venture without delay? Harland and Wolff has the biggest and best shipyard in western Europe and we must ensure that it is maintained as a national and European asset.

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Having sat before him and answered his questions, I am well aware of his interest in this matter. I am also grateful for the interest shown by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. There was nothing between us about the fact that the Harland and Wolff shipyard is a major asset. The yard is important; It is on a larger scale than other yards in western Europe in general and its work force has considerable technical skills. The arrangement that I have announced today, if carried forward successfully, offers the possibility for those facilities to be put to the best possible use. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. I assure him that I have tried to ensure that the right messages have been lodged in Brussels and we will carry that forward as soon as we can.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Whatever the delays and ideological road blocks created by the Government before an easier and earlier solution, the Secretary of State has made a very happy announcement today. I congratulate him on choosing the management-employee buy-out and on the work that he and his colleagues have done. He was right to pick out John Parker, whose commitment to Northern Ireland and to Harland and Wolff is very much a part of the deal. He was also right to pick out Mr. Fred Olsen, whose commitment to the deal will be observed from outside with some interest. Do they not both comprise a vote of confidence in the staff, and especially the work force?

I believe that the Secretary of State said that the support of the work force was "critical". Does he mean that it will be conducted on the basis of a vote, or does he mean that the commitment of the work force's money to the proposal in some proportion or another will be an essential part of the deal? If the latter, I ask the Secretary of State to bear in mind especially that the special circumstances of Northern Ireland, and the uncertainty which has hung over Harland and Wolff, may well mean that many members of the work force, for reasons that he will understand, will not feel able to commit in large amounts what in essence will be their redundancy packages. I hope that that will not cause the deal to founder.

Mr. King: The heads of agreement that we reached today relate to a management-employee buy-out, which was planned by Mr. Parker and discussed by the management and employees of Harland and Wolff as a way of saving the yard and giving it the best possible chance for the future. When speaking of the support of the employees, that is very much what I have in mind.

The right hon. Gentleman rightly picked up on the terms of the agreement, paraphrased though they were,

and he referred to the word "critical"—but my use of that word goes wider. Harland and Wolff has an opportunity that it will not achieve under its present methods of operation. If the yard is to succeed, there must be changes, recognition of the need for new methods and new approaches, and new commercial vigilance and determination. That is also what I meant by the support of the work force being critical. Mr. Parker can give the lead, but it is critically important that people are prepared to back him.

I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's support, and for the general support of hon. Members in all parts of the House for Mr. Parker and his colleagues. The Government will back them too, and I hope that all those in Harland and Wolff, who may have been used to a rather different working situation and atmosphere under public ownership, will realise that there is a new situation, and one in which they have their part to play.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Will the Secretary of State convey the thanks of the people whom I represent to the Prime Minister for her helpful and influential intervention, and for her approval of the finance enabling the deal to go ahead? Will the Secretary of State tell the House which factors made him decide to opt for the management-employee deal as opposed to the Eddie Pollock deal, and how much less it would have cost the taxpayer if the Pollock deal had been approved?

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to explain that, in the final analysis, we had before us two strong contenders. I appreciate very much the interest of Mr. Eddie Pollock and his team and the care they took in making their proposals. My final judgment was that, on balance, on the evidence available to me, and because certain aspects of BT Shipping's proposals were not as clear and as final as I would have wished, that the accepted proposal offered the best prospects for the yard's continuing and enhanced success in the future. One of the factors that also influenced me was the need, as has been mentioned already, to reach a decision as early as possible. I could not afford to wait longer for further clarification of proposals that might not have been successful. I regarded the MEBO-Olsen proposal as a serious proposal, and as the one that I should recommend.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): With other right hon. and hon. Members representing Belfast constituencies, I welcome the statement. As I said on a previous occasion in the House, that is good news not only for Belfast and Northern Ireland but for the whole United Kingdom economy, because it will have a knock-on effect. Will the Secretary of State use his influence with the Secretary of State for Defence to ensure that the shipyard will not be limited only to merchant shipping contracts but can tender for defence contracts as well?

I join others in calling upon the work force at Harland's to do what it has in the past. When others said that things could not be done, it did them. It built both the Titanic, which somebody else sunk, and the Sea Quest, which some people conveniently forget about. When Japanese firms said that ship could not be built, Harland's built it. The company has now been given a new opportunity, which I welcome.

Mr. King: If I was looking for an illustration of what Harland and Wolff can do when asked, it would be its support in meeting the urgent requirements for the Falklands campaign, which is an even more recent example than that mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. As to Ministry of Defence orders—I apologise for not answering this question when it was put earlier by the hon. Member for Belfast, East—it is our intention that the yard will be able to tender for them. I am not sure how many orders there are around at the moment, but it is certainly our intention that the yard will be able to do that.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): Will my right hon. Friend accept my congratulations to him and to the Under-Secretary of State on finding an imaginative solution which eluded many of his predecessors, including me? What did he mean by the liabilities that remain in the old company? Was he referring to the accumulated debt in capital and interest? If so, how will that be dealt with under the terms of the competition policy of the European Commission?

Mr. King: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's gracious comments. The sentence he will have noticed, which points out the difference and shows why it was possible to make the announcement today, states that there is expected to be an improvement in the shipbuilding industry. That has led to greater confidence and made it possible to consider proceeding in this way, and it accounts for the considerable private sector interest in the company.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Why are the Government closing other yards, then?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend is correct that the accumulated debts will remain and are likely to have to be written off. There are also certain rather smaller ship financing liabilities connected with orders for previous ships for which the old company, retains responsibility.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Will the Secretary of State note that, while we would have preferred the company to have remained in public ownership, we welcome his Easter present to the people of Northern Ireland in bringing the uncertainty to an end so soon after the report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry? Will he clarify his announcement a little further? Will the company be able to accept new orders and tender for Ministry orders from now on, without waiting for the new company to be brought into existence? Finally, I do not want to end on a sour note, but does the Secretary of State envisage that the labour force will remain stable until the new company is established and that there will be no further redundancies?

Mr. King: On the last point, some redundancies have been announced and it is likely that they will need to go ahead, but it will then be a matter for Mr. Parker, who will be able to advise further how he sees the situation developing. The hon. Gentleman spoke about the company taking new orders. That is a complicated matter. I said that I hoped that the transitional period would be completed by September. During that time, a prospectus will be prepared and details will be put before the work force to establish whether the various details can be tied down into a final contract.

The complexity of, and one of the difficulties in negotiating, those heads of agreement is deciding what to do about existing contracts and who takes liability for what in regard to the SWOPS and the AOR being built at

[Mr. King]

the moment. There will need to be further discussions about other orders. Under the proposals, the first orders likely to be in the yard will be the three orders which are part of a commitment to Mr. Olsen for three Suezmax tankers.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on an achievement which meets the wishes of the employees as they stressed to us when we took evidence there that it was their wish that the management buy-out in league with them should succeed? He may also be interested to learn that, when the Select Committee on Trade and Industry was over in Brussels recently, we stressed the need for a quick decision should this happy situation arise and we were certainly led to believe that they were well aware of the desirability of the quickest possible response to the application for approval from Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. King: I know the interest that my hon. Friend has taken in the matter, and I am grateful to him for lending his powerful voice to the pressures which others are trying to apply to the Commission in the hope that we may receive an early response. I hope that he felt that the responses he received were not discouraging. I thank my hon. Friend for what he said about that achievement. Two or three years ago, not many people would have had much hope that Harland and Wolff could conceivably be privatised, yet under nationalisation it could never have had the direct personal involvement and commitment of a major figure within the shipbuilding and shipping industry who can contribute his resources and connections, which, as Mr. John Parker would be the first to say, bring a major additional strength to the new consortium.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Will the Secretary of State accept that, while we are all delighted with the decision that he has announced, much work needs to be done especially in Belfast, by the Northern Ireland Office—his team of Ministers and himself—in the wake of this decision? Will he acknowledge that the uncertainty that the Government have displayed —I do not wish to enter into recriminations—over almost the past year had led to a drop of morale in the yard and instability on the streets of Belfast?

In the new spirit we have seen today, will the right hon. Gentleman pursue his decision to its ultimate conclusion as quickly as possible, reassuring not only those in the yard but those who live in Belfast about the Government's intention to create new stability in Northern Ireland? I encourage him to speak to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to ensure that, as soon as possible, the opportunity is accorded to Harland and Wolff to bid for a Ministry of Defence order.

Mr. King: I reject completely the allegation and suggestion of uncertainty. We have been determined to achieve the privatisation of Harland and Wolff—a project that many would have thought quite impossible and without which the yard would have been condemned to certain closure. We have succeeded, but it has not been easy and there have been many problems along the way. Unfortunately, they arose against a background of great and intrusive interest in publicity, reporting and comments made by individuals from different sides, which made the task all the more difficult.

We must recognise how difficult that task was. It looks as though it has been successfully accomplished. I am glad that, far from showing uncertainty, we stuck resolutely to the path on which we had embarked, which we believe has been brought to a successful conclusion.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have called all hon. Members who are directly involved in the statement. I recognise that other hon. Members have an interest, but I ask for brief questions.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the tribute he paid to Mr. John Parker and those who work at Harland and Wolff is well deserved? Is he further aware that the confidence that he expressed in them is shared by all Conservative Members? As my right hon. Friend is a party to the heads of agreement, will he do his utmost to convert them into an actual agreement at the earliest possible date?

Mr. King: I know that my hon. Friend's tribute to Mr. Parker and his team and to Mr. Olsen and his colleagues will be much appreciated, and is well deserved. I assure my hon. Friend that I wish this further stage to be brought to a successful conclusion at the earliest possible opportunity so that we can advance, and the question of the yard taking further orders from other sources can be considered. People understand that, if we can carry this proposal through, the intended direction for the yard must become a possibility, given the assets it has. I give an unqualified yes to my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): I welcome the potential salvation of any shipyard and believe that the skill, ingenuity and determination of Mr. John Parker, far more than the policies of the Government, may save Harland and Wolff. Before the Secretary of State made the statement, did he have discussions with his ministerial colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry about how he would square the level of support, state aid and writing-off of debt for Harland and Wolff with the pathetic conditions made available to North East Shipbuilders Ltd. before it closed? Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why he is so optimistic that the proposal will be accepted by the European Commission, when we were continually told by the Department of Trade and Industry that much more modest proposals for shipbuilders in Sunderland and other shipbuilders' subsidiaries on the mainland would not be acceptable to it?

Can the Secretary of State explain why, as he has already said today that possibly the greatest reason why Harland and Wolff may survive is that there is now an upturn in the shipbuilding market, his colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry have been denying that for a long time and have been closing other shipyards? How can the Secretary of State square all this within one Government?

Mr. King: Of course, other Departments are aware of my proposals today. I understand the hon. Gentleman's disappointment about the problems at North East Shipbuilders Limited and we all share that. It was not possible to find a viable future in any of the offers put

forward. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not in the business of seeking to denigrate other yards and employees. The Harland and Wolff yard has assets that NESL, sadly, does not have. Harland and Wolff has the capacity to build the size of ship that NESL cannot build. Harland and Wolff will have the involvement of an outside investor who is well respected within the shipbuilding and shipping industry. I am not sure whether such an investor was available to NESL.

The test that we had to apply was whether the proposal offered a viable prospect for the future of the yard and for the enduring future of shipbuilding. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had to speak at the Dispatch Box about NESL. Sadly, the Government were not able to see such a long-term, viable future in the proposals put before them then. The proposals I have announced today have such viability.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the only criticism of this excellent decision is that it was not possible to make it many years ago? Even the designer Socialists in the Opposition seem to recognise that people now want the spirit of enterprise, not the old, decayed decadence and dogma of clause 4, which some Opposition Members still seem to want?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. He is right. The involvement of Mr. Olsen and his colleagues, together with the contribution of Mr. Parker and the commitment and enthusiasm of the people working at Harland and Wolff, are a combination that could be an exciting prospect.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The Secretary of State seems confident that Harland and Wolff will be able to compete for Ministry of Defence work. At the time of the AOR1 contract, the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence gave the House clear assurances about that order and about public subsidy. Can the Secretary of State tell us today that there will still be no element of public subsidy for the AOR1 order, that the vessel is still being built to cost and that it will arrive on time? Can he tell us that that is the basis on which he expects Harland and Wolff to be able to compete for Ministry of Defence work and that the Government have not reneged on the promises given to the House three years ago?

Mr. King: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman makes that comment as he speaks for a constituency that has been entrusted with the AOR 2, precisely because the undertakings that I gave from the Dispatch Box have been honoured. His comment was pretty churlish and snide.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I also want to congratulate my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), on their imagination and skill in putting together the deal. However, can my right hon. Friend say whether there will be any preferential scheme for lower-paid employees to be able to buy shares? It is imperative that as many as possible are brought in as shareholders and owners of the new company.

Mr. King: I would rather that this matter was put before the employees by Mr. John Parker. He has constructed his proposals and has discussed with senior management, management and employees his ideas for the way in which they could contribute. I would rather leave that to him.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The importance of this yard extends far beyond the Province, and the announcement made this afternoon could have an important bearing on my constituency with regard to the Norwegian connection and the orders for the three new tankers to be built with shipbuilding intervention fund money. May I remind the Secretary of State that when the Norwegian firm Kvaerner Industries acquired Govan shipyard, part of the deal was that it would place orders for new engines with Clark Kincaid of Greenock? Surely the Secretary of State should be advising the new owners of the Ulster yard that shipbuilding intervention fund money must be used to acquire purchases from suppliers within the United Kingdom? He and all hon. Members will surely forgive me when I say that orders for the engines for the three new vessels should be placed with a Scottish firm—namely, Clark Kincaid.

Mr. King: I can understand the hon. Gentleman putting in a bid on the part of his constituents, but he knows very well that Clark Kincaid and Govan shipyard were part of British Shipbuilders, and the arrangement was part of British Shipbuilders' understanding over the transfer of Govan to Kvaerner. Obviously, the continuance and possible expansion of Harland and Wolff, if it is successful in the future, is good news not just in Northern Ireland but in other parts of the United Kingdom. It must be very good news for British Steel if the corporation is competitive, because three Suezmax tankers will take a lot of steel. If the yard had not continued to operate, that steel would not have been bought. That is part of the spin-off effect of the proposals. I am sure that Mr. John Parker and his colleagues will view sympathetically any competitive offers from firms in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, as we would all like as much as possible to be procured in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): What guarantees of job security up to and beyond 1992 did the Government get from Mr. Parker, given the Secretary of State's initial remarks about further rationalisation costs? What exactly does that rationalisation entail? Secondly, given about half a billion pounds, worth of debt cancellation and the subsidies announced by the Secretary of State today, why do not the Government put money into Harland and Wolff to allow the company to flourish and prosper in public ownership, instead of putting money in to allow private shareholders such as Mr. Olsen to reap the benefits?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman's economic brilliance seems to have deserted him for once. If there are accumulated debts, there is no money to put in; that money has already been lost over the years. It is a question not of putting new money in but of writing off money that has already been lost.

British Nationality (Honorary Citizenship)

4.16 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the award of honorary British Nationality to any individual for outstanding humanitarian services in Hungary during the period July 1944 to January 1945.

At the outset, let me say that the intention of the Bill is that honorary British citizenship should be awarded to Raoul Wallenberg. Early-day motion 234 encapsulates the spirit of the Bill, and I am grateful to those hon. Members on both sides of the House who have signed it, thus showing their support for the measure.

I wish to record my thanks to those who have assisted me in preparing the Bill. They include United States Congressmen Ted Weiss and Tom Lantos, Mrs. Rachel Haspel of the Raoul Wallenberg Committee of the United States, the Jubilee Campaign, Miss Louise Smith and Mr. Paul Lennon.

I shall first address the work of Raoul Wallenberg in Budapest in those incredible closing months of world war 2; then I shall explain why I think that honorary British citizenship should be awarded.

More than 100,000 men, women and children undoubtedly owe their lives to Raoul Wallenberg. Although the great majority of them were Jewish, the record shows that Catholics in Budapest were also persecuted and that Wallenberg protected them. Raoul, who has rightly been called "the righteous gentile" did not stop to inquire about religion; he saved all he could, regardless of faith.

When Wallenberg arrived in Budapest on 9 July 1944, newly appointed to the Swedish legation, he immediately went into action. He arrived dressed in a windbreaker, carrying a rucksack, a sleeping bag and a revolver. The latter, he said, was merely to give him courage; he never used it. He immediately began to issue certificates for the Jewish people who already had visas for Sweden. He invented, on the spot, a procedure that was subsequently the saviour of thousands of people—the Schutpass or protective passport. That consisted of an official-looking document with the Swedish colours, the Swedish coat of arms and the ambassador's signature—all the formality necessary to impress the Germans.

Wallenberg negotiated with the Germans for permission to distribute 5,000 of those passports. Instead he printed and distributed thousands more than the original limit. He rented houses, protected them under the flag of Sweden, and sheltered as many persons as he could. Those houses held about 20,000 people. Wallenberg encouraged other embassies to follow that example, bringing the number rescued in that way to 50,000 people.

Wallenberg was untiring and relentless in his efforts, repeatedly risking his own life. The Germans made several attempts to kill him. He knew the danger, but he would not withdraw. He had authority, diplomatic status and undaunted courage, and he intimidated the Nazis by his mere appearance.

Almost daily, Wallenberg went to the railway stations in Budapest where Jewish people were on their way to Auschwitz in cattle cars with the doors nailed shut. He commanded the doors to be opened as he looked for people with Swedish passports. He would take people who had a driver's licence, a library card, a receipt or any piece of paper written in Hungarian, which the Nazis could not read. He marched away with 100 people here and 100 there, in front of the Nazi guards. The same story was repeated in the death marches to the Austrian border.

Wallenberg's greatest skill was in negotiating with the Germans. At one time the Hungarian Nazis—the so-called Arrow Cross—in their desperation decided to exterminate the general ghetto. People had been herded into the area and put into star-marked houses as a last stop before Auschwitz. Families were separated and no food or clothing was provided. People were at a level of exhaustion and despair. As the Soviets closed in on the city, the Nazis decided to blow up the ghetto. Wallenberg heard of the plan. He confronted the Nazi leaders and told them that he personally would see them hanged as war criminals if they proceeded with their outrageous action. The plan was stopped, thus sparing an estimated further 70,000 lives.

Wallenberg was only 32 years old. He was viewed by Hungarian Jewry as a saviour—a white light in a horrible darkness. In those nightmarish days, he was already a legend. The fact that he existed was passed among the Jews in whispers through the streets of Budapest.

After the Russians took Budapest in January 1945, Wallenberg mysteriously disappeared. The Russians said that they had taken him into protective custody. Then a curtain of silence fell on his fate. Efforts to obtain his release, or any information about him, have been ignored by the Russians. Andrei Gromyko informed the Swedish Government in 1957 that Wallenberg had died of a heart attack 10 years earlier in a Soviet prison. He would have been only 36 years old. No prison records have ever been produced. However, over the years, continued reports from former prisoners of the Gulag, independently and without knowledge of each other, have consistently testified to the fact that he was still alive in the Soviet prison system.

The flagrant disregard by the Soviets of Wallenberg's diplomatic status—in violation of international law—is a fact that cannot and should not be ignored. Whether he is alive or dead is, of course, of utmost importance, but that has no direct relevance to the decision to bestow upon him honorary British citizenship. Bestowing honorary citizenship is not only the greatest recognition that we could give Raoul Wallenberg, but the action would be our most appropriate. Raoul Wallenberg was not the head of state of a great Government. This act is not a self-interested national investment in future political alliances. This man's life shows the heroism, willing self-sacrifice and dedication to a cause that is unparalleled in our time. He has illuminated our history.

We need to take this unprecedented action to let the Russians and the world know that in a civilised society the violation of international law and human rights will never be ignored, that we do not forget and that Raoul Wallenberg will not be abandoned by Britain.

It would be fitting and appropriate if, on 9 July 1989 —45 years to the day after he began his mission in Budapest—we could announce that Raoul Wallenberg is, from that day forward, an honorary citizen of Great Britain.

Undoubtedly Raoul Wallenberg is deserving of limitless praise for his selfless and courageous action. Unlike many others who preferred to remain indifferent in the face of the unspeakable horrors of the holocaust, Raoul Wallenberg refused to ignore the perverted evil of the Nazi regime. He acted; we can do no less on his behalf.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. David Amess, Ms. Diane Abbott, Mr. David Alton, Mr. Peter Archer, Mr. David Atkinson, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mr. Alistair Burt, Mr. Cecil Franks, Mr. Ken Hargreaves, Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. Ivan Lawrence and Mr. Rhodri Morgan.

BRITISH NATIONALITY (HONORARY CITIZENSHIP)

Mr. David Amess accordingly presented a Bill to provide for the award of honorary British Nationality to any individual for outstanding humanitarian services in Hungary during the period July 1944 to January 1945: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 May and to be printed. [Bill 108.]

Orders of the Day

Water Bill

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

Clause 7

GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND RECREATIONAL DUTIES

4.27 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I beg to move amendment No. 115, in page 7, line 23, at end insert—

'or relating to any land to which this section applies'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 116, in page 7, line 41, at end insert—

'or relating to any land to which this section applies'.

No. 110, in page 7, line 42, leave out paragraph (a) and insert—

'(aa) to preserve and maintain public rights of access to areas of woodland, mountain, moor, heath, down, cliff, water areas including reservoirs, or foreshore and other places of natural beauty.'.

No. 117, in page 8, line 17, leave out 'and'.

No. 118, in page 8, line 18, at end insert—

'or of any other land to which this section applies'.

No. 121, in page 8, line 24, at end insert—

'with the exception of access on foot by the public to the land'.

No. 119, in page 8, line 26, at end insert—

'(6A) This section applies to any land which was owned before the transfer date by a water authority.'.

Mrs. Taylor: The amendments open up an important area of the Bill and I hope that we shall be able to make some progress in our discussions.

The amendments are to clause 7, which relates to:

"General environmental and recreational duties"

and which has caused concern to hon. Members on both sides of the House. We all acknowledge that it is important to get this part of the Bill right. When we discussed this matter in Committee, the Minister for Water and Planning gave us many assurances and said that we were worrying unduly about the restrictions on access that might come about as a result of the Bill. He told us that all was well and that there was no need for us to worry. He did not convince us then and he did not completely convince himself, because since our discussions in Committee—not that long ago—the hon. and learned Gentleman has reconsidered the issue.

I do not want to anticipate later debates, but we welcome the Minister's change of heart, as shown by some of the amendments that he is introducing, particularly Government amendment No. 57 on the rights to roam. We raised that issue in Committee and he told us not to worry, but I am glad that he has accepted that there were problems with the Bill as originally drafted.

The Minister for Water and Planning (Mr. Michael Howard): I am sure that the hon. Lady will recall that during our discussions of these matters in Committee I said that I would keep an open mind and would listen to the argument and that if I was persuaded by the argument I would act accordingly.

Mrs. Taylor: I repeat that I welcome the Minister's amendments. I hope that we shall be able to persuade him to go a little further and that he will be able to reassure us about some of our other concerns about access.

Three main problems still exist with clause 7. The first concerns the weakness of the phraseology in the Bill, in particular the phrase

"have regard to the desirability of"

in clause 7. We are still convinced that that phrase does not afford proper protection for the recreational rights now enjoyed by many people.

4.30 pm

The second problem is the need to discover to whom the duties in the clause apply. Will successor companies be included? Amendment No. 119 is aimed at ensuring that the successor companies and any subsidiaries of the new privatised water companies are caught under the obligations that the Bill imposes on water undertakings. The third problem is about charging. Amendment No. 121 deals with that problem and with the pressure on new owners of land to introduce charges even for access on foot.

When we discussed these issues in Committee, it was pointed out that the Water Act 1973 put duties on all water authorities and on statutory water companies to make their land available for recreation. Since then some progress has been made; many water authorities have opened up more of their land to the public. Conflicts still arise in some places. For example, the Yorkshire water authority sometimes gives priority to grouse shooters rather than to ramblers. But in general the situation since 1973 has improved and it has been easier to persuade water authorities to open up some of their land.

We pay tribute to those who piloted that measure through the House, including the present Secretary of State for Wales. It is ironic that another Conservative Secretary of State should be sweeping aside that measure, which has worked over the years in the public interest.

The Bill contains two main recreational duties. The first appears in clause 7(2), which states that every relevant body must

"have regard to the desirability of preserving public rights of access to areas of woodland, mountains, moor, heath, down, cliff or foreshore and other places of natural beauty".

When the matter was debated in Committee on 31 January, we interpreted the phrase "public rights of access" to mean just that. But the Minister said that it was wrong for us to conclude that "public rights of access" meant public rights of access, and he said that a wider interpretation covering concessionary routes was necessary or the provision would be an absurdity.

We agreed with the Minister; unless "public rights of access" meant more than simply rights of access, the duty to protect those areas would be meaningless because public rights of access already exist in law and are not in need of special protection. There is agreement on that, it seems.

We are pleased that the Secretary of State has tabled an amendment to end that absurdity. We welcome his move to extend the provision, even though it gives only nominal protection, with the change from "rights of access" to "freedom of access". However, that will be meaningful only if the whole clause has bite and strength. Unfortunately, clause 7 does not have any bite because the duty imposed is only

"to have regard to the desirability of"

preserving for the public any freedom of access. That means that nobody need do more than simply think about whether something is desirable. If the new profit-seeking companies decide that the preservation of access is not desirable or that it in some way conflicts with their enterprise activities, the duty will be meaningless.

The second main recreational duty is to be found in clause 7(3). Under the 1973 Act, public bodies managing land owned by the public were told to do what they could to open up their land to the public. Now, what appears to be a similar duty is being placed on the new private water companies.

It is important to remember, however, that private companies are answerable not to the public but to their shareholders. Their priorities will not be those of a public authority. Clause 7(3) states that the National Rivers Authority, water and sewage undertakers and internal drainage boards have a duty

"to take such steps as are—

(a) reasonably practicable; and

(b) consistent with the purposes of the enactments relating to the functions of that body,

for securing, so long as that body has rights to the use of water or land associated with water, that those rights are exercised so as to ensure that the water or land is made available for recreational purposes and is so made available in the best manner."

Those bodies do not have to open up their land if they consider that it is not reasonably practicable or if they think that it is not consistent with the purposes of the enactments relating to their other functions. We accept that there will have to be operational restrictions and that some will be justified in some uses of some of the land. That is bound to be a small proportion of the land, but there will be nothing that the public can do to ensure that these bodies open up the remainder of their land, whereas under the present system the public can publicly press a public body to open up public land to the public, as is right. The ability to pressurise and to make sure that land is opened up will be reduced in future.

There is an important intrinsic difference between a public landowner and a private landowner. While public landowners do not have a perfect record, they have a far better record than private landowners. We have only to consider the record of the statutory water companies, who were under the same obligation under the 1973 Act, to see that they have not opened up their land in the same way that water authorities did in the past. Therefore, we think that the recreational duties are very weak, and we hope that the Minister will accept our point that they should be strengthened.

That brings me to the second question. To whom do these duties apply? Who, exactly, will have to have regard to the desirability of protecting for the public any freedom of access? That is the main point of disagreement between the two sides of the House. I do not think that we disagree on our objective but only on how to achieve it.

In Committee the Minister stated that the extent to which land could be disposed of free of the duties imposed by clause 7 would be severely limited. That conflicts with the advice and the information given in a letter on 4 January from the Department of the Environment to the chairman of Thames regional recreation and conservation consultative committee, which said:

"These statutory duties will only apply to the plc core business since it would be impossible to justify a blanket extension to subsidiary companies."

That worried my hon. Friends and many organisations outside the House. The Ramblers Association, the Open Spaces Society, the British Mountaineering Council and the Youth Hostels Association were so convinced that the Minister was making incorrect statements to the Standing Committee, and that he was misinterpreting the Bill, that they clubbed together and paid for counsel's opinion out of their meagre resources to clarify the legal position. Counsel's opinion stated clearly that the Minister's statement in Committee was wrong. Counsel went on to say—I am sure that the junior Minister has seen this opinion; I know that the Minister of State has—

"The Minister turns out to be wrong to say that it is not possible, merely by disposing of ownership, to free the use of land from the clause 7 duty."

The opinion goes on:

"The Minister speaks as if the clause 7 duty attaches to the land when in reality it does nothing of the sort."

The basic question remains: do the clause 7 recreational duties apply to the land no matter who owns it, or do they apply only to the limited list of relevant bodies defined in the Bill? That is the core of the discussion on this clause.

The purpose of amendment 119 is to ensure that all the duties in the Bill apply to subsidiary bodies. I hope that the Minister will accept that point, because water authorities that are gearing up for privatisation are acting as if the duties will not apply to all the land. I look, for example, to the Yorkshire water authority, which has announced its post-privatisation structure. It intends to split its activities into three divisions, only one of which will be the water undertaker as licensed by the Secretary of State. If the land is owned by either the main holding company or the enterprise division that Yorkshire Water is establishing, which will have a duty to make a profit, that land will escape completely the recreational duties provided for in the Bill. The Minister tells us that the Bill will achieve something that we want it to achieve, but the very clear legal opinion is that it will not.

In a letter of 6 February to Members of Parliament, the Under-Secretary, who will be replying, has made his position clear. I hope that he will accept that amendment No. 119 fulfils the obligations which, in that letter, he spelt out as being necessary. Our amendments make it very clear that clause 7 should be extended so that its provisions will apply to any land owned by the water authority before the transfer date, I hope very much that the Minister will accept that point.

Finally, I want to say a few words about charging, which is the subject of amendment No. 121. Clause 7(5) clearly enables the new owners to introduce charges for public access to open spaces. It says:

"Nothing in this section or the following provisions of this Act shall require recreational facilities made available by a relevant body to be made available free of charge."

The Under-Secretary of State, in his letter, said that he saw no reason to believe that, in practice, access would be made subject to considerations of competition and profit. He said that he found it difficult to envisage circumstances in which the companies would find it sensible or cost-effective to make charges.

However, it is obvious to all of us that, once these private companies are established, their main priority will be to maximise their profits, and they will be under considerable pressure to do so. Therefore, charges will be introduced, and they will be set at a very high level—or at the highest level possible in accordance with the workings of those companies. Obviously, charges cannot be introduced for walking where there are rights of way, or for walking over land where there is a right of access. But most public access to water authority land is not as of right. That is the nub of the debate. In the majority of cases, access is enjoyed only by the permission of the water authority, and it is that access which is under threat and for which charges might be introduced after privatisation.

If the Government have no intention of allowing or encouraging charges to be introduced for rambling, I see no reason why they cannot support our amendment No. 121, which states that if charges are to be made for recreation, they should be made

"with the exception of access on foot by the public to the land".

We are talking about large areas of land in areas of outstanding natural beauty which are enjoyed by the public who own it and who have rights of access that have been granted on a concessionary basis by the water authorities. That access is seriously threatened both by the provisions in the Bill which could deny any access and by those that could allow charging.

The new water companies will be operating under considerable pressure to maximise their profits. The access that we have all enjoyed for so long could become a thing of the past if the Bill is enacted unamended. I therefore hope that the Minister and the House will accept our amendments.

4.45 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): I wish to support my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on amendment No. 119 in particular. I have no pecuniary interest, but I should declare an interest as a vice-president of the Association of County Councils. My hon. Friend mentioned several organisations, such as the Ramblers Association. On an all-party basis, the Association of County Councils is worried about what the Government are doing in terms of recreation and conservation as the water authorities are major land owners in this country.

The Association of County Councils is especially concerned about what happened in Committee. It feels that the greatest potential weakness in the draft code proposed by Ministers in Committee was the suggestion that it should apply only to land directly related to water supply and works. I stress the words "directly related". In Committee, the Minister accepted that the vast areas of land currently owned by the water authorities but not used in their core water operations might not be covered by the code, so the water plcs set up by the private companies to manage their non-operational lands will not be covered by the proposed duties in relation to conservation, recreation and public access.

Clause 6 places a duty on those private companies—understandably, because they are private companies—to be concerned with economy and with profit-making, but we are dealing with institutions which hitherto have had a public responsibility. Clause 6 conflicts with anything that the code may state. The private companies can say that they have a duty under clause 6 to make a profit and that any code in operation must be secondary to that.

The Association of County Councils is worried because several councils are affected, including national park land in Cumbria, north Yorkshire, Devon, Somerset and the Peak District. In all those areas, water authorities own large amounts of land, some of which is not directly related to their core activities. The Secretary of State has tabled

[Mr. Gordon Oakes]

amendments to maintain public access to certain areas in the Lake District and the Elan valley, but they do not go nearly far enough and they neglect and ignore all the other areas to which the public now have access and where conservation is an issue. Such land is not exactly public land, but the public have rights over the land because it is overseen by a responsible public body rather than one designed purely to make a profit for its shareholders.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Is my right hon. Friend fully aware of the Secretary of State's comments yesterday when he made it clear that one of the main objectives of the Bill is the privatisation of the 500,000 acres of land at present owned by the water authorities? My hon. Friend's fears about the future of recreation and access are therefore justified because the lands will obviously be flogged off to make money for the water authorities.

Mr. Oakes: My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) is absolutely right. The clear object of the Bill is to make money for the shareholders because they will face great difficulties with the European Community and the standards of water purity and sea pollution. The only way for this rip-off to take place and for shares to be sold is by selling the land. I mentioned Devon, Somerset and north Yorkshire. Conservative Members should not think that I am talking about Labour-controlled councils because those are all solidly Conservative controlled, but they are worried about the Bill, as is the Association of County Councils.

I do not want to delay the debate because we face the guillotine, but I plead with the Minister to accept amendment No. 119.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I wish to draw the attention of the House to my amendment No. 110 in this series. The amendment draws attention to the necessity

> "To preserve and maintain public rights of access to areas of woodland, mountain, moor, heath, down, cliff, water areas including reservoirs, or foreshore and other places of natural beauty."

It is essential that that right should be continued and protection given to those areas after privatisation has taken place, as I fear that it may.

I wish to draw the Minister's attention to an anachronism in my constituency, about 10 per cent. of which, under the Bill, is to be flogged off. We have heard that the Elan valley is apparently to be given some protection. I certainly welcome that because it is an improvement on the present position. That area is particularly important because, since the Water Act 1973 and the rights that have been mentioned came into being, there have been developments at Llanwrtyd Wells in my constituency, to which thousands of walkers on international walks have been attracted. Very often, at the weekend, there are 300 or 400 of them using the rights of way in that area. A tourist industry of considerable importance has grown up in this remote area. People from as far away as New Zealand come to walk there and enjoy the Welsh countryside. It is important that they should have continued access to this part of the world. I assume that continued access will be ensured, partly through the Birmingham Corporation Act 1892. The Victorians were far-sighted enough to ensure that people would have the right to enjoy the countryside and fresh air.

We should compare that area with another part of my constituency—the 21,000 acres that the Welsh water authority owns in the Brecon Beacons national park, where there are a number of reservoirs at Talybont, Dolygaer, Pontsticill, Taf Fechan and other places. At present, people have access in those places to go to the foreshore for fishing and other recreational pursuits. There are rights of way through the area, which is on the edge of an area with a population of 1 million people in south Wales—mainly in Glamorgan—who make great use of those access facilities at the weekend for their enjoyment. If subsidiary companies are formed for recreational purposes by, for example, Welsh Water plc, it is absolutely vital that access continues to be allowed to that land.

I am pleased that Government amendments Nos. 61 and 62—I realise that we are not discussing them now—indicate a considerable change of heart on the part of the Government in relation to allowing more access, which I welcome. However, we must also consider charging, and the desirability to have regard, as the Bill puts it——

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): I entirely sympathise with the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. Is he not aware that substantial safeguards on precisely the points that he raises are already built into the Bill?

Mr. Livsey: The Bill contains some safeguards, but we have tabled our amendments because those safeguards are insufficient. That is certainly the view of many people outside the House. There is no doubt that the interpretation of the Bill, after privatisation, will be vital in determining whether people will have ready access to the land. Concern has been expressed by the Countryside Commission, the National Trust and the national parks about such problems. It is to be hoped that the Government will accept the amendments as improvements to their own and ensure cast-iron guarantees of access so that people may continue to enjoy areas that they have previously enjoyed, especially areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I shall press the amendments of my hon. Friends because I am keen to ensure that conflict does not return to the countryside. As a young person I went out walking and climbing from Manchester virtually every Sunday for 10 years. I remember the end of an era when there was considerable conflict between walkers and climbers, and between gamekeepers and water bailiffs. Fortunately, most of that conflict has disappeared from the countryside as a result of access agreements and a more enlightened attitude by water authorities and others.

I still remember when we had lumps of peat thrown at us by one of the water bailiffs who wanted us off the rock climb. I also remember when we were taken off Stockport water authority land on the banks of Kinder Scout simply because we brewed up with a primus stove. I shall not recount to the House all the tricks that we got up to as teenagers in order to get revenge on the water bailiffs and gamekeepers, but certainly some of them had nothing to do with maintaining water purity.

I do not believe that the Government deliberately want to bring back an era of conflict in the countryside, but I warn them that if sufficient people find that their rights of

access to the countryside have been diminished, they will fight hard to protect them. I fear that, perhaps as a result of the misdrafting of the Bill, or the Government's failure to put the case clearly, there is much confusion. Many people feel that, as a result of that confusion, and the inaccuracies within the Bill, that conflict may return. It is the duty of the House to ensure that the Bill—however bad—is clear and does not encourage future conflict in the countryside. People's rights of access should be clearly set out.

I am concerned about three major points. First, existing rights should be absolutely guaranteed for the future. Secondly, anything that people have previously enjoyed free of charge should not be charged for. Thirdly, the legislation should encourage the establishment of new rights.

5 pm

There will not be much problem about recorded public rights of way, but in many parts of the country there are many public rights of way which have never been recorded. Although they might be put on the map at some point, on the whole no one has argued about them because they are de facto rights of way—one can see the path clearly—and for 10 or 15 years no one has stopped people using them.

In the Peak district and increasingly in other national parks and in areas within them that are owned by the water authorities there are areas that are subject to access agreements which have played a major part. I want an absolute guarantee from the Minister that all such areas are protected in the legislation, not only in the context of the new water companies but in that of any subsidiary bodies to which they may give rise. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said that the Minister claimed in Committee that the new bodies would be bound to protect public rights and that any subsidiary bodies or new companies resulting from changes of ownership of the land would be so bound.

It seems that counsel's opinion suggests that the Minister was wrong, and we need to clarify whether the Minister still believes that his opinion was right and why he thinks that the legal opinion is wrong—if he does. We need a guarantee at the end of the debate that all existing rights will be continued by the water companies in their water activities and in any other use or sale of the land into which they enter.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): In order to assist the hon. Gentleman on this specific point, may I tell him that counsel's opinion, to which he referred, said that in certain circumstances the duty might not be effective. These limited and technical circumstances are being considered carefully, but generally speaking, if the undertakers continue to use the land transferred for their functions, the duties will bite in full.

Mr. Bennett: The Minister said that the Government are reviewing the position. Is that an undertaking that if he cannot give us a clear statement today a clear statement will be given to the House of Lords where, if necessary, the Government will table amendments? Would the Minister like to give us that assurance?

Mr. Moynihan: I made it clear that, as we have just received counsel's opinion and have listened carefully to the representations made by my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) and the Ramblers Association, it is right and proper that we should consider the limited and technical arguments that have been put forward. If we see the need to return to the House and take the matter further, we shall. We do not believe that the position of the Ramblers Association, as set out in its press release, is accurate, but we accept that counsel's opinion referred to specific circumstances which we need to review in detail. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that.

Mr. Bennett: The Minister has not made it as clear as I should like that he will table an amendment, but I think the gist of his point is that, if necessary, he will. I am sure that the other place will examine it carefully.

The Minister talked about water undertaking activities. The bodies about which I am concerned, such as the Ramblers Association and the Peak and Northern Footpaths Society, want a guarantee that the duty will apply not only to land retained for water gathering but to land which may be passed on to other bodies. In large areas in the west Pennines, where water gathering was established in the last century, water-gathering activities are no longer particularly economic because of the better use of water and the bigger reservoirs at Hirlmere, Hawes water and Vyrnwy have come into use. Some of those reservoirs might be taken out of use—I know that there are safety arguments, and so on. I am determined that not only the water authorities but any bodies to which they dispose of land will have this duty.

Access must be free. I hope the Minister will make it absolutely clear that there is no intention to charge people who go on foot. I accept the argument for charging for some services such as car parking.

I want to press the Minister on new rights. I am sure that he is well aware that one of the problems, particularly in the Pennines but also elsewhere, is that the overuse of some footpaths has led to severe problems of erosion. There is a great deal of concern about the Pennine way, some sections of which have to be protected artificially because of the large numbers of people who use them. One of the best ways of protecting paths is to encourage people to use alternatives. By developing access agreements the Peak District national park has enabled people to go to areas such as Kinder Scout, where they can choose where to go rather than follow a specific footpath that might suffer dramatically from erosion.

I want a guarantee that there will be clear powers to ensure that new access agreements can be created on water land in cases in which that would clearly be in the interests of the conservation of footpaths or of an area in general. There must be no charges for such access agreements. All the national parks make the point that the Government have not been overgenerous with their funding, and that there are problems with paying for access agreements. At the moment the Peak district park makes only modest payments, which usually go to local farmers rather than to the water authority or the large landowners. I should not like any restrictions on the development of new access agreements because the new water companies demanded large sums of money.

I want a guarantee that the Minister will introduce clarity and ensure that conflict in the countryside does not arise. I want him to guarantee that existing rights are preserved and that no system of charges will be

[Mr. Bennett]

introduced. There must be a system that will ensure that new and greater access to the areas that are held by the water companies can be opened up.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said that the opinion of the Ramblers Association's Queen's counsel firmly stated that the duties imposed in the Bill for recreation and access did not relate to land whoever it was owned by. The opinion was not quite as firm or all-embracing as that, although I agree with the hon. Lady that certain aspects are not properly protected in the Bill. I arranged the meeting between my hon. and learned Friend the Minister and the Ramblers Association and its QC at which the association expressed its worries.

I thank the Government for responding to the anxieties of the public, especially in areas such as my constituency, which has been mentioned several times, and for tabling amendments to meet some of those concerns.

I support what the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said; we want to know that the Bill will protect not only the legal and statutory rights of access but all existing rights that have been agreed on a voluntary or permissive basis by the water authorities, sometimes in a public-spirited way to which I pay tribute. I also agree with the hon. Gentleman that we do not want people to be charged for access to the national parks or to have little people with machines asking for money for tickets as climbers come down a steep limestone face in the Peak district. There is a case for some areas of the countryside to be freely available—by which I mean, at no charge—to members of the public.

It would greatly help to increase public support for the Bill if Ministers made it clear that these rights and freedoms will be protected. If they are not fully protected by the amendments tabled today, which I welcome—I am pleased that my hon. Friend intervened to say that Ministers are still considering the legal advice that has been given to them—I hope that steps will be taken in another place completely to clarify the issues so that the public do not feel that the Bill removes current rights to access.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): As I am sure you will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we live in the age of the looter. Public assets which have been accumulated over 100 years due to the foresight of our ancestors are now, in every walk of life—and water is only the latest —being auctioned off to the highest bidder and the proceeds used to fuel the illusion of prosperity. No doubt the perpetrators will be in Bermuda by the time the roof comes in, and the Labour party will then be called in to clear up the mess.

When this subject was raised in Committee, Tory Members became quite agitated when I said that behind the urbane and civilised men and one or two women on the Conservative Benches lay every species of spiv and con man known to civilisation. I know that some Conservative Members care about what happens to the great land assets owned by the water authorities, but they are very few. That must be our conclusion, particularly because only one Conservative Back Bencher has had anything to say on this issue today. Increasingly we are falling to the tender mercies of the estate agents and accountants who clutter up the Conservative Benches.

What is about to happen to the half a million or more acres of some of our most beautiful landscape owned by the water authorities is, I am afraid, a result of the actions of Conservative Members. There have been many references to beautiful landscape in the Peak district national park, in Thirlmere and in Kielder which is within the Northumbrian water authority area close to my constituency. Reference was also made to the Elan valley.

Yesterday the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) entered special pleas for exemption from proposed development for land in or near his constituency. It would be easier to take such pleas seriously if there was a general concern on the Conservative Benches about what might happen. It is a little distasteful to hear Conservative Members asking for exemptions or assurances from Ministers simply for a particular landscape or site which happens to be close to their constituents and their own backyards. We would like to see the measures in clause 7 addressed to all the assets and not just to those where personal concerns are involved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, did you see that excellent "Panorama" programme on Monday evening about the impending privatisation of the water authorities? It contained an interview with a farmer in Thirlmere in the Lake district. He was a water authority tenant who had farmed there all his life, as had his father before him. The father was recovering from cancer and was worried whether the tenancy would survive to be handed on to his son. He was also concerned to know whether the cowsheds on his farm were to be handed over for development and turned into luxury yuppie housing. We may have thought that it was basic enough to get an assurance about this as it must be the easiest case in the world for such an assurance to be forthcoming. However, "Panorama" could not obtain an assurance from North West Water that there were no such plans. That provides a clue about the future and it must be matched against any assurances which we may receive from time to time from the Government Front Bench.

All the signs are that those who are about to buy up the water industry and the land that goes with it consider the assets ripe for looting and can hardly wait to get their hands on it. Clause 7 brings us to the heart of the matter. It is a grudging acknowledgment by the Government that there are assets worth preserving and that there is something worth handing over to our ancestors.

As my Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said from the Opposition Front Bench, and as many hon. Members of all shades of opinion have said, it is pathetically weak to use phrases like "having regard to", "take into account", "desirability" or "reasonably practical". The purpose of the amendment is to mitigate the great damage which we believe will be inflicted on the half million or so acres owned by the water authorities.

5.15 pm

The concern is very widespread. All the members of the Standing Committee were deluged by briefs from every conceivable interest. Only in the past few days, I received a brief from the Council for the Protection of Rural England which states:

"There is no technical justification why the freehold of the half a million acres of land currently owned by the water authorities should be transferred to the new water utility PLCs."

It also states:

"There are currently no effective arrangements in the Bill to safeguard the existing public interests which are currently enshrined in all water authority land under section 48 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The Secretary of State's watchdog role over the clause 7 environmental duties is hopelessly inadequate, since he will only be able to intervene on a sporadic and post hoc basis."

That is not a party political broadcast from the Labour party. That is the view of the Council for the Protection of Rural England which enjoys the support of many people who, on most issues, take the opposite view from that of my hon. Friends and I.

The CPRE proposes something more robust than is contained in the amendments. It wants to see all the land presently vested in the water companies handed over to the National Rivers Authority and administered and protected in that way. Our amendments are more modest in the hope that they will extract a generous reply from the Minister.

Amendment No. 121 seeks to exempt from charges access on foot to water authority land. Amendment No. 119 seeks to bring all water authority land within the miserly protection proposed in clauses 7 to 9. We had a discussion in Committee about the code of practice provided for in clause 9, which is supposed to give effect to the good intentions in clause 7. The essential flaw is that the code of practice is completely unenforceable. It is totally advisory and no one need take the blindest bit of notice of it and all the signs are that that is what will happen. The most outrageous flaw—we have pursued the Minister about this—is that the code of practice does not apply to land hived off to subsidiary companies owned by privatised water companies. It will not apply to land which is sold.

We pursued the Minister up hill and down dale over that. He wriggled a great deal, but we eventually extracted one or two points. He said that the code and the good intentions in clause 7 would apply to what he called all "operational land". There is no definition in the Bill of "operational land". We do not know whether that is land on which a sewage station or a reservoir is located. We do not know whether the definition is wider than that. However, we have some clues.

Several weeks ago, the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) was told by the Secretary of State for the Environment that 95 per cent. of the Elan valley—88,000 acres—would be regarded as "operational land". If that is so, it is quite encouraging. However, there is nothing in the Bill to suggest that it is so. I suspect, as many of my hon. Friends and people outside this place suspect, that this rather pathetic protection will apply to a damn sight less than 95 per cent. of the 550,000 acres currently owned by the water authorities.

We take note of what the Minister confirmed in Committee—that "operational land" would apply to 95 per cent. of the Elan valley. Other hon. Members have drawn the Minister's attention to the counsel's opinion and no doubt the Minister will want to comment on it. Our amendments are modest and do not do justice to the outrage that is understandably felt about what will happen to parts of our most beautiful landscapes. I commend them to the House.

Mr. Pike: I shall be brief because we want to hear the Minister's comments on these important amendments before we vote under the guillotine.

Leaving aside the Bill's privatisation aspects, clause 7 and the related provisions, more than any other, have been the subject of lobbying of right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the Committee. That shows the genuine concern that is felt and why, despite moves made by the Government since the Committee stage, it is necessary to make further amendments. The Minister said that he is considering legal opinion and may make further changes, if he deems that appropriate, when the Bill is considered in another place. I accept the basis on which the Minister gave that assurance, but I hope that he will also be prepared to meet representatives of the organisations that are expressing concern.

Even at this stage, it is unsatisfactory for the Minister to give just this House and another place assurances about the Government's intentions, because they must also convince others outside. Even if the Minister does not recognise this, there is a credibility gap about the Government's intentions between them and the Ramblers Association, the British Mountaineering Council, the Greater Manchester countryside unit, the CPRE, and the National Trust. I could rattle off the names of organisation after organisation and read out any number of comments from various briefs, including one from anglers. The Minister must convince not only Parliament but those outside who are actively concerned about ensuring that in respect of access to land currently owned by water authorities the status quo will be at least maintained if not improved.

Many more people are concerned about the Government's real intention, having heard of the response made by the Secretary of State for the Environment in yesterday's main debate, when he said that one of the Bill's important objectives is the privatisation of 500,000 acres of land. We have said all along that that was the Bill's fundamental objective, and that the only way in which privatisation will pay is by people making money from the land they can acquire. The Secretary of State let that out of the bag yesterday, underlining that that was the Bill's main objective. Whether or not he did so intentionally, I do not know—but he did it.

The organisations whose fears we are expressing will be even more fearful of the consequences of clause 7 if amendments are not made. If the Government are not prepared to move today, there will be even less time available for dealing with that aspect, because the Bill has only to pass through the other place. I hope that the Government recognise the genuine fears that exist and that they must do something if they are not to lose the confidence of people throughout the country who want to ensure that recreational opportunities—whether for rambling, angling, or whatever—are retained.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are more than happy to meet relevant bodies to discuss the important issues that have been raised. Yesterday, I met representatives of the Sports Council, and a couple of days ago I met the chairmen of all the regional councils for sport and recreation, when we discussed those issues in considerable detail. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning met with my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) and other representatives of the Ramblers

[Mr. Moynihan]

Association. We shall of course continue to consider representations, not least those on recommendations concerning the code of practice, which Ministers can still review.

The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) reflected on my right hon. Friend's comments of yesterday evening, but he should have listened more carefully to my right hon. Friend's remarks about land. Most national parks land is, and always has been, in private ownership. Ninety-seven per cent. of the Yorkshire dales national park is in private ownership, and—if one includes 10 per cent. held by the National Trust—88 per cent. of Exmoor is privately owned, yet one does not see that land desecrated and spoilt by undesirable development.

It is an inescapable fact that proper regulation does not require public ownership. If it did, not one acre of land on these islands would be other than in public ownership. With planning controls and the proper regulation that we support and are providing, land can be as well protected in the private sector as in the public. If public bodies do not need land for proper public functions, why should they have it?

The Bill preserves in full, in clause 7(2) and (3), the present obligations of water authorities to have regard to the desirability of preserving public rights of access to land and to put their water and land to the best recreational use. Those are broad and substantial duties, but in Committee my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning said that we wanted to consider ways in which they can be further strengthened, clarified and updated. Public access to the water authorities' estates is of great importance because the authorities hold in highland and upland areas much land of great environmental and recreational significance.

We concluded that the general power in clause 180 to vary by order local statutory provision as a consequence of the Bill shall not apply to so much of such provisions as concerns public access and amenity. That is particularly relevant to the Manchester and Birmingham local Acts, and my hon. and learned Friend gave an assurance in Committee that the Government have no intention of using that power to revoke or amend the important provisions of those Acts, which provide for public access to the Elan valley and to parts of the Lake district and Peak district.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Does my hon. Friend accept that the Forestry Commission already charges the public for access to some of its land in my constituency, even when they are on foot?

Mr. Moynihan: I accept that, and it is vital that the flexibility that exists and has operated well in the past does not change in the future. I shall deal later with the specific subject of charging. My hon. Friend makes a pertinent point, because to accept the amendment would be to lose the freedom to make appropriate charges, not least to meet the cost of restocking rivers with fish—an activity requiring much energy, effort and financial expenditure. If charges are necessary for that purpose, there should be no prohibition on their being made in future.

The Ramblers Association and other interested bodies welcomed our assurances, but after further discussion on rights of way, we agreed that it is right that our firm intention should be reflected in the Bill. Some concern has been expressed about clause 7(2), which imposes on the National Rivers Authority and the undertakers the obligation

"to have regard to the desirability of preserving public rights of access"

to water authority land, and about whether that provision should be much clearer about its application to permissive or concessionary routes and, further, to the important and significant right to roam. We concluded that it is important to amend the Bill to embrace all those rights, to ensure that, in future, not just statutory rights of way but permissive or concessionary rights of access and the right to roam are embraced. We achieved that by proposing an amendment to leave out the words "public rights" and insert

"for the public any freedom"

of access to make it explicit that we are preserving for the public freedom of access to the land in question—whether one is considering statutory rights of way, permissive or concessionary rights of access, or the right to roam. I very much hope that the two Government amendments that relate to this debate will be welcomed by both sides of the House.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Moynihan: No. I shall move on and rapidly cover the other points that were raised.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) raised three significant and important points, and I shall swiftly respond to them:

5.30 pm

The amendments focus on the central features of the general environmental duties concerning conservation, public access and recreation to be imposed on the NRA and the appointed companies. I remind the House of the scope of our proposals. First, they preserve for the privatised industry all the present duties of the public sector. That includes the duty to further conservation and to put its water and land to the best use for recreation. Those duties are supplemented by a duty on the NRA generally to promote conservation and recreation. In addition, all the duties are made enforceable by the Secretary of State who is to take into account how far the companies have complied with the code of practice which we have already published in draft and which represents the fullest expression so far of what good practice in those matters represents. Therefore, there are absolutely no grounds for arguing that conservation, access and recreation are inadequately covered in the Bill. The water industry will be subject to fuller and clearer obligations after privatisation. Those obligations are more substantial than those attaching to any other industry in the country in the public or private sector.

In amendments Nos. 115 to 118 the House is asked to apply those duties not only to the performance of functions but to the ownership of land. Amendment No. 119 seeks to extend the duties to any successor owners of the land. Let me begin with the proposals that the duties should attach not only to the performance of functions but to the ownership of any land. The central question is simple. The general environmental duties in the Bill are special ones designed to apply specifically to water industry functions, reflecting their uniquely extensive impact on the environment through the collection and

control of water resources, draining operations and pipelaying and sewage activities. The nature of those functions, and not any characteristics of the land in question, requires those obligations. What logic could there be in applying them to the ownership of that land? It would create a quite unparalleled protective regime for land, based not on any special quality or requirement of the land, or any pressures or operations to which it might be subject, but simply because the land happens to be or to have been in the ownership of an appointed company.

Hon. Members can imagine the absurdities to which the amendments would lead. One can readily visualise small patches of urban land of no conservation or amenity value whose use for housing, employment or some other social need was for ever blighted by the need for further conservation and recreation in ways related to the performance of functions that it no longer serves. The general management and use of land outside the special functions of the industry are matters for the planning system to regulate.

The same considerations apply to amendment No. 119 which would extend the duties to any successor owner of the land. As long as the conservation, access and landscape duties apply to the performance of all water industry functions, full and sufficient protection is afforded.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Moynihan: No, I cannot give way.

The hon. Lady stated that "having regard to" duties are ineffective. That is wrong. Under that duty the water authorities have been opening up access and taking down fences since 1974, and, in any case, the Bill makes the duty fully enforceable by the Secretary of State. It is also irrelevant. Ramblers and climbers are further protected by the duty in clause 7(4) on companies to put their lands to best use for recreation. That is an unqualified duty, not a "have regard to" duty.

The hon. Lady referred to counsel's opinion about transfers to subsidiary companies. I hope that I have made it clear to the House that the opinion suggests that in certain circumstances the duty might not be effective. As I mentioned, we are considering the limited and technical arguments in the opinion, and if a technical amendment to the Bill is necessary, we shall table such an amendment, but, generally speaking, if undertakers continue to use any land transferred for their functions, the duties will bite.

Finally, the hon. Lady referred to charging. Nothing in the Bill changes the present position. The provision in clause 7(5) exists simply to make it clear that companies, like water authorities now, can charge for the use of recreational facilities. That must be right, as that flexibility needs to continue. The scare stories put about by Opposition Members are quite wrong. For the most part, the water authorities do not charge but allow people to roam freely on their lands in the highlands and uplands. Quite reasonably, there are often charges for car parks and jetties, but not for ordinary access on foot. Where no specific facilities are provided, the levying of charges has usually been considered unrealistic and impractical. Without the amendment, that sensible and pragmatic position is expected to continue.

I have touched very briefly on the main points raised in the debate. I apologise to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) for not giving way, but it gives the Opposition Front Bench the opportunity to respond.

Ms. Walley: Because of the guillotine, there is not time for me to raise with the Minister some of the important comments made and issues raised in the debate. The Opposition wish to make clear three basic points. First, we want clause 7 to have teeth, and our amendments give the clause teeth. Secondly, the Minister tells us that he is currently having discussions with the Ramblers Association, the Sports Council and other bodies. Now is the time for action. The Bill will soon be the law of the land and, unless we receive some real assurances from the Government, there will no longer be any time for further talks.

Access to land is an old problem which has been with us for a century. Organisations such as the Ramblers Association have been campaigning for proper access to land, whether it is in private or public ownership. We want there to be public access to all the land in the ownership of the water authorities post-privatisation. When we debated this matter in Committee it appeared that there was no difference between the views of the Government and the Opposition, yet the necesary provisions are still not spelt out clearly in the Bill.

The amendments are very clear, and if the House accepts them, or if the Government give us an assurance that they will accept them in another place, we shall ensure that there is access to all the land, which people throughout the country have campaigned and fought for for years, and for which in certain parts of the country they are still campaigning, with the help of organisations such as the Ramblers Association. For that reason, we feel that the amendments are important.

Thirdly, if the Government consider that it is not necessary to include our amendment which would remove the right to charge people for access to the land on foot, why does he not accept it now? Does the Minister envisage that in the future the new companies will not charge only for facilities, which would not be unreasonable, and that it will be in order for new companies to charge people to travel on foot over land which has been open for a long time?

Amendment negatived.

Amendments made: No. 61, in page 7, line 42 leave out 'public rights' and insert
'for the public any freedom'.

No. 62, in page 7, line 46 leave out 'rights' and insert 'freedom'.

No. 26, in page 8, line 21 at end insert—

'(4A) It shall be the duty of a relevant body, in determining what steps to take in performance of any duty imposed by virtue of subsection (3) or (4)(c) above, to take into account the needs of persons who are chronically sick or disabled.'.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Amendment proposed: No. 121, in page 8, line 24 at end insert
'with the exception of access on foot by the public to the land'.—*[Mrs. Ann Taylor.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 204, Noes 285.

Division No. 130] **[5.39 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham	Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Anderson, Donald	Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Battle, John
Armstrong, Hilary	Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy	Beckett, Margaret
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Ashton, Joe	Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Bermingham, Gerald

Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter

Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 119, in page 8, line 26, at end insert—

'(6A) This section applies to any land which was owned before the transfer date by a water authority.'.—*[Mrs. Ann Taylor.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 200, Noes 298.

Division No. 131] **[5.51 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McTaggart, Bob

McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen Adams and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom

Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Six o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [6 February] and the Resolution yesterday, to put forthwith the Question on an amendment moved by a Member of the Government up to the end of clause 9.*

Amendment made: No. 27, in page 9, line 28, after 'Council', insert—

', the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Part II

WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE SERVICES

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 9, line 30, leave out part II of the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 102, in clause 10, page 9, line 36,, after 'Chapter', insert—

'and provided that no reference to the Monopolies Commission made in accordance with section 28(2)(b) in respect of that company is outstanding.'.

No. 109, in clause 28, page 32, line 4, after second 'undertaker', insert—

'or by any nominated holding company of a successor company or any subsidiary thereof'.

No. 103, in page 32, leave out lines 15 to 23.

No. 104, in page 32, line 37, leave out subsection (5).

No. 105, in page 33, line 1, leave out subsection (6).

No. 106, in clause 29, page 34, line 22, after 'enterprises', insert—

'(aa) shall have regard to the desirability of the ownership of water enterprises remaining under United Kingdom control and not altering in such a manner as to be prejudicial to the interests of water consumers or other industries the ownership of which is under United Kingdom control.'.

No. 107, in page 34, line 26, leave out 'that principle' and insert—

'the principles contained in paragraphs (a) or (aa) above'.

No. 108, in page 34, line 29, leave out 'that principle' and insert 'those principles'.

Government amendments Nos. 141, 142, 94, 95 and 25.

No. 96, in schedule 4, page 194, line 2, at end insert—

'Public access to meetings

7. In paragraph 1 of the Schedule to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 (bodies to which Act applies in England and Wales), at the end there shall be inserted the following sub-paragraph—

"(i) customer service committees established and maintained under the Water Act 1989.";

and the functions of a customer service committee shall be regarded as public functions for the purposes of that Act.".

Government amendments Nos. 31, 32 to 36 and 41.

No. 143, in clause 46, page 53, line 40, at end insert 'or to show that it was prevented from complying with its obligations under this section by frost, drought, unavoidable accident or other unavoidable cause'.

No. 144, in clause 50, page 59, line 11, at end insert 'or to show that it was prevented from complying with its obligations under this section by frost, drought, unavoidable accident or other unavoidable cause'.

No. 122, in clause 51, page 59, line 23, after 'supply', insert

'within the meaning of section 52(1A) below'.

No. 123, in clause 52, page 60, line 31, at end insert—

'(1A) No water shall be regarded as wholesome where it falls below the prevailing standard determined by the European Community in respect of Drinking Water Quality, whether or not contained within a Directive.'.

Government amendment No. 63.

No. 127, in clause 71, page 82, line 25, at end insert—

'(4A) Any arrangement made in pursuance of this section may authorise a local authority to undertake works in the relevant area and in such other place as may be incidental to the area referred to in the arrangement and where it is expedient to do so to secure the efficient discharge of the sewerage functions of any sewerage undertaker.'.

No. 128, page 83, line 11, at end insert—

'(5A) In the absence of any arrangements under this section each sewerage undertaker shall in making arrangements for the discharge of their sewerage functions invite competitive tenders for the design supervision and execution of all works of maintenance or construction within the relevant area from at least three organisations, one of which shall be the relevant authority for that area.'.

No. 131, in page 83, line 11, at end insert—

'(5B) Where arrangements have been entered into in pursuance of this section by a sewerage undertaker and a relevant authority any such arrangements may be varied or terminated by agreement between the parties thereto and in the absence of an agreement the arrangements shall be terminated by either party giving to the other at least 12 months notice of termination taking effect from 1st April following subject to the provisions set out in (a) (b) and (c) below:—

(a) the notice shall contain a Statement of Reasons explaining why termination of the arrangements proposed would benefit customers or potential customers of the sewerage undertaker

(b) either party may apply within twenty one days of receiving the notice to the Secretary of State for a review of the decision to terminate and any such notice shall not come into effect until the Secretary of State has published the outcome of the review and

(c) in carrying out the review the Secretary of State shall have regard to the benefit accruing to consumers as a result of the proposed termination and the financial consequences of termination on the parties to the arrangements.'.

No. 126, in clause 73, page 83, line 34 at end insert—

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

'(1A) The Director shall lay before Parliament in each year in which charges are fixed under this section a report setting out those charges together with such information as he may consider to be relevant in relation to those charges.'.

No. 148, in page 84, line 5 at end insert—

'(3A) When a water main or sewer is requisitioned or a connection is made in accordance with the provisions of this Act or section 34 of the Public Health Act 1936 the undertaker shall be entitled to charge the person or body making the requisition or requiring the connection in respect of each dwelling a sum (the connection charge) to cover the costs of any additional works required to ensure compliance with sections 37 and 67 of this Act.'.

No. 136, in clause 76, page 87, line 29 at end insert—

'(2A) Notwithstanding the generality of subsection (2) above, or of Schedule 10, regulations may not impose any right on a water undertaker or sewerage undertaker to require any person to make any payment for the connection or maintenance or repair of a water meter installed at the undertaker's request or insistence.'.

No. 125, in page 87, line 46 at end insert—

'(dd) provide for optional arrangements for payments by instalments'.

Government amendments Nos. 43 to 48.

Dr. Cunningham: Amendment No. 1 is an excellent amendment and has the additional merit of being quite simply understood, even by those hon. Members who have paid only fleeting attention to the work of the Standing Committee. The effect of the amendment is to remove from the Bill the whole process of privatising the water industry.

Amendment No. 1 is part of a large group, which includes several other amendments in my name and in the names of my hon. Friends. Amendments Nos. 122 and 123 would require the Bill to include drinking water quality standards that met the provisions of the European Community directive. Amendment No. 126 is an important amendment, which would require the director general to give Parliament an annual report on pricing in the water industry. Amendment No. 125 is a small but significant proposal, which would allow people to pay their bills by instalments. Amendments Nos. 127, 128 and 131 deal with local authority sewerage agency arrangements.

We also have an interest in the significant amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton)—amendments Nos. 102 to 109—which would have important implications for references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and other aspects of takeovers in the water industry.

It is well known that the Labour party is totally and irrevocably opposed to the idea of privatising water—the nation's most fundamental natural resource. Privatisation has always been a bad idea, as is recognised increasingly widely. The two most comprehensive opinion surveys have been conducted by the BBC. The survey conducted by the Derek Jameson show——

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Oh yes; quality stuff.

Dr. Cunningham: That is an interesting reaction. Clearly, the hon. Gentleman does not like the idea of the British people expressing their views. No doubt Mr. Jameson and his listeners will be interested to hear of the contempt expressed by Conservative Members. I am not surprised that Conservative Members do not want to hear what happened as 36,068 people recorded their opinion, of whom 96·4 per cent. said that they were opposed to the whole idea of privatisation. More recently, on the "Open Air" programme, about 10,000 people responded, and 96 per cent. of them expressed opposition to the idea of privatising the water industry.

Mr. Howard: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the Derek Jameson show will be the touchstone of the policies of any future Labour Government? Is the bold cry of the Opposition, "We offer you government by the Derek Jameson show"?

Dr. Cunningham: Of course not. I am entertained by the contempt in which Conservative Members hold the opinions of the British people and by the dismissive—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Conservative Members seemed to laugh contemptuously at the opinions of the British people. They may laugh on the other side of their faces before too long because, as the arrangements unfold, a significant and steady trend of opinion can be seen that is opposed to the Government's proposals.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): The test of British opinion is in the ballot box, and the Conservative party is consistently returned to government by the British public. Surely the hon. Gentleman does not have the face to put forward misleading surveys by semi-qualified people broadcast on the Derek Jameson programme. Non-viable surveys are irrelevant and should form no part of a properly prepared and presented Opposition argument against the Bill.

Dr. Cunningham: If the hon. Lady prefers, I can read into the record the results of the Gallup poll, the MORI poll—*[Interruption.]*

Miss Nicholson: I am quoting the hon. Gentleman's figure of 96 per cent.

Dr. Cunningham: All the other opinion polls, too, show a trend against the Government. I agree that it is slightly smaller, being in the mid-70s. Is the hon. Lady saying that she is content with 76 per cent. opposition to the Government's proposals?

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North) *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way in a moment; I have given way twice already.

It is well established that British public opinion is implacably opposed to the idea that the nation's most fundamental essential resource should be a matter of profit-taking by private enterprise monopolies. I believe that the public will remain opposed to that proposal.

Mr. Burt *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way in a moment.

In almost 19 years in the House, I have never seen so much adverse press and public condemnation of a proposal. No doubt we shall hear that leading articles and editorials in the *Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *The Daily Telegraph* do not matter either. However, we believe that those and other newspapers are expressing genuine concern about, and in some cases are showing outright opposition to, the implications of the proposals. *The Guardian* showed its concern in an editorial headed, "Wet and worrying." I do not know whether the

Minister would describe himself as wet in the political sense—certainly not. He is, however, in a certain amount of deep water on this issue.

The Times had the heading, "Flotation is heading into deeper water"; *The Independent*, "The wrong way to sell water"; the *Daily Mail*, "Why water charges are overflowing"; the *Financial Times*, "Water sale in a muddle"; *The Daily Telegraph*, "Privatisation water torture"; and *The Observer*, "Risk of drowning in water sell-off".—*[Interruption.]* They are all very recent.

The *Financial Times* said "Costly water, rotten eggs". That is absolutely ringing condemnation of the very idea of privatising the nation's water resources.

Mr. Burt: All this is very amusing, and I take the hon. Gentleman's point. It is amusing, because it reminds the House of the Opposition's reliance on ephemeral opinion. Will he think back to the considerable opposition at the time of the introduction of the measures to privatise the telephone service and British Gas and to deregulate the buses, which at the time brought tremendous opposition in much the same way as the hon. Gentleman has described? However, their success has now been proved. Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that that will happen with this measure?

Dr. Cunningham: That is a matter of opinion. I would not say that the majority of people think that the privatisation of the telephone service was a wonderful success, or some of the other inadequate privatisations. People in the rural area that I represent do not consider that bus deregulation has been a roaring success, because they do not have a bus service any more. That is hardly success for those people. That is typical of what has happened in the rural areas. The suggestion of this being some kind of ephemeral public opinion is, too, a matter of opinion and remains to be seen. However, the evidence over the past two years has been that the public are implacably opposed to the idea.

Mr. Mullin: Does my hon. Friend recall that, when it was said in Committee that 96 per cent. of more than 30,000 people who telephoned a radio show were against privatisation, the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) was overheard to remark that, if that was calculated on the same basis as under the Housing Act, it would constitute a majority in favour?

6.15 pm

Dr. Cunningham: It would be typical of the Government and their supporters to construe something like that as a victory rather than a defeat. Indeed, on the basis of some of their earlier legislation, that might be their intention.

Privatisation has little, if any, support outside the House. I do not believe either that it has an honest majority in favour inside the House.

Mr. Burt: What does that mean?

Dr. Cunningham: It means that there is a whipped, arm-twisted, bullied and cajoled majority for it. *[Interruption.]* I shall tell the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) that I would be happy to have a free vote on the issue, but would he? Of course he would not. I suggest that, before he makes sedentary interventions like that again, he thinks about the implications of what he is saying.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The free vote that matters is that of the electors at the polling stations. If the hon. Gentleman is paying so much attention to what the papers and opinion polls say, he should know that they have always said that they would much rather have this Government in charge of the country's affairs. The reason why the Opposition were thrown out of government in 1979 was their completely inefficient management of the economy—including the water industry, where investment was cut by one third.

Dr. Cunningham: It is a blinding statement of the obvious that the Conservative party won the last general election. However, I do not believe that such issues as water privatisation and the sell-off of our national parks played a significant part in that general election. I wish they had. However, they will play a significant part in the next general election, and they will not be helpful to the hon. Gentleman's cause.

Mr. Knapman *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall not give way for the moment.

The public are already paying an unnecessary and heavy price for this dogma-driven idiocy, as the recent increases imposed by the statutory water companies have made clear. The Minister of State has huffed, puffed, bellowed and cajoled about the matter. He said that he could not see any reason why consumers should pay more than a 10 per cent. increase in the coming financial year. We always believed that that was nonsense. I remember his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State saying during Second Reading that our predictions about the effect of this on prices were "absolute nonsense".

Within months, our arguments have been proved right and those of the Secretary of State proved wrong. The forlorn and bedraggled attempts of the Minister of State to resurrect the Government's credibility from the fiasco—not to protect the public—have come to naught. He has tried to make a virtue of the fact that the average price increase for 12 million consumers will be 22 per cent. in the coming financial year.

The Minister of State looks somewhat puzzled. He looks as though all this is new to him. An increase of 22 per cent. is three times the rate of inflation. There has been an attempt to present this debacle of policy as a great victory for consumers.

Mr. Howard *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way in a moment.

I wrote to the right hon. Lady the Prime Minister about the connection between privatisation and increased charges. The Secretary of State got into a bit of a lather today and said that what I was saying in that letter was not true. I was, however, quoting the West Kent water company. The management of that statutory company —one of those paragons of rectitude often paraded from the other side of the House as role models for how to manage the water industry—told every one of its consumers that a 21p in the pound increase was being dunned on them as a direct consequence of the Government's privatisation proposals.

Mr. Howard: Does the hon. Gentleman not recognise that that reinforces the need for the regulatory structure that we are providing in the Bill? Does he not recognise

[Mr. Howard]

that those companies operate under an out-of-date system, with inadequate regulation that was untouched by the Opposition when they were in power?

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, of course it was untouched, because those companies were not levying increases of 42 per cent. For the Minister of State to propose that private enterprise is necessary for the regulation of prices is the most incredibly stupid argument for the market that I have ever heard. To say that we must have private enterprise so that we can have price controlsis economic illiteracy. As an act of kindness to the Minister, I suggest that he would do far better to keep his head down and keep quiet about this.

I have the *Daily Mail* with me, which is the most implacably loyal supporter of the Conservative Government through thick and thin whatever happens, but it says of the Minister of State and his huffing and puffing and bluster about price increases:

"Ministerial anger over this is bluster and humbug."

Mr. Howard: Never mind what the *Daily Mail* says; does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that, if one has monopolies in the private sector, they should be properly regulated? Part of that proper regulation should be price control of precisely the kind that we shall put in place as a result of the Bill's provisions.

Dr. Cunningham: But the point is that we should not have private monopolies in the first place. What is the possible justification for leaving consumers to the mercy of private, cosseted, protected monopoly power?

Miss Emma Nicholson *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: No, I shall not give way.

We shall be faced with private monopolies with unprecedented powers in the British economy, from which consumers will have no escape. They will have no choice, unless, of course, they take the advice of the Secretary of State who said, "Yes of course they have a choice—they can buy Perrier." I cannot see people in Durham watering their leeks with Perrier or washing their greyhounds in it or anybody bathing their grandma in it. Of course consumers have no choice; the Minister knows that full well. *Public Finance and Accountancy* of 17 March was right to describe privatisation—I forgive it the pun—in this way:

"Sluice gates open for water charges."

That is the consequence for consumers of the Government's proposals and the Minister knows it.

It is bad enough that water consumers should be taxed in this way to pay for Conservative party dogma in the face of all reasonable and reasoned arguments, but the environment too will pay a heavy price as a consequence of privatisation.

We believe that the whole idea of water privatisation is nonsense, and I believe that the public share our view. Water is inevitably a natural monopoly, essential to life, to health and to well-being. It should not be an object for profiteering. The Prime Minister's comparison between the water supply and the food industry is offensive.

People have no choice about needing water and they have no option about from where they get it, but they have all sorts of choices and options about where they can buy their food—they can even grow it themselves. It is insulting to millions of people throughout the country to say that the things are the same and that therefore there is a case for making water the subject of profit taking and private monopoly powers. The private monopolies will not face any market forces, and there will be no competition in the sense that people talk about private enterprise creating such competition. There will be no private enterprise, because the private monopoly will be protected from the market simply because no market will exist.

The Government's notion of comparative competition is a half-baked idea which has been dreamed up to try to give the privatisation some cloak of respectability, but no one has any difficulty in seeing through it.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): The hon. Gentleman has spoken about private monopoly. Why then did the Labour Government do nothing about the statutory private water companies from which I and many other people draw their water supply? Their prices were not controlled by the Labour Government, but the hon. Gentleman appeared to suggest that those prices were not put up enough. How does he suggest that a Labour Government would get the required investment? In Committee, he accepted that a large amount of new investment is necessary, but who would he get to pay for it?

Dr. Cunningham: I do not want to be discourteous to the hon. Gentleman, but his compendium interventions with multiple questions are difficult to answer in total. I do not like Conservative Members' allusions to "private" water companies. They are not private enterprise water companies, but statutory, regulated water companies. We did not do anything about them—to paraphrase what the hon. Gentleman has said—because we did not believe there was a significant problem. They supply about 25 per cent. of consumers and, in the circumstances that then prevailed, they did a reasonable job.

The hon. Gentleman is aware that I recognise that major investment is required to improve drinking water quality, to protect and enhance the environment and to eliminate pollution. The hon. Gentleman was upstairs with us for weeks on end, and he knows that there was no argument about that. The argument is whether such improvements are best controlled, directed and planned as part of a national policy, which is open and accountable, with national objectives under Government and public control, or whether it is better done by private enterprise monopoly power exercised in secret, with the public having little or no impact on the matter. In that case, the public would have little say in what happens and nowhere else from which to receive their water. There is a wide gulf of opinion about the way in which such things are managed, but there is no argument about the need for investment.

We believe that we are far more likely to achieve sustained, coherent, strategically planned and co-ordinated investment if such matters are subject to public policy rather than to private enterprise policy. That is the great political difference between the opposition parties and those who support the Bill. I am sorry that I rehearsed all of that again at some length, but——

Mr. Howard: Was it part of such a coherent, planned strategic policy that investment in sewerage was cut by 50 per cent. by the previous Labour Government?

Dr. Cunningham: We had numerous exchanges about this in Committee. I read the figures into the record last

night. Total capital investment in the water industry during the Labour Government's period of office was, on a yearly average, higher than the yearly average during the nine years of this Government's office. That investment was made in different economic circumstances. Expenditure was not cut and the Minister need only look at the water statistics published by the Water Authorities Association to see that.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman has not answered the question.

Dr. Cunningham: That does answer the question. The hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong.

Mr. Howard *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I have given way to the Minister three or four times.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman has not answered the question.

Dr. Cunningham: I have answered the question, and I will not give way again. The Minister can no doubt use different figures to try to prove his point. I am talking about total capital investment over a five-year period in the water industry.

6.30 pm

The Government have argued that, by passing the nation's water resources into the hands of protected private monopolies, efficiency will improve. Let us test that claim. The arguments for the market and for private enterprise have been that competition and market forces —the need to be in the lead, and the challenge of other providers of goods and services—drive efficiency. None of those will exist in the circumstances that the Government are creating in this case. That is clear beyond doubt, so none of the alleged creators of efficiency in a free market will impinge on the private water monopolies. The Government claim does not stand up.

It is argued that water authorities will not only be able to borrow freely but that they will invest more when they are privatised. In fact, it is cheaper for the regional water authorities to borrow from the national loans fund than it will be for them to borrow in the open market. Immediately, therefore, it will be more expensive for them to borrow to finance their investment.

The Secretary of State has said, not once but often, that these protected private monopolies will be given immunity from prosecution if they pollute the environment. Hence, pressure on them to invest and improve and be more protective of the environment is being knocked away before they even exist. From where will the efficiency come? How will there be a drive for greater investment? What will direct, control and motivate all of that?

These protected private monopolies will face a dilemma. They will have to keep their shareholders and investors happy and achieve the necessary returns and dividends, and pay the directors' fees and all the other paraphernalia of additional expense, and at the same time invest in long-term matters of environmental protection and pollution control, on which the pay-back periods will stretch far into the future. We think we know where their final choice will rest. It will be to keep their shareholders happy and pay dividends at the expense of consumers and at the expense of investment to protect the environment.

It is argued that the new system of regulation will protect consumers, but the director general will have no part in the initial price-fixing, and it will take at least 10 years for his system to have any significant effect. Privatisation, it is argued, will release the industry from political control. Yet the Secretary of State will fix the original prices, and thereafter they may be reviewed after five years.

The Government will try to palm off the shares to a few million people whom they believe will want to take them up. I do not think there will be a very positive response to a flotation of the water industry, because people already see the difficulties and contradictions in the Government's position. The privatisation proposals in the Bill are a triumph of ideology over reason and common sense. They are costly, messy and deeply unattractive proposals.

It has been suggested that involved in all this is the selling off of public assets worth about £27 billion—assets built up over years out of the rates and public investment —for between £5 billion and £7 billion. That sale will be challenged in the courts by a number of local authorities, and understandably so. That is another negative factor for the flotation, if it ever reaches that stage.

We are seeing a great deal of public investment and assets being sold at a knock-down price. I have said many times that much of our priceless natural heritage and environment is being sold off in this way. I defy the Minister to tell me of any other national Government of any political persuasion who are putting large tracts of their national parks on the market, up for grabs. It is not happening in the United States, in the Federal Republic of Germany or in Scandinavia, France, Portugal, Spain or anywhere other than in Britain. That fact is deeply offensive to millions of people who are horrified at the prospect.

We believe that the Government are proposing to ease this privatisation by writing off £2 billion to £3 billion of the total accrued debt of the industry, which is standing now at about £5·2 billion. We believe that they intend just to write it off. It will be another huge cost to the taxpayer. It is happening almost without a word. Indeed, I do not recall one word of protest by Conservative Members when that matter has been discussed. Do Conservative Members call that protecting the interests of the taxpayer? They have been silent on this issue, as they are now.

It has become an accepted fact of life that privatisation and Government dogma is enough justification for these huge write-offs to take place at the public expense, and apparently another one is on the way. That will be necessary to give the industry some semblance of the sensible capital structure that it will need to be even remotely attractive to investors.

Adding debt to relatively debt-free companies, such as Thames Water, to create the level playing field necessary to maintain the charade of competition is apparently to be another facet of all this. It means that customers of Thames Water, whose charges over the years have funded investment rather than it being financed through borrowing, will have to pay again. Thames Water consumers will have an additional tax placed on them. They will be allocated some debt. That will be their prize for privatisation. They do not have much debt now, but they will be given some. There is no real justification for that action. The justification is simply the Government's dogma-driven ideology, and that is the only reason why the Bill remains before the House in its present form.

[Dr. Cunningham]

The proposals are about guaranteeing a rate of profit to the industry to ensure that investments are made, irrespective of whether any commercial risks are involved and irrespective of management competence. We cannot get much further from market forces and private enterprise. That is a signal feature of what Ministers are asking the House to accept. We are to have increasing prices to finance profit, dividend, corporation tax and investment up front rather than ensuring that the generators who benefit will have to pay.

The Government's proposals are about the creation of cosseted, protected private monopoly power over captive consumers on a scale and of a nature unprecedented in Britain. There is to be immunity from prosecution and from market forces. These bodies will be protected even against takeovers for the first few years of their existence, regardless of competence and performance. In 19 years in the House I have never seen such a miserable, pathetic collection of incoherent proposals. If it has any sense, the House will throw them out now.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I am grateful, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the importance of the delay before you called me to participate in the debate.

I intend to support the Opposition on amendment No. 1. I see it as my duty as a Back Bencher to seek to improve a fundamentally flawed, unpopular and unnecessary Bill. One way of improving it would be to leave out part II. That has been dealt with adequately by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham).

I wish to direct my remarks to other amendments. The purpose of amendment No. 102 is to prevent an appointment being made to a new plc where a reference is outstanding to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I am widely supported in my view that we should introduce a pause while the MMC reports on mergers which are in progress after 11 January this year and before the new companies are appointed as undertakers.

Amendments Nos. 103, 104 and 105 have an important purpose. They would delete the provision for, and all references to, the asset limit of £30 million below which references to the MMC are not made automatically. Since all water undertakings are monopolies, as has been pointed out already in the debate, it should make no difference in principle whether a company is large or small when determining the reasons for a referral to the MMC.

Amendments Nos. 106, 107 and 108 also have an important purpose. They would add to the duty of the MMC to examine a merger in the light of its impact on comparative competition an equal duty to examine it in the light of its impact on the interests of consumers or other industries. Amendment No. 109, which might be described as an optional amendment, would have the effect of ring-fencing the assets of the industry at transfer for the purpose of a reference to the MMC.

Privatisation of the water industry will place in private hands the 10 regional monopolies that dominate the industry. The 100 per cent. of consumers whose sewerage services are provided by water authorities, and the 75 per cent. of consumers whose water is supplied by them, are to join the 25 per cent. of water consumers presently supplied by private water companies. All consumers, whether currently supplied by water authorities or by the statutory water companies, will have supplies regulated on a different basis from that which obtains at present. All consumers have an interest in the Bill. I seek on this side of the House to represent the genuine concern and confusion of people up and down the country who are deeply worried about the Bill and its implications.

The Bill will transform an industry which is a vital component of everyday life. All consumers, therefore, have an interest in seeing that the Bill is made right. That is what I am seeking to do at this late stage. There is much in the Bill which seeks to protect the interests of consumers —price controls, environmental controls and regulation by the Director General of Water Services. In the long term, it is the control imposed upon the creation and ownership of the monopolies which comprise the industry that will underpin the system and perhaps dictate whether the legislation—if it ever reaches the statute book—is a success.

That control will determine the general approach that the monopolies take to business. It is intended to ensure that companies interested only in exploiting the potential position of monopolies to increase prices while cutting the quantity and quality of services, rather than those interested in providing a genuinely effective and efficient service, are kept out of the industry. That is the purpose of some of the amendments. It is thus essential that the parts of the Bill dealing with the acquisition and extension of monopoly powers are got right in the House. It is because of fears that the Bill as it stands has not got it right that I have tabled the amendments.

6.45 pm

My amendments would have three effects. First, the Secretary of State would be required to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission all takeovers and mergers in the industry rather than just those involving companies with water or sewerage assets in excess of £30 million. Secondly, the companies which would be deemed relevant for the purpose of such a referral would include all those which develop out of the industry as it currently stands, not just those which are water and sewerage undertakers.

Thirdly, and most important, the amendments would require the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to have an equal regard for the interests of consumers and for other parts of the wider economy, as it would have to be used to maintain the system of comparative competition when making a recommendation on any case referred to it by the Secretary of State.

The questions giving rise to the amendments were touched on briefly in Committee. At its 29th sitting, and at the end of the day, the Standing Committee found time to spend just 45 minutes discussing these issues. Because of the briefness and inconclusiveness of that discussion, the matter requires an airing before the full House. Without such an airing, the chance to put right a fundamental omission from the Bill, which would have serious and unwarranted long-term consequences, would be lost.

The first matter is relatively straightforward. Amendments Nos. 103, 104 and 105 propose the removal of the exemption on referrals of takeovers and mergers where the relevant assets of either company are under £30 million. The Bill already embodies a concession: if the assets of either company involved, rather than those of the object of the bid, exceed £30 million, a referral is automatic. That concession is warmly welcomed. My amendments propose to take the matter to its logical

conclusion and extend to all consumers the protection that investigation of bids and mergers by the MMC is supposed to afford.

The need for such protection is already evinced by the Bill—hence the requirement for referral where assets exceed £30 million. It is already admitted that the possession of monopoly powers involves such risks to consumers that their investigation is warranted by referral. Yet for those whose water is provided by statutory water companies with assets of less than £30 million there will be no automatic protection.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and other Ministers have defended the position by saying that the operation of comparative competition, whatever that might be, will give consumers all the protection that they need. I ask my hon. and learned Friend whether that assurance can be relied upon. Comparative competition is a relatively new concept—untested and untried except in the local authority sector, with which the water industry is not comparable. Further, it is to be operated by a directorate staffed by only 80 people. That is hardly a sufficient complement to police 39 companies, given the other duties that the directorate has. In any case, were it to operate effectively, the customers of those companies would still be afforded less protection than those of other companies. Yet the last two years suggest that it is these customers who are, in fact, in need of protection, for it is the smaller statutory water companies that have been the object of the most sustained interest from what I can describe only as foreign predators. Surely it is in precisely those circumstances that the protection afforded by an MMC investigation is most needed, since foreign predators are those about whose track record and intention the least is known in this country.

I hope that my hon. Friend will accept the validity of what I am saying, particularly in the light of evidence that I have about the extent of French interest in the water industry of this country—the French having bought into some 16 of the private water companies already, and having increased the value of their shareholding dramatically.

Miss Emma Nicholson *rose*——

Mr. Winterton: I shall give way in a moment. I suspect that I shall be tempting the right hon. Lady—I should say the hon. Lady, though perhaps it is only a matter of time—in a few moments.

The second matter—that of extending the investigatory role of the MMCs to the entire industry as it currently exists, rather than just to the water and sewerage subsidies of successor holding companies following privatisation—may be less straightforward, but in my view it is no less necessary. Throughout the discussion of this Bill—indeed, since it was first mooted back in 1986—there has been much public concern about what will happen to the assets of the industry. We are not talking just about the distribution and supply of water, or about effluent disposal, but about an industry that has immense, rich assets, which were built up over many decades, being paid for by ratepayers and users of the services throughout the country. They now total between 400,000 acres and 500,000 acres, much of which is not, strictly speaking, necessary for operational purposes and, as the Bill stands, will in many cases be outside public scrutiny after privatisation. There will be nothing to stop unscrupulous predators—by which, of course, I mean the French, among others—from taking over part of the industry and, while giving a perfectly good account of themselves so far as the water and sewerage undertakings are concerned, will use their acquisitions as an excuse to asset-strip other companies in the groups to which the undertakers belong.

The rights of access and the leisure and recreational facilities that have been developed over many years will, in my view, be severely jeopardised. I speak with a deep interest, as there are in my own area of Macclesfield many hundreds of acres, owned by the North West water authority, which are widely used by the people of my constituency and—yes—by the people of Greater Manchester as well, for recreation and leisure.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West) *rose*——

Mr. Winterton: I will give way in a moment.

I am deeply concerned, despite some of the assurances that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister gave in earlier debates both in Committee and on the Floor of the House. I should say that in my view no Minister in Her Majesty's Government could more adequately, competently and intelligently promote the Bill—I have said that publicly—but the problem is that my hon. and learned Friend can present a good case only when there is a case to put. In this instance, there is no case whatsoever. That is perhaps a backhanded compliment, but it is intended very sincerely none the less.

Sir Anthony Grant: On the point that my hon. Friend made so powerfully, I know his area and I know how beautiful some parts of it are. Does he agree, however, that there is a body—presumably known as the Macclesfield planning authority, or something similar—which no doubt shares his views and has the power to preserve the beauty of that amenity?

Mr. Winterton: I shall be coming to that in a moment, but I will tell my hon. Friend now that I do not believe that the local planning authority has the necessary power to ensure that that land is not exploited or developed in ways which are undesirable to the area and are certainly not in the interests of conservation or the environment. In my view, the rights of access and the leisure and recreation facilities that have been developed over the years will be jeopardised.

Nor is this just a fear of the more unusual groups—those whom many of my hon. Friends would describe as the bearded weekend ramblers—*[Interruption.]* I make that point merely to strengthen the views that I am expressing.

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend may rest assured that the bearded ramblers in the Opposition ramble only when they are speaking.

Mr. Winterton: I am glad that my hon. Friend did not accuse me of rambling.

That fear is shared by many organisations. One of them is the National Trust, of which I am a member. Dare I say that it is shared also by the Country Landowners Association—not a notoriously Socialist-oriented body—and the Countryside Commission? The amendment would subject to the scrutiny of the Monopolies and

[Mr. Winterton]

Mergers Commission the takeover of any assets currently within the water industry and would thus afford protection against those fears being realised.

The third and final matter—that of extending the remit of the MMC's investigation to include consideration of the effect of mergers and takeovers on consumers and on other parts of the economy—is perhaps the most important point covered by this group of amendments. As the Bill currently stands, cases referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are investigated by it in the light of the usual remit of potential detriment to the public interest.

Above and beyond that remit will be a duty to examine the impact of a merger or takeover on the operation of comparative competition. That consideration stands above all others. That provision is, however, naive. It results from a blinkered view of how the industry may develop and what its links with other sectors of the economy are. Comparative competition may be well and good in theory but, as has been made clear, it is untried and untested in any comparable industry in this country. In theory it would provide a check on the abuse of monopoly power—but only in theory. It is in the nature of natural monopoly that one cannot be sure of the counterfactualisation against which it is to be measured. Comparing one natural monopoly with another can guarantee only that neither abuses its position more than the other; it cannot guarantee that abuse does not take place. *[Interruption.]* It is therefore illogical to make the maintenance of comparative competition a primary consideration to the exclusion of all others.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Winterton: My hon. Friend should perhaps show a little more respect to one who has been in the House rather longer than he. This happens to be a very technical matter, and if I am referring to notes rather more frequently than I should, it is because I want to get it right. I can only say that I believe that in this instance I am reflecting the views of a dammed sight more people than he is.

Mr. Bennett: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Winterton: I will give way when I have finished this paragraph.

The first purpose of the amendment, therefore, is to give equal importance to the examination of consumer interests. I trust that we on the Conservative side of the House are interested in consumer interests. *[Interruption.]* I will give way in a moment. It is entirely correct that the MMC should take an inside view of the industry, but it needs also to take an outside view.

Mr. Bennett: Can my hon. Friend tell me first what he put in his own election address in 1987, when water privatisation was a clear commitment in the Conservative manifesto? What did he tell his electors then? Secondly, what is the role of the Director General of Water Services?

Mr. Winterton: The subject did not appear anywhere in my election address.

Mr. Bennett: Is that why the hon. Gentleman's majority went down?

Mr. Winterton: My majority is satisfactory—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Bennett *rose*—

7pm

Mr. Winterton: No, I will not give way on a trivial, pathetic point which should not feature as part of this important debate. I only hope that my hon. Friend will continue to enjoy any kind of majority in his constituency.

Miss Emma Nicholson: I am concerned about the position of the Macclesfield planning authority. I invite my hon. Friend to put forward his plans for new, revolutionary and even more democratic planning authorities. I do not know where he expects planning decisions to be made. Personally, I believe that they should be made as close as possible to the people who will suffer the effects. I am delighted to have two outstanding planning authorities in my constituency—Torridge and West Devon. In addition, we have the Dartmoor national park committee. I do not imagine that it will be better to pluck those decisions away and to have them made here or by the parish council, the county council or even, for example, by Macclesfield town council. I am confused—*[Interruption.]* I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman, with his keen and burning interest in the Bill, was here last night to hear the splendid amendments that were tabled and accepted by the Government and by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister, whose virtues the hon. Gentleman has so adequately lauded. Those amendments have been accepted. I believe that the hon. Gentleman fusses too much.

Mr. Winterton: There are times when I should not give way and that was undoubtedly one of them.

Without such a view being taken, situations could arise in which companies may buy their way into the industry at no damage to the operation of comparative competition, but at considerable risk to consumers. A management with aims other than that of providing a public service at a reasonable rate of return may take over the industry. Performance would still be competitive, but it would also be worsened. In the long term, the director general's exercise of his powers could—perhaps even would—restore the situation, but in the short term a continual see-saw would be created in which standards would alternatively rise and fall.

The task of the director general—this was one of the questions asked by the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett)—would become like the economist's pursuit of equilibrium. It would always be aimed at, but never achieved. Therefore, just as the economist goes for the pursuit of "second best", knowing that the holistic benefit is greater than that of equilibrium, so the remit of the MMC must be shaped with an acceptance that the market is not in a perfect state. By giving the MMC an equal duty to examine the impact of mergers and takeovers on the consumer interest, that can be achieved. That would prevent the entry of firms which have no track record in the industry, or those whose track record was poor. It would change the remit from one in which there was a presumption in favour of entry—on the assumption that if problems arose the director general could put them right afterwards—to one where there was a presumption against entry unless it could be shown that problems would be

unlikely to arise in the first place. In many industries this would be unnecessary, but in one so vital to public health it is not the case.

Firms which may have a tougher attitude to disconnections or which may be lax about health and safety or unused to the market in England and Wales should be weeded out before they are allowed to cause problems. It will be no consolation to consumers who may otherwise be adversely affected that the director general, in whom so many people seem to put so much trust, will have the power to close the stable door after the horse has bolted.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): My hon. Friend has been making a most eloquent case but it seems that, whether he intends to or not, he is directing his case almost entirely to the one moment of consideration in advance of clearance. Surely he agrees that it is better to have the continuing regulation of the director general and the safeguards established under the Bill for the continuing conduct of the privatised authorities than to have one moment or gateway in which the Monopolies and Mergers Commission could be invited to speculate on some hypothetical future conduct of a privatised water undertaking.

Mr. Winterton: I am not unsympathetic to the views that my hon. Friend has just advanced. My amendments go along with that. There is an ongoing role for the director general in just the way that my hon. Friend has described. I am trying to ensure that we do not allow undesirable companies into the industry in the first place. That is the reason for some of the amendments to which I am referring.

There is, however, a second reason for amending the remit of the MMC—to give it a duty to have regard to the impact of mergers and takeovers on other sectors of the economy. For such a requirement to be made explicit may seem unusual, but it is a measure of the extent to which one needs to be on one's guard. The past 18 months have seen an unusual flurry of takeover activity among the statutory water companies. The French have been buying in and paying up to 10 times the market capitalisation for companies whose financial performance has always, to say the least, been a little predictable.

One has to ask, and I do ask my hon. and learned Friend the Minister, why that is so. It cannot simply be because those companies see an opening to increase prices and thus increase profitability. That is part of the story, as the statutory companies average price increase of 22 per cent. shows, but the high prices paid for the companies suggests that that is not the whole story.

One does not have to search far to find the other reasons for those takeovers. It is by now widely realised that the water industry is asset-rich but cash-hungry. Indeed, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister has said so himself on several occasions. It has many non-operational assets which could be sold off and many which, though operational, could be simultaneously developed to purchase additional profits. In Standing Committee the Minister said that that should cause no problems for consumers, and that the normal planning process would guard against unwanted development, but assurance requires concrete form. It should be incumbent upon the MMC to weed out what I can only describe as the asset-strippers. My right hon. Friend Lord Young and the Government did that recently in respect of Elders IXL and Scottish and Newcastle Breweries. I hope that they can do the same again in the future.

Beyond that, the French firms pose a further threat that we must guard against. As my hon. and learned Friend the Minister knows all too well, those firms are not only—or even primarily—water and sewerage undertakers. Their subsidiaries cover chemicals, construction and civil engineering. What is more—I say this especially to Opposition Members—they cover many functions currently performed by local authorities, but which are shortly to be put out to tender in the compulsory tendering process. It is those areas on which the French have their eye as much as on the water industry. In the run-up to 1992 they will expand into civil engineering and municipal services.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth) *rose*——

Mr. Winterton: I will give way in a moment.

That may not necessarily be a bad thing and to some extent it is inevitable, but it must be guarded against lest we end up with markets handed over to French cartels interested in promoting uncompetitive practices for their own sole and exclusive benefit.

Mr. Leigh: That is pathetic.

Mr. Winterton: It is not pathetic—it is a real threat to this country. It could be well outside the remit of the director general, to whom reference has already been made several times, to examine the issue. It should therefore rightly be the duty of the MMC to consider it.

Mr. Hawkins *rose*——

Mr. Winterton: I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins), who is my neighbour and my colleague.

Mr. Hawkins: I put this kindly to my hon. Friend, to whom I am grateful for giving way. I believe that he is giving an impression that he would not wish to give in saying that French firms are building a bridgehead here and when he talks about "undesirable investors". British firms are building a bridgehead in Europe for 1992. Can my hon. Friend say how the Monopolies and Mergers Commission would define "undesirable investors" in a water company if the people concerned were obeying the law of the land? I do not believe that my hon. Friend wants to give the impression that the French are unwelcome. The Perrier company bought Buxton Water in my constituency, and transformed it into a household name. I greatly welcome that.

Mr. Winterton: It is sad that Buxton Water was unable to make itself a household name when it was independent —*[Interruption.]* It was in our household, among others. I trust, however, that I am not giving the House the impression that my hon. Friend sought to imply by his intervention. I am concerned that, unlike British firms which buy companies in America openly and honourably for the purpose for which they exist, the French seek to come here and take advantage in other ways, by the back door. The Minister understands what I am saying. Rightly or wrongly, the people of this country are sincerely worried about that.

The amendments are designed to give teeth to the controls which will be placed on the industry after

[Mr. Winterton]

privatisation. I am not trying to destroy the Bill but to put meaningful, rational controls on it so that if it proceeds to the statute book it will provide the correct solutions. Controls may seem contrary to the concept of bringing market forces to bear on state-owned utilities, but it is not market forces which are being brought to bear on the water industry. It is private monopoly forces—precisely those which encourage bad practice and inefficiency.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South) *rose*——

Mr. Winterton: I shall not give way because I am about to sit down.

It is amazing that the Government, who worship at the door of Adam Smith, are doing precisely what he advised against—exchanging a public monopoly for a private monopoly. He did not believe that it would work, and neither do I. The electorate are well aware of that. Strong controls of the kind that I have proposed must be put in place to convince the public that the Bill is not an ideological measure with no regard for their interests.

I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will seek to respond to my speech, not to destroy the Bill, but to make it better so that when the Conservative party comes to fight the general election in 1991 it will not be faced with the dire consequences of the Bill, but the legislation will be in force and working properly. That will happen only if the kind of proposals that I have put to the House today are incorporated in the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Obviously, many hon. Members wish to take part in this debate. I should remind the House that the debate is guillotined and that long speeches are made only at the expense of other speakers.

7.15 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I certainly do not want to make a long speech. I wish to draw to the attention of the House the fact that a document has arrived in my hands called "Supplement to *The Engineer*", dated 15 July 1892. The document is about Lake Vyrnwy and the Vyrnwy water supply to Liverpool, which was inaugurated on 14 July 1892 by His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught. It contains an article by George F. Deacon, M. Inst. C.E. Engineer.

I draw the House's attention to this document because on 14 July 1892 Lake Vyrnwy was handed over to Liverpool city council's water committee, which was a publicly owned body. Incidentally, Lake Vyrnwy is still one of the main water supplies to Liverpool. The article states:

"During the last census period the rate of increase in population"

—in Liverpool—

"was not quite so great as in the immediately preceding decades, but no less than 518,000 people within the city boundaries and 801,000 people within the area of distribution are now supplied with water by the Corporation of Liverpool. Such a population will, at the rate of, say, 30 gallons per head, require over 24,000,000 gallons per day, and to meet this demand the existing and extensive water supply works have become insufficient."

The article then explains why the supply should be extended.

I considered the document carefully and discovered that Liverpool city council, in relation to water supplies, goes back even further than 1892. The first Act of Parliament was in 1847. This is all about public ownership. When did that public ownership fail the people of Liverpool in regard to their water supply? People in Liverpool, including Conservative city councillors, have never argued that the Liverpool water supply was not good enough and ought to be privatised. That is a figment of the imagination of the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister who, for some reason, have developed a crackpot idea in their heads that they ought to introduce water privatisation even when there is no demand for it among the people who are perfectly satisfied with the present water supply and who have been quite happy for local authorities—mainly Conservative controlled since 1847—to supply Liverpool's water. I do not understand what this Government are about, except that they want to get hold of the land surrounding Lake Vyrnwy in order to sell it off at what they believe to be a profit.

I sat on the water committee in Liverpool—until I did so I did not know much about the water supply. However, I then realised the great things that have been achieved over the years, many of them absolutely magnificent. All sorts of facilities have been granted so that youngsters from Liverpool who had never seen such things could visit lakes and participate in water sports and other activities connected with the lake. What do the Government intend to do with that land—sell it off to their mates and friends? Is that what this is about? The people of Liverpool are not arguing for that.

I could continue to speak about this document, which is truly magnificent. I am glad that it came into my hands and I shall repeat the details. It is the supplement to *The Engineer*, dated 15 July 1892, and contains many lovely pictures depicting how water was brought to Liverpool —including the route, which was a great engineering feat——

Mr. Thurnham: I thought perhaps the hon. Gentleman would allow me to intervene, as I am an engineer myself. I am sure that, in harking back to 1892, he will find that engineering then was nothing like engineering today. Does not the Bill adapt the structure of the water supply industry to the needs of modern society, rather than try to sit with all the old-fashioned stuff? If the hon. Gentleman were an engineer, I expect that he would try to introduce engineering that was designed in 1892.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman may be aware that I worked on construction sites all my life until I came into the House. There are engineers and engineers. For example, once when I went to do a job in an office, the office manager said to me as I was hanging a door, "Joiners are not like they used to be." I said, "How the hell do you know? Could you hang that door?" He did not know what it was about. I knew, because I was a trained carpenter and joiner. All joiners are not great; neither are all engineers.

The document that I have shows what a magnificent feat of engineering this was to Liverpool. Is the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) suggesting that the engineers of that day did not do a great job? We have some of the best and purest water supplies in the whole country, and we should be proud of those engineers. They worked for Conservative city councils,

which also built the docks in Liverpool. The councillors tried to further the interests of the people of the area so that, once they had the basic services under their control, they could expand private enterprise. The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East does not seem to understand this.

Certain public services should never be privatised. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I do not agree with private ownership of many things. I accept that some can be privatised and opened up to competition, but the basic services of this country, such as water, should never be privatised. There is no rational argument for privatisation —there are only ideological arguments emanating from the likes of the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman has spoken of the drinking water that is supplied to the city of Liverpool. Is he aware that, to this day, 75 per cent. of the sewage from the city is untreated? Does he regard that as an adequate testament to the record of the public sector in this industry?

Mr. Heffer: Just because it is said that is so it does not mean that we have to privatise water. The Minister knows full well that that is a separate issue that can be dealt with separately. Over the years, the water committee on which I served asked the Government for financial support to develop the sewage works, but we never got the full support that we needed——

Dr. Cunningham: I should like to ask my hon. Friend to suggest that the Minister write to the Prime Minister to tell her that 75 per cent. of Liverpool's sewage goes out into the Irish sea untreated. She says that no untreated sewage goes into the sea around Britain. Perhaps the Minister will tell the Prime Minister that she is wrong.

Mr. Heffer: My hon. Friend knows that the Minister will not tell the Prime Minister that if he wants to keep his job for long. Saying boo to the goose leads to one being dealt with quickly——

Mr. Leigh: That is what happened to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Heffer: I made a principled stand on an issue, and I am not ashamed of having been sacked from a Government for doing so. Most Conservative Ministers never seem to make a principled stand on anything; it is left to Back Benchers such as the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) to do that. The day when we see a principled stand by a Minister I shall be delighted. It will give me new faith in the House of Commons and in the idea of Ministers standing up for what they believe in. However, I doubt whether it will happen.

There is no case for privatisation, and no one can argue there is. The hon. Member for Macclesfield made a first-class speech against it, and I did not disagree with most of his arguments. The Minister, with his steamroller majority, will roll the Bill through, but he had better understand that the people of this country do not want it. Whatever criticisms I may have of the way in which Labour is conducting itself, I believe that the people of this country will roll the Government over and get them out at the next general election.

Mr. Thurnham: The speech of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) harked back magnificently to all the great features of the past, of which he himself is a magnificent relic. His thinking is stuck in the past and its great works; he does not look ahead to how we should adapt the structure of the water industry to the needs of a modern society in which one can separate the function of providing water from the function of regulating how it should be provided. That is the principle behind the Bill, and it is why I oppose the Opposition amendments and cannot support the amendments of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton).

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): If the purpose of the Bill is to separate the regulation of the water industry from the running of it, why is the National Rivers Authority going to sub-contract work back to the privately-owned water companies, thereby recreating the problem that the hon. Gentleman claims is being destroyed—that of the gamekeeper and the poacher being one and the same?

Mr. Thurnham: I am satisfied that the National Rivers Authority will be a well-constituted body of 6,500 employees. That does not mean to say that it will be incapable of calling on resources from anywhere that it wants. The authority will properly execute its functions and if it wants to call on the services of others, so it should. It is only dogma on the part of the Opposition that would prevent it from calling on the services of other bodies, private or public sector.

I must oppose amendments in the spirit of those tabled by the Opposition which strike at the heart of the Bill. My only criticism of the Government is that we have not been able to privatise the water industry earlier. Because we did not privatise water in our first or even second Parliament, a myth may have developed in the minds of the public that for some reason the industry could not be privatised. That is why public opinion is still showing so much inertia. Now that we are arguing that the industry can be privatised, it will take time for people to accept the idea.

I do not accept any criticism of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister or of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about all the work they have done on the Bill. It has been magnificent. If there is inertia in public opinion, it existed long before they came along to do the job that they are now doing.

Dr. Cunningham: First, the hon. Gentleman must have heard the Prime Minister say that the Bill has not been well presented. Secondly, there is no inertia in public opinion: it is moving steadily against the proposal.

Mr. Thurnham: Criticisms of presentation arise purely out of the ignorance, superstition and nonsense that are evident in the attitudes that we heard expressed by the relic from Walton, who is stuck in the past. If the public are fed the sort of misinformation that has come from the Opposition——

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman's past is already behind him.

Mr. Thurnham: Conservatives can look forward to the future. It is only the Opposition who worry about the past, because they have nothing to look forward to.

At the time of the outstandingly successful privatisation of the National Freight Corporation, the trade unions were so opposed to it that their Leeds branch persuaded all the employees of the corporation there to burn their applications for shares on a bonfire. I do not think that the work force in Leeds has ever forgiven the trade unions for that; it has cost them dear. That is the sort of attitude that

[Mr. Thurnham]

we are fighting on the Water Bill and it is indicative of how public opinion can be wrongly influenced by misinformation from the Opposition.

It is said that we should not privatise water because it is a vital commodity. I remember that that was said about British Sugar. We were told that we could not privatise British Sugar because sugar was such a basic commodity. I have not heard anyone mention any problems about privatising British Sugar. Food and clothes are as vital as water, but we do not hear comments about privatisation in those areas. The Opposition want to ditch their clause four, but they can do that only by ditching it into a privatised drain and they do not like that idea.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thurnham: I want to make progress.

7.30 pm

Before British Telecom was privatised, there were endless complaints about telephone boxes. People are now very pleased that they can use telephone boxes. British Telecom is far better now than it was in the public sector. Mercury exists as a competitor to British Telecom now. The pricing formula—RPI minus X—is working very satisfactorily for British Telecom. When we talk about RPI plus K for the water industry, we should not forget minus E where E is the efficiency factor which should work in exactly the same way as it has for British Telecom.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is an example of the new designer Socialist who wants to ditch what was wrong and unacceptable with Socialist policies, but is not sure where to ditch it or what he wants to pick up instead. He seems to believe that a public monopoly is all right, but he cannot accept that a private monopoly should work as well. That is the difference between us. There must be confidence in the regulatory mechanisms in the Bill which will enable the water industry to operate much more efficiently in future.

Mr. Spearing: The British Sugar Corporation was formed as a private company, although the majority of the shares were held by the public. As an engineer, will the hon. Gentleman tell us how he reacts to the idea that all the sewers—their bricks, pumping stations and filtration plants—in Bolton might be owned by a private company, which, as far as I know, and unless the Minister can deny it, can be traded and controlled on the New York, Tokyo and Johannesburg stock exchanges?

Mr. Thurnham: The thrust of the Bill is that we need more investment which can be conducted more efficiently by the private sector, and the costs of that investment can be spread over several years.

The fundamental problem about investment in the public sector is that the Treasury seems to count current expenditure and investment as coming from one pot which must be recovered or accounted for in the year in which it occurs. I am confident that the work which needs to be done in Bolton will be better funded as resources will be available from the financial world in this country and abroad.

The key factor is that the costs can be spread over several years and funded by the workings of the RPI plus K formula rather than all the investment being recovered in the year that it occurs. That is why investment has been so restricted in the past and why the Labour Government had to slash investment. That is why investment in the sewers and drains in Bolton was cut under the Labour Government. They did not know how to fund the industry. They were in a desperate crisis with the IMF knocking at the door, and the country was bankrupt. The Labour Government did not understand how we could gain the efficiency that we needed by spreading investment over several years and by having a management which was accountable to the people who provided the investment and which ensured an efficient return on it.

I have great confidence in the Bill. To appease public anxiety we must be very careful to set up regulatory structures which will function efficiently. The public wants to see that happen. It would be nice if we could do it step by step, because one of the fundamental improvements in the British economy has been the way in which industrial relations have been transformed through step-by-step legislation.

However, it would be impractical to have a step-by-step privatisation of the water authorities. It might be very nice to start with the North West water authority, but it would not be practical to privatise one water authority one year and another two years later. If we are going to do it, we should get on with it. As I argued at the beginning of my speech, we should have privatised water years ago. We have allowed a myth to develop that the industry is a sacred cow which cannot be privatised. However, there is every reason for getting on with privatisation.

This is complex legislation and we should not rush it. That is why the Government have taken their time to privatise the industry. I have every confidence about the way in which it is being done and in the work carried out by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister. I am sure that the Bill will reach the statute book without any more undue delays. I am sure that the public will invest their savings in this basic utility with every confidence. I am sure that those who use water and will be accountable if they pollute it will also benefit in every way possible from the Bill.

Mr. Livsey: This is a vast series of amendments, 38 as far as I can see, and they cover a huge area. I congratulate the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on making a speech, like the hills behind Macclesfield, of true grit and determination. He put forward constructive ideas to the Minister who I hope will take note of some very constructive criticism of the Bill.

This legislation gives rise to immense questions. I support amendment No. 1 which removes part II of the Bill. That would result in no privatisation of water and would be particularly constructive.

The private monopoly which the Bill creates is inexcusable. There will be no competition as a result of the legislation. It seems that the Cabinet consists of the "Monopoly" generation. Clearly Ministers must have played too much "Monopoly" in their youth. They are obsessed with producing private monopolies under which there will be no competition.

Privatisation will increase costs as a result of the legislation's duality. Prices will inevitably rise because shareholders will have to be satisfied while consumers pay more. The need to introduce higher standards in the industry will also create massive expenditure. It appears at the moment that consumers will have to pay the lion's

share of that expenditure. Why are the Government or the Treasury not prepared to shell out some of that money to create the necessary investment to raise standards?

Mr. Collins on "Panorama" on Monday estimated the cost of privatisation to be £842 million. Who will pay that sum? Will the consumers have to pay? The argument is that the statutory water companies represent 25 per cent. of the water industry, and those companies are already in the private sector. However, that argument does not stand up when it is subjected to close examination. Those companies are regulated and statutory. I believe that the Prime Minister does not understand the basis of the statutory water companies.

The water prices in the statutory water companies have been kept low. They have been kept 25 per cent. lower than those of the water authorities because of their statutory functions. As a result of this legislation, prices will rise between 30 and 50 per cent. because the basis of the statutory water companies is being fundamentally undermined.

Mr. Porter: Missing from the hon. Gentleman's argument is any understanding that what is required in the water and sewage industry is investment, which has been lacking under Governments of both parties for the past quarter of a century. The purpose of the exercise, as I understand it, is to ensure that private capital is available. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) reckoned that with all the regulations concerning price, quality, and the rest, the City will not be particularly attracted to investing in the new plcs. We shall see. If the City does not wish to invest, I am sure that the Treasury Bench will think again. In any event, the Bill is not about competition but about capital investment and where it can be found. It cannot be denied that investment has been unavailable from the public sector in the past.

Mr. Livsey: We all agree that investment is necessary to improve standards, but investment can be made equally well if water remains in the public sector. Yesterday, the Secretary of State himself admitted that billions of pounds must be spent to put matters right. Why has the Treasury not been prepared to sanction such expenditure, and why have the Government adhered to such policies? The Government failed to make sufficient investment in the public sector of the kind that the hon. Gentleman seeks. That is a basic flaw in Government philosophy.

Water is essential for life itself and is a fundamental necessity. It is a natural public utility and should remain so. The concept of privatisation is wrong, and the Prime Minister has admitted that its presentation has been inadequate. However, one cannot present a bad idea well, and privatisation is a rotten idea.

A number of the amendments address the subject of charges, which will depend on the investment that will be required of the water plcs, which will, in turn, depend on measures taken by the European Community to enforce acceptance of its drinking water standards. That issue is one which cannot be dodged. Those standards are based on clear scientific principles and ought to be accepted by the Government as being right and proper in ensuring the health of the consumer. The Secretary of State told the House that billions of pounds must be spent to provide clean, wholesome drinking water. Some estimates put the figure at £3 billion, while others put it at £6 billion. If the flotation of the water companies raises £7 billion to £10 billion, the Government's friends in the City may ask whether that is a reasonable deal for investors. I think not. The public cannot be expected to pay the whole bill, and some of that expense should surely be met from general taxation.

Here is the rub. The Bill as drafted enables water plcs to fleece consumers, regardless of their ability to pay, to meet the cost of an investment programme that should be a public duty. The RPI plus K formula and the K calculation for price increases incorporate efficiency savings and a cost pass-through factor for consumers relating to additional expenses. That factor will be deducted from inflation but there will still be an additional amount to pay, and no one can argue otherwise. The prices resulting from those calculations could double every seven years, and, by the application of the RPI plus K formula, water charges could rise by 150 per cent. by the end of the century rather than by the 12·5 per cent. that the Secretary of State anticipates.

The flaw in the formula is that efficiency is assessed only in relation to other companies, which are in any case monopolies, so any notion of comparative competition is a fallacy. One cannot have competition between monopolies that vary so much in nature—from Thames Water, with 10 million consumers and about 6,000 miles of pipeline to Welsh Water with only 3 million consumers but about 24,000 miles of pipeline.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that companies that are not of exactly equal size and having precisely the same resources cannot be competitive?

7.45 pm

Mr. Livsey: Companies will not be competitive in their own areas because they are ring-fenced and competition will not exist. One will not have six taps in one's house, with Perrier water coming from one of them and west country water, or whatever, coming from another.

Particular groups of people will find themselves discriminated against as a consequence of privatisation, particularly in respect of disconnections. Last year, there were 9,000 disconnections, 2,000 of them in Wales. After privatisation, private water companies will be licensed. I hope that the Minister can assure the House that the original draft licence has been altered in some respects, as it allows the plcs to draw up their own codes of practice. I know that the Minister has drawn up a code of practice on disconnection and has consulted on it, but the protection it gives is not sufficient for poorer members of the community.

Water is such an essential commodity that no one's supply should be disconnected by a private company. The only way of ensuring adequate consumer protection is by requiring the granting of a court order; the Minister has partially accepted that view. There should be a three-week cooling off period before the court acts, because of the suffering that could be created if a water supply is summarily disconnected, particularly to pensioners, families in which there are young children, and the disabled.

That problem will be exacerbated by the need of some people to pay water rates out of their supplementary benefits, particularly as water prices will rise after privatisation. It is essential that we consider the human

[Mr. Livsey]

aspects of privatisation as it affects the poorer members of the community. I hope that the Government will take that consideration on board, as well as the other points that I have made.

Mr. Burt: I agree with the concluding remarks of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) about disconnections. As my hon. and learned Friend knows, in Committee I made a strong plea for use of the court before disconnection can be authorised. He was receptive and sympathetic, and offered to consider that proposal. I am still of the opinion that such a provision would be very helpful to the general presentation of the Bill.

I always enjoy listening to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer)—as much as to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). Although I do not always agree with the views of either of them, they represent a strand of opinion that is strongly held and sincere, and gives a contrary view to that presented by the Government. I also enjoy listening to the hon. Members for Burnley (Mr. Pike), for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) and for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), who have raised similar arguments. I do not always agree with them, but the strand of thought which produced their arguments exists in the country at present and needs to be considered by the Government. I do not treat the straw polls of the Derek Jameson show with contempt, as I recognise that they tell the Government something. They tell the Government not that they are wrong, but that their message is not reaching people yet

We start from a consensus, which was recognised in Committee by the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) who said that Conservative Members were just as keen as Labour Members on environmental quality and the need to protect a clean, cheap, safe water supply. Everyone knows that we all share that view and want to maintain water quality. We differ as to how we wish to ensure a clean, safe water supply that is as cheap as possible. The fears that are abroad in the country have been expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). It is certainly possible to be worried by yet another privatisation. Some months ago I would have sympathised with my hon. Friend's arguments, but since I have been on the Committee considering the Bill I have been converted and I now realise that the quality improvements in the water supply that we all seek cannot be achieved without privatisation. That goes to the heart of the argument of the hon. Member for Walton, as I shall explain in a moment.

For my constituents, the bottom line is a good quality service. They are not bothered about who provides that service, but they are concerned about the service that they will eventually receive. The arguments about water are clouded by the idea that who provides the service is more important than the service itself. I and my constituents want a water supply that works and that provides clean water that is as cheap as possible. I am more worried about that than about who provides it.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): I have been listening very carefully to my hon. Friend's arguments. Does he represent any rural areas? He said that he wanted the highest quality water for all his constituents. Does he agree that the cost of that water should be the same for all his constituents, whether they live in rural areas or in towns? He will probably be aware that, in addition to the increased costs of water brought about by privatisation, and by improvements in the quality of water, there may well be additional costs in rural areas to people living at the wrong end of a supply pipeline. Does he agree that in other privatisations, such as British Telecom and that of electricity, which is going through the House, the status quo is maintained and the same charge is levied on constituents living in rural and urban areas? Surely that is a fair point.

Mr. Burt: I represent more town than rural areas, and the rural parts of my constituency are not far from major towns and cities. I believe that pricing policy is a matter for the water companies, as it is for the water authorities at the moment. But I am certain that the highest-quality water will be produced at the cheapest possible cost for everyone. My hon. Friend will be able to make her own arguments about water quality later.

Some time ago, I would have been sympathetic to the arguments of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). He takes the cosy view that we can have improvements in the regulation and quality of water supply without affecting the way in which the service is supplied. In a sense, he takes a lazy view—that we can have the best of everything without changing the structure of the industry. But that is not a fair compromise and it does not work. Only privatisation, the key to freeing investment, can possibly supply the improvements in quality that we need. That is why the amendments moved by the hon. Member for Copeland are wrong.

I do not believe that the crux of the matter has been correctly perceived by Opposition Members, some Conservative Members and the public. They do not understand the connection between privatisation and the changes to regulation and quality control in the industry. Privatisation is vital because it will free the water companies and allow them to attract investment. It will free the companies from the political control previously exercised upon them. I pray in aid the views of the chairmen of the Water Authorities Association in a letter to all Members of Parliament about water privatisation:

> "Is it also the way to avoid the constraints on necessary capital investment which we have experienced under Governments of different political complexions over the 15 years or so since the formation of the Authorities."

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Is it not the case that the chairmen of the water authorities are political appointees, and that, contrary to the views of their employees and their commercial and private customers, they have supported water privatisation, even to the extent that every water authority has a contact point with a Tory Member of Parliament? They have been having cosy little dinners and wining and dining their contacts. The letter was a completely political statement. The chairmen of the water authorities stand to do very nicely out of privatisation, unlike their customers.

Mr. Burt: During the proceedings on the Bill, we have been lobbied by a variety of different groups, each expressing its own point of view. The hon. Gentleman can take whatever view he wishes about the chairmen of the water authorities, but they are responsible for the authorities at the moment and are as entitled to express their views as other interests are entitled to lobby

Opposition Members who have quoted them strongly during the debate. I am as entitled to quote other points of view as the Opposition are.

The case for privatisation is clearly made when we consider the investment in the water industry in recent years. We have debated time and again the investments made by previous Labour Governments and by the present Government. I wish to draw attention to the trend in water investment under the last Labour Government and under this Government. When the Labour party was in office, it started much higher investment and continually ran it down. Opposition Members have consistently quoted the average level of investment, but the trend was that the level of investment continued to drop steeply and only under this Government have the tables been turned and investment has started to rise. While investment was falling, consumers were receiving some remarkable demands in increased charges. In 1975-76, when investment was falling steeply, the average rise in water rates throughout the authorities, not only the statutory water companies, was an astonishing 43 per cent. As investment was declining, charges were shooting up. At present, investment is rising.

Mr. Allan Roberts: One of the reasons why revenue costs increased, causing increased water rates, was that under this Government water authorities have been forced to fund capital expenditure from revenue because how much they could borrow for capital purposes was restricted by the Government.

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman makes my point. As long as investment for the water industry is in the hands of Government, of whatever complexion, and subject to Treasury control, there will probably never be as much investment as is necessary.

Mr. Roberts: Rubbish.

8 pm

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman says, "Rubbish." With the best will in the world, the Labour Government would have liked to do more for the water industry, but because of the way in which they managed the economy and had to use the International Monetary Fund, investment fell so dramatically and severely that it almost irreparably damaged the capital structure of the industry. We are only now picking up that bill. It is vital to free the industry from such constraint and to allow it the money it needs to put into effect the repairs and improvements in water quality that we all want. That is why I believe there is a fundamental link between the privatisation of the supply of the industry and improvements in quality through regulation.

It is important that the public should understand that the springboard of privatisation has challenged the myth that everything is better in the public sector. It has led to important new initiatives that will help consumers in the future.

Concern has been expressed that private monopoly companies will abuse their control, so the National Rivers Authority has been introduced. Everyone agrees that it is a good idea, but no Government put it forward before. It was encouraged only by the spur of privatisation. It is because people are concerned that there might be abuse of prices that a Director General of Water Services has been appointed. It is because people are worried about the introduction of private companies that the consumer's charter has been introduced. All those benefits and improvements would not have been obtained without privatisation.

The improvements to regulate quality which have been demanded by all of us would not have occurred without a change in the regime for the supply side of the industry. That is why I believe that there is a fundamental link between privatisation and regulatory controls. Privatisation will provide the funding that has been so woefully lacking from Government investment over the years. When people understand that fundamental link, they will believe that this measure will be good for the consumer, the environment and the country.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): Following the speech of the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), in which I am sure he convinced himself of his arguments, the slogan at the next election will be, "We come to bury Burt, not to praise him."

On the second day of the Report stage, the farce has continued of Conservative Back Benchers trying to digest the propaganda being put out by No. 10 Downing street. They tried to re-present the arguments to the public for privatisation, but re-presentation of the arguments will not work.

I should say how much we support the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who expressed the clear views of thousands, if not millions, of Tory voters. I have received letter after letter from constituents who were not previously supporters of the Labour party but who have said that the Bill marks a clear change in how they will vote in future. The hon. Member for Macclesfield represents those views.

We regard part II as the evil of the Bill. It must be stressed that, although we support the National Rivers Authority, it will not be as effective as the national environmental protection agency that the next Labour Government will set up. We must consider the pollution not only of rivers but of land and air in an integrated approach. We must not destroy the concept of integrated river basin management that we have under the current water authorities. Although under amendment No. 1 we are not ruling out the NRA, we must continue to express our concern that, without proper staffing and resources, even this part of the Bill will not be worth supporting.

Time is short, so I shall deal briefly with three issues that arise under part II of the Bill—comparative competition, pricing policy and disconnections. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) devastatingly exposed the Government's arguments for part II of the Bill. It would be folly to try to compete with his excellent speech, which destroyed the Government's credibility, but it is worth reinforcing some of the issues about which we are especially concerned.

We have clearly shown the flaws in the concept of comparative competition. There is no validity in the Government trying to compare competition in the food industry with that in the water industry. If people want to change the place where they buy their food they can move from shop or supermarket to obtain the lowest prices. No such choice will exist for water. It is a natural monopoly, and after privatisation the public will have no choice about which water plc they buy their water from.

We clearly showed in Committee that the only way in which comparative competition would have any reality for

[Mr. Keith Bradley]

the consumer would be if a tap from each plc were installed in every house and people could use the tap providing the cheapest water. We know that that is a farce and will not happen. In future, there will have to be not only taps from the 10 new water plcs but one running through the Channel tunnel from French water companies.

In his more manic utterings, the Secretary of State clearly told the public that there was choice not because of the water companies but because they can buy bottled water or Perrier water instead of using water from the tap. That is nonsense to the people of Manchester who struggle to choose what food or fuel they can afford. As usual, the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) is holding his face in pain when an hon. Member is talking about poor, low-income families in Manchester. Yesterday, yet again we saw him trying to impersonate Alan B'stard—or was it the other way round?—when he was discussing the NRA. He showed that he has no grasp of the real world. He does not represent the views of real people.

The Director General of Water Services is meant to consider comparative competition. We must consider the position in different water authorities and the problems facing water authorities such as those in the north-west, the problems of huge debt and inadequate investment. No comparative competition indicators, whether they are devised by the Director General of Water Services, the Audit Commission or whichever body the Government choose to set up, will ensure competition between companies. People will be tied to the problems, debts and investment problems of the water company in their area. *[Interruption.]* Does the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) want to intervene?

Mr. Soames: Certainly not.

Mr. Bradley: Throughout the deliberations in Committee, the Government advanced no credible argument to show that prices will not have to rise massively. They will have to rise massively to meet the investment required by the industry and to meet the potential investors' wish for a quick buck. They will need to make a quick buck if they are seriously to consider investing. When they see other privatisations, such as electricity, coming along, they will make choices, and when they see that there is no money to be made out of water, they will wait for the other privatisations.

When we discussed the price rise with the Minister, he said that it would be between 7·5 per cent. and 12·5 per cent. above that already in the investment plans of the water authorities. He has not been able to say how much is already included in the forward plans of those companies. When we pressed him in Committee, he said:

> "The programmes, to which the Secretary of State referred when he gave that estimate, are already out of date. That cost will be met by a mixture of charging and borrowing. Therefore, we cannot make a sensible estimate of the cost of these programmes. We have given the cost of the additional programmes as explained by the Secretary of State."—*[Official Report, Standing Committee D,* 21 February 1989; c. 1207.]

The Government can give no estimate of the real price increases required. We have only to study the increases in the charges of the private water companies to see that the new water plcs will put prices up by as much as 30 per cent. to 40 per cent. to meet the investment required and to ensure that investors will make a quick profit on their investment.

Disconnections are an issue of crucial importance. When we consider consumers in constituencies such as Manchester, Withington, we must consider the thousands of low-income families, low-income pensioners and low-income people with handicaps and disabilities who have to manage on meagre benefits. We have to ask the Government pertinent questions about how they will handle the hardship that may be caused by such dramatic price increases. We have to ask the Government how people on income support or housing benefit will deal with the dramatic increases in prices. Benefits such as child benefit—a crucial support to low-income families—have been frozen. Prices will not be frozen; they will rise. Low-income families need to be assured that they will be able to afford the water coming through their taps in future.

We need to ask the Government some specific questions tonight about disconnections. We need to ask, as the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) pointed out, why there has already been a dramatic increase in disconnections and how those disconnections will relate to the price increases after privatisation, if it goes ahead. If families are disconnected, how long will the Government expect them to survive without an adequate water supply to their homes? If there are disconnections, how long will the Government be prepared to let the community suffer from the increased public health hazard of families being disconnected? That will place an increased demand on an already overstretched National Health Service.

We must ask the Government whether, if metering is to be the preferred option of the new private companies, the cost of metering, estimated at £1·3 billion, will be passed directly to consumers by being included in future charges. There will be an extra demand for water from families with children, families with handicapped or disabled members or families which have a large number of elderly members. Will the extra demand for water in such families, reflected through the meter, cause the Government to reconsider the pricing policy?

If families are disconnected, as we fear, will there be any penalty on neighbours and friends who care for those people supplying water to them to ensure that they do not become a health hazard and to ensure that they have healthy, clean water coming into their homes? Should not the code of practice be a statutory code which covers all water companies and does not allow each separate water company to devise its own system, which will mean different regimes for disconnection in different parts of the country?

8.15 pm

Cities such as Manchester have a proud heritage of investment in their water industries. As other hon. Members have pointed out, it was the ratepayers of such cities who paid for the water industry and who were in the forefront of public health legislation to ensure proper water supplies in their homes. Such cities will not have those assets passed to the water authorities without a fight and without any element of compensation for taking away assets that have previously been paid for by the ratepayers. The legal challenge will come from cities such as Manchester to ensure that the assets that belong to local people are retained by those people.

We must look at campaigns against privatisation, such as that in Manchester, which join together individuals, groups representing consumer interests, groups representing pensioners' interests, groups representing conservation and environmental issues and the Ramblers Association. They are all joining together to say to the Government that they are not going to have this privatisation. Such campaigns will be successful. This Bill will be the Government's Achilles' heel, unless they decide tonight to support our amendments or the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Macclesfield. The Government should think again, because if they do not, they will be forced into submission by 1991.

Mr. Knapman: I am extremely grateful for the chance to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I sat here for most of yesterday and have done so again for most of today. I appreciate your difficulty, as so many of my hon. Friends want to demonstrate their support for this excellent Bill. For that reason, I shall be brief.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said yesterday that of four Opposition amendments under discussion two were unnecessary and two were undesirable. I hesitate to suggest that perhaps it is good that my right hon. Friend is not here tonight, but I do not know what he would make of the collection of Opposition amendments before us. Amendment No. 1 seeks to delete the whole of part II—clauses 10 to 98. I hope that the Government will not be tempted to accept those deletions, because they would make some little difference to the Bill, which was considered in detail in Committee.

I should have thought that all hon. Members would welcome the creation of the National Rivers Authority. It is a giant step forward because it will be a far more effective regulatory body than any we have had before and will be guided by clear and comprehensive codes of practice. However, the Opposition amendments seek only to achieve two things—to dot the i's twice and to cross the t's twice. That would be not a step forward, but a recipe for inaction and would strangle the National Rivers Authority with red tape. The authority's success will not be measured in the tons of annual reports that the Opposition wish them to produce. The authority should be in a position to produce a quick response to problems as they arise.

Having listened to Opposition Members, I fail to understand why there is any need for them to support the National Rivers Authority. I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). In the first sitting of the Committee, he welcomed the creation of a National Rivers Authority. He was always good value in Committee and I believe that he also mentioned that he was a member of the Select Committee on the Environment, which recommended the creation of the National Rivers Authority. He spoke of that with some pride and had every reason to do so. But I do not understand what value the National Rivers Authority has for the Opposition, because they oppose privatisation.

The Government rightly say that we need to separate the gamekeeper from the poacher—in this case, the provider or water plc. Perhaps there is no particular reason why the National Freight Corporation should be a hundred times more profitable and efficient than British Road Services, but it is, and that is a fact. In the same way, the water plcs will be a great deal more efficient than the existing water authorities. The Bill provides for the separation of the poacher from the gamekeeper or regulator, the National Rivers Authority.

Conservative Members seek a clear-cut division of responsibility—this is the crux of the matter—whereas the Opposition want to retain water authorities in public ownership. That is not a poacher-gamekeeper relationship; it is a two gamekeepers relationship, which is neither satisfactory nor practical. If the Opposition had their way, we would have two Government bodies exchanging correspondence. The two gamekeepers would soon get to know each other's ways and each other's foibles, and with all the red tape and reports that the system would entail, it would be a recipe for inaction. The buck would stop nowhere.

Mr. Morley: I have been listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman's argument, but I find it hard to understand why the National Rivers Authority should not be as effective when dealing with water companies in the public sector. Are not public health inspectors effective in their inspections of public abattoirs? Are not Her Majesty's inspectors of pollution effective in overseeing industries in the public sector? It seems to me that they are equally effective—there have been no complaints—so I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's argument.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that point. He served on the Standing Committee and will have listened to his hon. Friends the Members for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) talking at length about the importance of the Camelford incident. They were entirely right about that. It has been pointed out to them time and again that such incidents happen under the present system precisely because the poacher is not separated from the gamekeeper. That is the whole point of the Bill.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will actively consider the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker). I realise that he has much to consider, but it seems to me that my hon. Friend's amendment is worthy of detailed examination.

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend properly referred to a system involving two gamekeepers. Can he say a little more about the additional safeguards built into the Bill—for example, the director general, who is the consumers' white knight? Will my hon. Friend draw Opposition Members' attention to the effect of the other safeguards in the Bill and agree with me that, under the Bill, consumers will have more, rather than fewer, powers?

Mr. Knapman: I am obliged to my hon. Friend, who has made those points a great deal better than I could. Whereas the consumer has few rights at present, the Bill provides a code of practice that not only describes the product that must be provided—wholesome water—but allows fines to be imposed when it is not provided. I find it extraordinary that Opposition Members should argue so forcefully in favour of high standards when they know very well that there is no chance of such standards being reached under the existing system of public ownership.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Will my hon. Friend tell the House who brought in the present system of water authorities 15 years ago? Is his memory really so short?

Mr. Knapman: The 1973 reorganisation produced integrated river basin management, and I do not see how the geographical base of that—which is the important part—is altered by the Bill, under which the 10 areas are to be retained. The Bill merely seeks to separate the poacher from the gamekeeper. The Water Act 1973 was valuable because it brought together hundreds of small water companies. It is well understood that, with the increasing demands in both the drainage and water supply sectors, it was necessary to have larger blocks of authorities. I do not seek to detract from the importance of the 1973 provisions, but I would still argue that there is justice in separating the poacher from the gamekeeper, rather than having two gamekeepers, as Opposition Members would suggest.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): We come to the guts of the Bill. We should certainly be much happier to live with the Bill if we succeeded in removing part II. It has been suggested that the alternative to water supplied through the tap is Perrier water. Advertisements on the television showing droves of milk floats delivering hundreds of bottles of water to hundreds of doorsteps bring home to us the lack of choice. The Welsh advertising campaign brings home to us the fact that the chair of the National Rivers Authority, the former Secretary of State for Wales, is also a director of HTV and reminds us that the chairman of Welsh Water has also been made a director of HTV. One must have misgivings about the heavy use of advertising to try to sell a product which is clearly not sellable.

Wales does not want the Bill. We have seen the effects of the Government's water policies in recent years. It is interesting to note that the average domestic water bill in Wales, which was £49·08 in 1979-80, had increased to £122·61 by 1987-88; in other words, it nearly trebled. Over the same period, the required rate of return has increased from 0·3 per cent.—the going rate in 1980-81—to 2·35 per cent. in 1987-88. As the rate of return has been pushed up by the Government to increase the capital formation of Welsh Water, so the charges landing on the ratepayer have increased substantially. Similarly, we shall face enormous increases in charges for our water when the Bill is enacted because a return of 2·35 per cent. will not attract the capital necessary for the programmes that have been referred to. To achieve even a modest return of 8, 9 or 10 per cent., as Ministers have suggested, will require substantially greater charges to be levied for water.

The average equated water rate in Wales in the financial year 1988-89 is 108p in the pound as compared with 50·95p for Severn-Trent, 58·50p for North West and 33·54p in the Thames area. We already pay twice to three times the amount that those in other water authority areas pay. We dread to think what will happen to water prices in future years; it is a grim prospect for the Welsh water ratepayer.

We accept that we need to pay for the work that has to be undertaken, but we want a fairer method of payment than that proposed in the Bill. As long ago as the debate on the Queen's Speech, the Secretary of State said:

"the necessary investment might increase prices by between 7·5 per cent. and 12·5 per cent. in real terms by the end of the century."—[*Official Report*, 28 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 450.]

He was referring to the investment in a programme for environmental improvement, for cleaner beaches, drinking water quality and improvement of sewage treatment works and it seems that that is over and above the other inevitable increases.

The Secretary of State was very honest in his response to me yesterday. He said:

"That is equivalent to an extra 7·5 per cent. to 12·5 per cent. in real terms in financial costs over the next 10 years. That is little more than 1 per cent. per year in real terms. As I have said, that is over and above the increases that would have been required without those additional programmes."—[*Official Report*, 21 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 1012.]

In other words, we are facing a substantial increase. The Prime Minister said:

"we shall need increases in water charges."

She claimed that it was

"not for privatisation . . . but to provide the capital to spend on the required increased quality."—[*Official Report*, 16 March 1989; Vol. 149, c. 528.]

8.30 pm

That is what we need, but what we are saying is that the water charges will go up astronomically because of this part of the Bill. It will not just be 12·5 per cent. plus a little more, but in real terms 50, 60 or 70 per cent. The Government are acknowledging that between the lines of such answers as those given by the Secretary of State yesterday and the Prime Minister on Thursday, but that is directly contrary to the publicity campaign that was launched in Wales earlier this month. A statement released in the Committee corridor by the Minister of State, Welsh Office led to the *Western Mail* having the banner headline on the front page saying:

"25% off—The hope for Wales's water bills."

That statement was directly engineered by the Minister of State, Welsh Office to give the impression that the legislation would lead to a 25 per cent. reduction in the price of water for Wales. That is absolutely disgraceful. I call on the Minister of State to tell the House that that statement—that leak was also given to the *Daily Post* on the same day—was unfounded, misleading and the people of Wales should take no notice of it. That is based, of course, on the statement that

"The Government is planning to write off £460m of Welsh Water debts to make the authority more attractive to private investors and city institutions."

If that debt was written off now, water rates in Wales could be at a reasonable level instead of at the levels that we have suffered over recent years.

The Government must come clean about where they stand on the matter of the writing-off of debts. How will that be managed? Was the hon. Member for Copeland (Mr. Cunningham) right when he suggested that it would be equated between all areas? Has the matter been properly discussed? Will that be spelt out clearly in the prospectus? If we look at what was said in Committee we see that the Under-Secretary clearly had no answers to those points. He said:

"A decision will be made on the amount of equity for each company that will be offered for sale. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning made it clear this morning that the Government intend that 100 per cent. will be floated. How we achieve that will be decided closer to the time in the interests of the taxpayer and of maximising the flotation."

The Bill will leave the Commons without our having an inkling of the direction in which we are moving. The Under-Secretary continued:

"I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman whether the equity will be 51 per cent., 71 per cent., 91 per cent., or 100 per cent. I cannot tell him whether the shares will be paid for in one go or, as with other privatisations, by part payments. I

cannot make those decisions now or say how much income will be generated."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 23 February 1989; c. 1326.]

In other words, we are being asked to vote for a pig in a poke. We do not know what we will be getting. All we know is that the costs will be substantially higher and those will push water charges in Wales to an astronomical level.

Privatisation is supposed to provide certain benefits. One of the benefits is said to be greater efficiency. We have not yet heard where that efficiency will come from, how many redundancies there will be, what slimming down there will be, or what services will not be provided. Privatisation is supposed to provide a great attraction for capital. That will not happen without the scale of charges that I have mentioned. Without those high charges, the capital will not be there. Privatisation is supposed to provide a better service for customers because of competition. However, many hon. Members—in fact, more Conservative Members than Opposition Members—have said that that competition is not there. It is a monopoly and one which cannot in any way be effective in the market place.

We have been told that privatisation will lead to better quality. When the main criterion will be profitability, I wonder what effect that will have on the quality of water and, indeed, on public health.

We have been told that there will be better protection for the environment, yet there is a real danger that the plc will sell its assets to raise capital that it will be unable to raise in the market place. We have been told that individuals will be more involved and that they can be shareholders. However, we know that the large institutional shareholders are likely to move in, especially with the low returns that will be available. There will be no democratic answerability and no mechanism to raise questions in the House.

We have been told that there may be a fairer charging system. Certainly, water rates can be very unfair under the present system, but will metering be fairer when someone old and incontinent will use more than the average 9,000 gallons per annum? There have been no mechanisms to allow rebates in the past. I cannot see that metering will be fairer.

We have been told that possibly there will be better co-ordination of the industry, but I wonder, when the question of the use of reservoirs and land arises and there is an opportunity to make money, whether the amenity value of the land will go out of the window.

What effect will there be on industry? The increased charges may make many industries, such as the chemical industry, uncompetitive. The Department of Industry advertised at one time the attraction of water charges as an incentive for industry. I wonder whether it could put out the same booklet as it did in 1981 and 1982. Will there be any greater stability, as we have seen companies that have been taken over having to rely on the whims of the market place? All those factors fill us with foreboding.

I tabled amendment No. 136 which refers to the need to have an absolute assurance written into this part of the Bill that there will not be any charges passed on with the introduction of meters. We welcome the Government's move on the amendments regarding disablement. Amendment No. 53, which has not been selected, deals with metering and disabled people. The Government may be able to reconsider that aspect in another place, because in comparable Bills, such as the one for gas, a provision has already been written in. Perhaps the Minister will consider that at an appropriate time.

We are fearful of the effects of privatisation. Privatisation by a Government who do not have a mandate is not wanted by Wales. I hope that even at this late stage they will change their minds.

Miss Emma Nicholson: The speeches today have had a valedictory ring. The utterances from the Opposition resembled those of professional mourners at a funeral burying the corpse of nationalisation. I do not believe that they will ever be able to exhume that corpse and rattle its bones again. It is like a pavane for a dead doll because nationalisation has shrunk to that size. The hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has been the chief pall bearer. Speeches from other Conservative Members, however, had the ring of a job well done—a task completed and a polished performance—and were more like a march triumphant.

It is relevant that we should be discussing the Water Bill in the round, especially the retention of part II. In 1977, the United Nations declared the 1980s to be the decade of international drinking water supply and sanitation. The goal was to meet the needs of everyone world wide by 1990. The Bill ensures that in the United Kingdom we shall do just that with an innovative, imaginative and highly effective piece of legislation which will bring immeasurable benefits to the consumer.

As it enters its last year, the present decade has many notable achievements to its credit. The principal one is the establishment beyond doubt of the relationship between ill health, dirty water and poor sanitation. I remind the House that every day 30,000 people die from water-related diseases. In that context, and thinking especially of the developing world, it is interesting to note that every human being needs five gallons per diem for washing and drinking, but in the developed countries we use about 25 to 40 gallons. We are profligate with a natural resource. Water metering may help us there.

In the months in which we have been debating this major piece of legislation, we have had food scares, food and health scares and, in Committee, water scares. Unwarranted, unjustified and unscrupulous attacks have been made on the purity of unbottled British drinking water. All the medical experts of the United Kingdom have declared that water to be of excellent quality, and more of our rivers have a higher water quality than many of those in Europe.

In Committee we were threatened with Alzheimer's disease if we drank British water. The threat has been flourished with seeming relish, as though the disease would be caught by anyone drinking tap water in Britain. The chief medical officer's verdict has been wholly ignored by the Opposition. He does not believe that there is any perceived link, although he is continuing serious and proper studies.

The Opposition have based their scare stories on an invalid extrapolation from data about kidney patients undergoing dialysis and ingesting water in an abnormal way to cleanse their kidneys, with distressing but preventable side effects. As a result of that scare story, acute unhappiness has been caused to widows and widowers whose partners have died of Alzheimer's disease.

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

People ask me whether they were wrong to move to Devon and whether they did a terrible thing which caused their spouses to die.

Mr. Heffer: I shall not take up the last point because I am not competent to do so and I do not know whether any such problems have been caused. The hon. Lady and the Government should make up their minds. On the one hand we are told that if we privatise we shall improve the quality of water—that is the essence of the argument. The hon. Lady then says that the quality of water is better than that in most of the advanced world. I do not disagree with that. I do not agree with those who say that our water is bad. Having visited Italy regularly, particularly after the war, I remember that if one went south of Milan one was damned careful not to drink the water around Rome, and so on. We all knew what could happen. The fact is that our water is good water, so why do we need to privatise it?

Miss Nicholson: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his excellent and highly intellectual intervention based on his experience of Italian and British drinking water. The circle can be properly squared because the public are rightly becoming more environmentally conscious and calling upon us to improve the quality of our water still further. I invite the hon. Gentleman to visit my constituency, where he will discover an appalling history of poor quality water supply. The new mechanism for investment and for attracting money will improve beyond belief the appalling water that we have suffered in Bideford, Launceston and Tavistock for many years. Under the new South West Water chairman, all is being rapidly improved. That did not happen under the Labour Government appointee. With an irresponsible and heartless Opposition Front Bench team playing most meanly upon people's fears, we certainly need the Bill. It is as well that, in this context, Britannia is the clean woman of Europe.

Mr. Allan Roberts: If our drinking water is of such a high standard, why do 11 million people drink water that is below EEC standards?

Miss Nicholson: Our drinking water is only 95 per cent. perfect. We still have 5 per cent. to go.

As water scares have been promoted by the Opposition, public education is the key. We need a strong and resilient group of customer service committees with powers to call for evidence from companies outside their normal remit and with the ability to challenge those companies with their findings and to put those findings to the director general. As those customer service committees will serve the public, it is most important that their meetings should be held in public. I have never understood the idea of a body that is meant to represent the public holding its meetings in private. In that context, I commend amendments Nos. 25 and 96 to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister and to the House. They will give us that strong and outward-looking public body to educate, inform and serve the customer.

8.45 pm

Mr. Morley: The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) said that perhaps we are mourning a dog's funeral, but I believe that the Bill is more like a dog's breakfast.

The way in which the Bill has been presented is a total shambles, and the arguments have been contradictory. Amendment No. 1 seeks to discover what the Government are trying to get out of privatisation. There may be a case for a separate regulatory body, the National Rivers Authority. That is fair enough. If we delete part II we can go ahead and set up an NRA that will have the powers to regulate water quality, do something about our river quality and ensure that our sewerage standards are improved. All that could be done without everything being moved to the private sector.

The question posed by the public, which the Government must answer, is what are the advantages from putting the water and sewerage undertakers into the private sector? So far they have not come up with any convincing arguments in favour of such a move. The evidence suggests that it will be a great deal more expensive for the consumer if such a move goes ahead. They have also not told the public why a natural monopoly should be put into the hands of the private sector when its natural place should be in the public sector, where control and accountability can be exercised.

The Minister may argue that, together with passing control over to the private sector, a whole range of regulations will be introduced to prevent abuse by any private owner. That is the argument in favour of the price control mechanism. If that is the case, it makes nonsense of the argument of the Water Authorities Association that, by moving into the private sector, water companies and authorities will be free of Government interference. Given the regulations that will accompany the Bill—I accept there is a need for them—there will be more Government interference in the water companies than at present.

It is also argued that everything will be more efficient in the private sector, but that does not automatically follow. I am not suggesting that private sector companies are not efficient—many are—but if they were all efficient, there would be no bankruptcies or fraud cases. Such things happen all the time because there are good and bad companies. By making something private it does not follow that everything will be more efficient.

It is clear that the move into the private sector will be more expensive. The Secretary of State will not produce figures to show what it will mean for the public, because he dare not. If we are to achieve the necessary investment in our sewerage works, the sewage outfalls and the associated infrastructure, the necessary money must be raised. Raising such money through a privatised water company, however, will be more expensive than raising it through the public sector. Private water companies will not have access to the lower rates of interest that are available in the public sector and they may not have access to various European grants currently available. The shareholders' dividend will be an extra element that must go on top of the distribution charges.

Opposition Members have already pointed out that, if those companies are to attract private capital, there must be a decent return on it. Most companies in the private sector believe that the minimum return on capital invested is 10 per cent.

Under the present pricing regime, there is nothing like a 10 per cent. return on capital. The implication is that water charges will rise dramatically to meet that return and leave sufficient to invest in the infrastructure. Apart from some Conservative Members, nobody denies that. Even

stockbrokers in the City have given a cool response to this privatisation because they know the investment difficulties that will have to be faced.

Mr. Wigley: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in an unguarded moment towards the end of last year, the Secretary of State admitted that other factors would be involved, including what he described as the higher cost of private sector capital? The Government have shied away from putting a figure to it. Perhaps the Minister will give a figure tonight.

Mr. Morley: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that intervention. People who think about these issues impartially recognise the logic of what I am saying. By putting the industry into the private sector, the Government are being responsible for dramatically increasing charges. Water charges for industry will also go up. That will have an effect on our ability to compete with the Europeans, especially after 1992.

Apart from the fact that it has not been proved that the industry will be more efficient in private hands, we must remember that the water authorities are part of our natural heritage. They control some areas of outstanding natural beauty, including important nature reserves and areas of leisure and recreation.

Considering the restraints that will be placed on private water companies and the fact that they will be in a financial straitjacket, having little room for growth in their core services, they will inevitably look towards the land assets that will be given to them on a plate by the Government. They will be inclined to develop those land assets, and that could have a detrimental effect not only on the conservation role of that land but in terms of access by the public and the maintenance of areas of natural beauty.

It is nonsense to suggest that the existing planning controls give sufficient protection. The Countryside Commission, a Government quango, has said that the present planning regime is not adequate to prevent the despoliation of areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Anglian Water has put up its charges this year by 12 per cent., double the rate of inflation. That is an early indicator of the way in which charges will rocket under privatisation. The private statutory companies have already said that their astronomical increases in charges are due mainly to privatisation and not to necessary investment in the infrastructure. Indeed, one has said that the infrastructure element represented only 4 per cent. of its increase and that the rest was due to privatisation.

Some of the amendments in this series deal with extending the role of agencies with sewerage functions. I hope that the Minister will reconsider some of the arguments that were adduced in Committee about the problem of private sewers that have not been adopted by local authorities because those sewers are not up to standard.

I have that problem in my constituency, in Winchester avenue in Bottesford, Scunthorpe. When that development was constructed, the sewers were not put down to an adequate standard, and the local water authority, understandably, refused to adopt them. The residents of the area are anxious because the developer of the estate blames the builder who put down the sewers and the builder claims that it is the developer's responsibility. The only people who are suffering are the residents because the roads have not been adopted, the street lights have not been connected and the grass verges cannot be laid out, all because the sewers under the roads are in need of repair.

If we are to make changes, we should introduce into the Bill a provision by which the new water plcs have power by law to go in, to do the job, to bring the sewers up to standard and to recover the cost from the company which laid them in the first place. That would cut through the circle of complaint, with the buck constantly being passed between developers and builders. I hope that the Minister will examine that matter. Several hon. Members, including Conservative Members, raised in Committee similar problems affecting their constituencies and we should take the opportunity of this measure to tackle that problem.

The Bill will do nothing to improve the efficiency of the water companies. The restraints from which they have been suffering are artificial. If the Government want to improve our rivers and water standards and wish to make sure that various aspects of the infrastructure receive the necessary investment, they should remove those restraints and allow water authorities to borrow on the open market and have freedom to invest.

By all means establish the NRA, create more regulatory powers and introduce a more efficient code of conduct, but all of that could be done by deleting part II of the Bill and making sure that part I goes through.

Sir Anthony Grant: The 12 per cent. increase to which the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) referred in the Anglian water authority area is in line with the forecast made by the Secretary of State for the Environment on Second Reading.

The Cambridge water authority, which supplies water to me and my constituents, recently had to announce an increase. It was not the 43 per cent. rise which some authorities have had to announce, but it was sufficiently high at 29 per cent. It made it clear that the money was required for the replacement of old plant and for other engineering necessities and had nothing to do with privatisation.

The Bill has not been adequately explained. That is undoubtedly why Mr. Derek Jameson and his telephone pollsters misunderstand the situation. I acquit the Minister of State entirely in that respect; he was bogged down in Committee, giving massive attention to detail—a task which he performed with his usual forensic skill—but it is now necessary to concentrate on the two fundamental points in the Bill. If that is done, we shall be able to disregard straw polls conducted by straw men.

The first point concerns the setting up of the NRA to deal with standards and quality. The Opposition may want the NRA to be strengthened in certain respects, but it is agreed in all parts of the House that the basic principles of the body are right. We debated this subject at length yesterday, so at this stage I will simply say that the principles involved in establishing the NRA are right, that the fears that have been expressed about dangers to our beautiful countryside are wildly exaggerated and that we can have the highest respect for our erstwhile colleague, Lord Crickhowell, who will chair that body.

Secondly, while we are demanding higher standards, we should appreciate that our water is extremely good compared with that in some countries. Nevertheless, we and Europe want it to be better. In my constituency there is a great fuss about nitrates. We have the highest concentration of nitrates in the soil, although even that

[Sir Anthony Grant]

concentration is wildly exaggerated. I pointed out in the House recently that, while nitrates are said to cause stomach cancer, the highest incidence of stomach cancer is in Wales, where there are the lowest amounts of nitrates, and the lowest incidence of stomach cancer are to be found in East Anglia, where we have the highest concentration of nitrates. That must be borne in mind before people become hysterical over this issue.

If we want higher standards, they have to be paid for. The Opposition have proposed a wrecking amendment. If we accept their arguments we shall simply stay in the same miserable circumstances as we had between 1974 and 1979, and subsequently, with the water industry standing docilely in a queue at the Treasury, trying to get the necessary investment. The water industry was not the only one to suffer between 1974 and 1979. Hospitals, nurses and everyone suffered in times of economic difficulty. The same could happen again. If the water industry is in the queue behind Ministers who are clamouring for more money for pensions, hospitals, defence and education, we will be back to square one.

9 pm

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). Part II of the Bill provides the opportunity for competition, although not in the commercial sense as we know it. No one can say, "I do not like Anglian Water so I will go to Thames Water because it is better or cheaper." That is not what we are talking about. By their efficiency and the way in which they conduct themselves, water authorities will be able to apply to a wider circle of investors to raise funds. They will be liberated from the constraints that have caused the difficulties up to now. That is fundamental and one of the main purposes of the Bill. We must hammer that home and explain it to the people in simple terms.

Much nonsense is talked about the French taking over things. I am not so xenophobic as some hon. Members and I do not worry particularly about that. In 1992, if Anglian Water plc is efficient enough and keen enough, it may take over the French. When we were negotiating to go into the Common Market the Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), told me that Pompidou was complaining bitterly that the British had taken over the French food industry, which they had. There is no reason why the water industry should not do the same. We should not be frightened of competition and we should not talk xenophobic nonsense.

I will conclude by quoting from a letter to *The Times* by the chairman of Anglian Water, Mr. Bernard Henderson, who has put it as well as anyone could. He said:

> "For too long the United Kingdom water industry has been starved of the funds needed to carry out these improvements as it wanted to do. This has got to cease. Stop-go policies have left the water industry frustrated and underfunded time and time again.
>
> The present Bill offers the chance to revolutionise this situation. The powers of the secretary of state and the National Rivers Authority will ensure the remedial work is carried out. The director general will oversee the maintenance of standards and impose a price control which should encourage further efficiency gains, whilst allowing for the necessary work to be financed. And the privatised companies in turn will, for the first time, have the freedom to operate outside the constraints of public expenditure policies."

Mr. Henderson has got to the root of the problem. We should forget the other nonsense and put that message forward. We should reject amendment No. 1. The sooner the Bill is on the statute book the better for everyone.

Mr. Pike: I shall be extremely brief because there is a guillotine and other hon. Members want to speak. Important issues are involved in this large group of amendments. If time permitted, I would take to task the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) for some of his comments about other privatised industries; he said that they had done extremely well but he did not give a true picture of the position. Many of them have created additional top-tier jobs which have benefited those at the top, but they have not done much good for the consumer. At the end of the day we should judge things by the results for the consumer. Many times during the debate the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) has claimed to be a champion of consumer interests, but when she supported the main drift of the Bill she showed that she is no friend of the consumer.

The hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) referred to the Select Committee report. The Minister also made an intervention about it, referring again to the chart, as he has done so many times. The Conservative Government have been in power for almost 10 years, and they must be judged on their record. The simple fact is that, in true comparative terms, the Government investment in the water industry in 1989 is lower than it was in the mid 1970s. The chart does not give the latest figures, but what I have said is correct. The Government have failed miserably.

There is some truth in the statement by the hon. Member for Stroud that the National Rivers Authority originated in the proposals of the Select Committee. While the Select Committee accepted that there was a need for a regulatory body, and a separation of the poacher and gamekeeper functions, it did not say that the industry should be privatised to achieve that objective. It stated clearly that the problems in the water industry arose not from ownership but because the Government controlled capital investment and interfered too much. There is no reason why the Government, if they wished, could not remove the PSBR from water authorities and allowed them to borrow on the open market, perhaps even involving some private sector finance. We do not need to go along the road of privatisation.

If the House does not accept amendment No. 1 to delete part II which deals with privatisation, we have grave doubts that the Bill will deliver the goods. Whatever regulatory powers are provided, at the end of the day the industry has to have profit as its prime motive. We know that the Government have to fiddle the figures and wipe out debt. They will have to make provisions for derogations and extending the period for water authorities to meet the requirements for river and water quality, and for the improvement of beaches. If they do not, the industry will not pay.

The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East said that in other privatised industries the regulatory control for price increases was RPI minus X but that in this case it would be RPI plus K. The important difference is the plus rather then the minus.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) made an important point about sewers of existing properties not being up to an acceptable standard. The Minister should recognise that it is still

possible for properties to be constructed with sewers that are not of the required standard to be taken over by water authorities. That will continue. This may not be the appropriate Bill to cover it—the Local Government and Housing Bill might be better—but the Government should do something about the problem which exists even on estates built in post-war years. The Government must accept responsibility to prevent that happening in future.

I have known the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) for many years. Indeed, I worked as a full-time Labour party organiser in the 1971 by-election that brought him to this House. He made a very bold, constructive and important speech. He recognises very clearly that, while the Government, with their majority, may win the votes in Committee and in this House, they are not winning the debate, either in Committee or in the House. But, even more important, they are not winning the debate in the nation. The people recognise that in this industry comparative competition and all that kind of nonsense is absolutely unrealistic. This will be a private monopoly. The consumers will have to pay, and if there is metering the poorer sections of the community will be penalised. If time permitted, I would go into detail on that matter.

The Government must recognise that there are important issues involved in these amendments. The latest Select Committee report on toxic waste says that the Government should make the National Rivers Authority the basis of an environmental protection agency. As I have said to the Minister before, if the Government were to drop this nonsense of privatisation and made the National Rivers Authority an environmental protection agency, they would be doing a lot more to serve the nation.

Mr. Leigh: I have now sat through five hours of Second Reading debate, 150 hours of Committee debate, and countless hours of Report stage debate.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Do you want a medal?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) shared those labours with me.

I am pleased that the Minister has accepted several of my amendments. The one that I have down this evening concerns due diligence, but I shall not delay the House by talking about that, as there is already considerable correspondence about it. In the two or three minutes available to me—I want to give other hon. Members a chance to take part in this debate—I shall try to boil down some of the arguments. Unless we can put over our case very simply, in a couple of minutes, we really are in serious trouble. But I think we can do so.

I hope that hon. Members opposite, who may not agree with everything I say, will at least accept that I have tried to study the Bill with reasonable care. It seems to me that we are all agreed—this is the view of the people who work in the water industry: not just the chairmen of the water authorities, but people at all levels—that there is a large measure of historical under-investment in the industry. It is accepted throughout the industry that, if it were to remain in public ownership, it simply would not get the investment it needs, given the fact that it would have to compete for scarce resources. That is not a party political point. I am not making an attack on past Labour Governments; perhaps I am attacking the records of all Governments on this issue. There simply are no votes in sewerage. That is the first point.

Mr. Boateng: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leigh: No, because I intend to speak for only two or three minutes.

The second point is that it is in the very nature of this Bill that the regulatory functions of water quality are split from the actual provision of water and sewerage. As a result, the Government and Government agencies such as the NRA are allowed to get on with the job that they do best, which is regulation, while the private sector is allowed to get on with the job that it does best, which is providing the service. That is the very essence of the Bill.

9.15 pm

I think that we can get the argument across in the country if we inform people that these private sector companies will not be like other private sector companies. It seems that people out in the country think that they will operate for profit in an entirely free market. In fact, they will be tightly controlled by the Director General of Water Services, operating under the K factor. They will be operating within a tightly regulated framework, and will be much more akin to private contractors working for Government Departments than to private companies. It is not so much a question of privatising something for profit margin; what we are doing is splitting up an unhealthy relationship, in which secretive water authorities have both provided the service and regulated themselves. We are creating something much more healthy—a healthy tension between Government agencies regulating, and tightly regulated private companies providing the service.

The people in the water industry to whom I have talked are actually looking forward to being let off the leash of Government control, of chopping and changing, as was mentioned in the letter from the chairman of the Anglian water authority—let off the leash of the Treasury, allowed to invest, allowed to attract private capital. That is what people in the water industry are saying. They look forward to providing a service. There may be price increases, but they will be the result of historic under-investment. The only way we can get real improvements really quickly is by privatising this industry, and to that end this amendment must be rejected.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) talked about this Bill representing a march triumphant. I would argue that it is a march that tramples the poor and disadvantaged into the ground. The Bill constitutes a serious attack on the rights and interests of low-paid and disadvantaged people. The hon. Lady talked about scare stories. It is no scare story to look at the record of the present Government in water charges and the hardship that those have caused in the run-up over the past few years to privatisation. In 1984, the average bill was £76; now it is £107. It is no scare story to say that the Water Authorities Association itself said that that increase was the direct result of the Government's move towards privatisation. That is not a scare story.

Nor is it a scare story to suggest that Gordon Jones, the chairman of that association and of Yorkshire Water, has said that bills will effectively double to £200 per year by 1993. These are not scare stories. It is not a scare story to

[Mr. David Hinchliffe]

talk about the private companies and the figures that they put forward. The Minister proudly announced that he had got the increases down to 22 per cent.—three times the rate of inflation. These are not scare stories; they are facts, truths, that the hon. Lady conveniently forgot.

Amendments 126 and 125 are intended to help the interests of the poor if this Bill goes through its parliamentary processes. They respond to the growing trend of disconnections. Over the past few years we have seen an average of 2,000 extra disconnections each year. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) referred to a figure of 9,000 disconnections this year. That so many people are deprived of such a basic commodity as water is an appalling indictment of this Government. They must be very proud of their record. We heard in Committee the Tory view of wilful non-payers—the clear distinction between the deserving poor and the undeserving poor—concepts which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) said when he was discussing measures that have been brought in in Liverpool, take us back to the last century.

I am deeply concerned about what will happen under this Bill to those families who cannot afford to meet their bills now, let alone when we have the huge increases that will be brought about by privatisation. It is vital to understand the seriousness of the situation in which families will find themselves when their water supply is cut off. I have listened to all the speeches that have been delivered since 6 o'clock this evening. Not one hon. Member opposite—not even the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton)—mentioned the position of the poor, the position of the disadvantaged, the position of the disabled, the position of those people who will be, and those who have been, deprived of a water supply.

I am sure that all hon. Members have received representations and information from the citizens advice bureau nationally about the evidence it has received. It has referred to a case in Lichfield where its client, a woman who is a single parent with a three-week-old baby, had her water supply cut off without her knowledge after she had actually paid the bill. I repeat that a three-week-old baby was deprived of its water supply.

I have also referred to a family that I went to see while we were considering the Bill in Committee. The family has five children, one a nine-week-old baby, and it too was deprived of its water supply. Can any hon. Member who supports the legislation defend a nine-week-old baby being deprived of water? How on earth can people care for a child of that age without a water supply? It is a disgrace that the Bill will add to the misery of families such as the one I visited which told me—I mentioned this in Committee—that one of the children——

Miss Emma Nicholson *rose*——

Mr. Hinchliffe: I am sorry but, with respect to the hon. Lady, I shall not give way to her because I am limited to only a few minutes before the wind-up speeches.

I mentioned in Committee the condition of one of the children in that family—a five-year-old child who had diarrhoea. When there was no water supply that child refused to use the toilet because it could not be flushed so the child went to the toilet in the garden. That is the sort of situation that there will be with the privatisation of water. This country will be taken back 100 years to the conditions of the last century. I am sure that the Secretary of State, who has now just turned up, will be proud of that record.

The Bill adds to the problems that are being faced by the poor as a direct result of Government policy. The Government have hammered the poor by their discontinuation of water rates allowances and by the way in which direct payments of water rates have been scrapped and by the way in which the benefit system has not reflected the huge increase in water rates.

I am being looked at by my Whips so I shall sit down in a moment. I have sat here from 6 o'clock and I have had a couple of minutes in which to get this off my chest. Let us remember the poor, the disadvantaged and the deprived, not those who will make a fast buck out of the legislation.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) spoke with feeling, as he did in Committee, and we respect him for it. I am only sorry that the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) has been muzzled in this debate.

I shall be brief, but I must advise my hon. Friends—and, especially, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)—that the more I go round my part of the country and my constituency to explain the case for the Bill, the more it is understood and the more support it receives. People appreciate that the need for substantial investments is urgent. They appreciate that there is a need to define the functions of regulation and the supply of services. They appreciate also the need to raise environmental standards, even if the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) does not. They appreciate too that there is a need for a well-managed water industry that is capable of improving services and exporting its services, free from political control, to the Third world. They appreciate that all that is urgent.

I wish to make a point that I made in Committee on amendment No. 148, which has been tabled by my hon. Friends the Members for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and which has the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Pudsey (Sir G. Shaw), who is a former Minister and about whose knowledge of the water industry no one should feel anything but respect.

There is a need for a connection charge because of the inadequate provision made in the Bill for paying for the improvements to the infrastructure that are required to service new developments. As my hon. and learned Friend the Minister knows, the problem at the moment arises in the following way. New dwellings are connected to public water supplies and sewerage systems and they impose a demand on the existing capacity of all elements of the water and sewerage structure. The water supply elements include source works, treatment works, pumps, trunk pipelines, treated water reservoirs and distribution pipes.

The capital costs involved in new developments are high. At the moment, improvements have to be funded by cross-subsidy from existing customers and at the moment the section 52 arrangements are time-consuming and result in uncertainty for developers and water undertakers. Treatment works have to run at the limit of their capacity

to justify contributions, which results in a serious risk of failure. There is also inequity between early and late developers of buildings.

After privatisation, the problems are likely to be worse. The costs of meeting the needs of new developments will put an upward pressure on K. The contributions currently obtained from developers by section 52 planning agreements will reduce significantly after privatisation because planning authorities are bound to be less co-operative with private sector companies than they are at the moment.

The problems of cross-subsidy and pressure on K can be overcome by introducing a statutory requirement for developers to pay a connection charge. It would be a capital sum for each dwelling and would be paid before commencement of building works. The charge would be fixed at a standard rate to reflect the average cost of meeting the development needs in each water undertaking area. Application of the charge would be policed by the director general. The introduction of the charge would streamline the planning process and give developers more certainty about their commitments and enable the water undertakers to use sensible and cost-effective planning horizons to remove inequities. The whole basis for the charge is that there should be equity.

My hon. and learned Friend has said that he will look at this issue and, indeed, his officials are considering it. I hope that he can say something in his reply about his attitude to the charge. It is important for equity and would be an important element in the post-privatisation process between the water undertakers and the regulators. My hon. Friends and I look forward to my hon. and learned Friend's reply.

Mr. Howard: Last night we were treated to the extraordinary spectacle of the Labour party pressing to a vote at midnight an amendment that would not have changed the Bill's effect by one iota.

Tonight Opposition Members apparently intend to press to a Division amendment No. 1 which would delete the whole of part II and in so doing deny to the people of this country the considerable improvements in drinking water standards which we wish to see, the control over prices which the Director General of Water Services will exert and the new and unprecedented rights for customers that the Bill provides. Even by their own attitudes and standards, the Opposition's approach is incomprehensible. I shall return to that point later, but first I want to deal with some of the many other points that have been raised during this extremely interesting and wide-ranging debate.

I shall begin with the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton)—as I suspect that he would expect me to. I am grateful to him for the kind remarks that he made about me, although he will understand that I approach them with a degree of caution. He made a characteristically forceful speech in which he urged the provision of a water merger control regime that would apply to all 39 water undertakers to be appointed under the Bill and would extend it in certain other respects.

The purpose of our special water merger provisions is to ensure that the director general has access to all the information that he needs so that he can compare the performance of different companies and make sure that the standards of the most efficient spread to the rest of the industry and that the customer benefits as a result. That exercise will provide a clear incentive to more efficient management and will be a key factor in effective regulation of the industry. The ability to make these comparisons is an advantage available to the Director General of Water Services which has not been available to the regulator of any previously privatised industries. It is one of the main reasons why we can be confident that the customer will benefit from greater efficiency in the industry in future.

9.30 pm

However, for that to be achieved, it is not necessary that all mergers in the industry should automatically be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission—as my hon. Friend would like to see. It is not necessary for this purpose to preserve all 39 water undertakers in independent ownership. To do so would be to tend to freeze the existing pattern of ownership in the industry, and there is no reason to suppose that the existing pattern is necessarily the best or most efficient. My hon. Friend also wanted, in mergers that were referred to the commission, account to be taken of matters such as the interests of consumers and other sectors of the economy. The commission would be able to take those matters into account under existing arrangements.

My hon. Friend referred to French investment in the industry. The really important point about French investment is that French companies are showing us what can be achieved in this industry by independent private sector companies taking advantage of the opportunities that are available. There is a huge worldwide market for water services—as my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) pointed out. The French have a large share of it. We will never be able to compete with them so long as the British water industry is a collection of nationalised industries, operating under all the constraints which are an inevitable consequence of that status. I want the British water industry to compete with the French in world markets to obtain a big share of the business that is available, and I am absolutely confident that when the industry is in the private sector that is exactly what it will achieve.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) described the effect of amendment No. 148 which stands in his name and the names of a number of my hon. Friends. We debated it in Committee and it proved to be one of the most interesting debates of our entire proceedings. As I explained to my hon. Friend, we are still looking carefully at the evidence. We have been provided with a good deal of information which needs careful examination and I am afraid that I cannot yet announce the outcome of our study of these matters. My hon. Friend knows that I have some sympathy with the points that he makes, but I hope that he will understand that I cannot go further tonight.

Sir Giles Shaw: I fully understand my hon. and learned Friend's position. Is it still his intention to resolve this issue during the passage of the Bill, even if in another place?

Mr. Howard: If it can be so resolved, I should be very happy to resolve it in that time scale.

Government amendments Nos. 94, 95, 141 and 142 arise out of a commitment given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary in Committee to consider the possibility of deleting the references to commercial interests in clause 161, which requires the Secretary of State to lay directions made before Parliament, unless to

[Mr. Howard]

do so would prejudice national security. We have looked very carefully at the effect of the clause since our discussion in Committee, are satisfied that the references to commercial interests serve no useful purpose and have introduced amendments to give effect to that conclusion.

Government amendment No. 25 provides for customer service committees to have a duty to keep under review all matters affecting the interests of customers and to make representations as well as to consult the companies allocated to them about such matters. It follows an undertaking given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) in Committee, who asked for clarification of this point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West also spoke to her amendment No. 96, the purpose of which is to provide for public access to meetings of customer service committees. We have carefully considered the matter and I am delighted to say that we have come to the conclusion that amendment No. 96, should be accepted.

Opposition amendments Nos. 122 and 123 deal with drinking water. The Bill establishes a comprehensive, new system for regulating and safeguarding the quality of drinking water. It represents the greatest legislative advance on this subject that we have ever seen.

The proposals in the Bill fully incorporate the provisions in the European Community's drinking water directive and go beyond it in a number of important instances. This will be the first time that drinking water quality standards have been laid down directly in United Kingdom law.

Mr. Allan Roberts: In the light of recent revelations that pesticides in the food chain are not easily identified, is the Minister still seeking, as he said he was in Committee, a lowering of the EC standard on pesticides in drinking water?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well —he has had it explained to him many times—that all we want is a pesticide directive that is based on proper scientific standards. The present directive is not. We think that some standards should be higher and some should be lower than they are now.

Quite apart from the standards, we are specifying minimum sampling frequencies far higher than those in the European Community directive. Our regulations will specify monitoring frequencies for such substances as aluminium, iron and manganese which are at least four times higher than those in the directive. We are also specifying minimum treatment requirements which go beyond those in the Community directive.

To make sure that the companies are kept up to the mark, we are establishing a drinking water quality inspectorate with full powers to carry out thorough and technical audits of the companies' records and procedures. If a company fails to implement an inspector's recommendations, the Secretary of State will be able to make regulations requiring it to do so.

There is a new duty on companies to ensure no deterioration in the quality of their supplies, and there is a new criminal offence of supplying water that is unfit for human consumption. It is punishable by fines or imprisonment.

In Committee, the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) wrongly alleged that the regulations would make it more difficult to monitor samples and obtain information. The truth is exactly the opposite. Information on water quality would have to be made available to the public in a manner that makes it absolutely clear whether supplies comply with standards, and, if they do not, what is being done about that. These information requirements are far more comprehensive than those proposed or enforced anywhere else in Europe.

Dr. Cunningham: Why is it that only the Secretary of State can initiate prosecutions in connection with the matter to which the Minister has just referred? Given the many months of inactivity by the Secretary of State in connection with the Lowermoor incident, in which 22,000 people—possibly more—were poisoned by their domestic water supply, what confidence can the British people have that the Secretary of State will take whatever action is necessary?

Mr. Howard: Since, as I have said, the offence to which I have referred is a new offence which is not on the statute book, I do not understand the relevance of the hon. Gentleman's reference to Lowermoor. He is wrong even in the terms of his own question. It is not only the Secretary of State who can prosecute for this criminal offence——

Dr. Cunningham: Or the Director of Public Prosecutions, which comes to the same thing.

Mr. Howard: But that is an extremely important safeguard—the power is not confined to the Secretary of State. The DPP can also prosecute under this new criminal provision.

Against this background, what do the Opposition propose? They have tabled two amendments which would require water companies to meet quality standards determined by the European Community, but not necessarily those specified in a Community directive. In other words, the requirements that will apply to drinking water in this country could be determined administratively at any time by Community bodies such as the Commission or even the European Parliament. So the Opposition would remove responsibility for water quality entirely from the United Kingdom Government and place it with officials in Brussels. I do not know whether this is to be the model for some of the other rethinking of Opposition policy about which we hear so much these days, but I cannot believe that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is serious about these amendments or has begun to think through their implications.

The true colour of the Opposition's approach to these matters and the extent to which they care for the customer is to be seen in amendments Nos. 128 and 131, which would strengthen the position of local authorities in carrying out sewage work as agents for the sewerage undertakers. The Opposition cling to the view, in the face of all the evidence, that local authorities are the most efficient, the most economical and the best way of achieving the best possible results in the best of all possible worlds. Policy rethinks may come and go, but the slavish

devotion of the Opposition to the local authorities which they control, and to the trade unions that control those local authorities, goes on for ever.

Amendment No. 1 would delete the whole of part II. We have waited in vain throughout this long debate for any explanation of how consumers would benefit from the amendment. Part II provides that European Community drinking water standards should be incorporated in regulations—in other words, directly incorporated into British law for the first time. What objection can Opposition Members have to that?

Part II makes it a criminal offence, for the first time, to supply water that is unfit for human consumption. Why do the Opposition want to remove that from the Bill? Part II provides for information on water quality to be published in a way that will make it absolutely clear whether water supplies comply with the standards set out in Government regulations and, if not, what the company concerned is doing about it. Why do Opposition Members wish to deny the public that information?

Part II proposes a new drinking water quality inspectorate with full and unprecedented powers to go in and carry out thorough technical audits of records, actions and procedures. Why are the Opposition opposed to that? Part II proposes a new and rigorous enforcement regime enabling the Secretary of State to specify action to be taken to remedy breaches of drinking water and other statutory requirements, a clear and open process under the scrutiny of the courts. If any Secretary of State unreasonably failed to take action where it was justified, he would himself be vulnerable to judicial review. Why do the Opposition want to remove those arrangements, which would safeguard the quality of our drinking water?

What about the powers of the director general to set prices and the customer service committees and guaranteed standards schemes and automatic refund payments? All those are contained in part II of the Bill. The Opposition's amendment would sweep away all these protections and safeguards for the consumer and we have absolutely no idea of what, if anything, they would put in their place.

Mr. Wigley: The Minister referred to the powers of the director general with regard to prices. Do the Government stick by their line that privatisation, as set out in part II, will reduce water prices in Wales by 25 per cent.?

Mr. Howard: That does not come from the Government. That report refers to the capital restructuring which will no doubt take place in the Welsh water authority, in common with other water authorities, when it is transferred to the private sector. The hon. Gentleman is well aware of that.

By aiming to remove all those protections for the customer, consumer and the citizen, the Opposition are being utterly consistent. Their record on these matters when they were in government was lamentable.

The hon. Member for Copeland used as the centrepiece of his speech the importance of having a coherent, well-planned strategic approach which, he said, we could have only in the public sector. Let us examine the extent to which the hon. Gentleman, as a member of the last Labour Government, was party to such a coherent, well-planned strategic approach to these matters. Let us consider bathing waters.

In 1975, the European Community adopted the bathing waters directive which laid down standards and required member countries to designate bathing waters which would be required to meet those standards within two years. Four years later, the Labour Government left office and not a single bathing water had been designated between 1975 and 1979. That is the coherent, well-planned strategic approach to the industry in the public sector which the hon. Member for Copeland commended.

Where was the hon. Member for Copeland at the time? He was a member of that Government and shared collective responsibility for their actions. The Labour Government had only two years to designate a bathing water, and the hon. Member for Copeland was a member of that Government, but they did not designate one during that time. What did he do about it? What did he say? Where was he?

What about the Control of Pollution Act 1974 which was placed on the statute book by the Labour Government? They inherited that from their predecessors. It looked good on the statute book, but part II dealing with river pollution was not brought into force throughout that Labour Government's term of office.

Totally inadequate and ineffectual regulation was carried out behind closed doors. There was no right of public involvement in decisions on consents to discharge into rivers and no right of private prosecution of polluters. The Labour Government had no idea of the performance of water authority sewage treatment works and they did not even bother to find out. Where was the hon. Member for Copeland? What did he do? What did he say? Where was the coherent, well-planned, strategic approach that one is supposed to find only in the public sector? We all know about the cuts in investment, about river pollution, and about enforcement being left in the hands of the water authorities.

9.45 pm

It is this Government who are tackling the task of cleaning up our water environment. We have embarked on the most comprehensive programme to clean up rivers in our country's history. We are introducing an open system of effective regulation where there was none. We are giving the public the right to be involved in decisions on consents to discharge where there was none. We are the Government who have introduced a system of sewage works discharge consents, and performance standards against which they can be measured, where there was none, and we have opened the whole thing up for public inspection.

We are the Government who have given the public the right to prosecute polluters, and we are introducing for the first time the new criminal offence of supplying drinking water that is unfit for human consumption.

Yesterday, the House debated the National Rivers Authority, which will be at the centrepiece of our new regulatory system. That authority and all the other provisions will count for nothing if we do not transfer the industry to the private sector. That point was made by several of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friends the Members for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant), for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) and for Gainsborough and Horncastle and, in an intevention, by my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter). They all put their finger on it. It is only when the industry is in the private

[Mr. Howard]

sector and has access to private sector resources and is benefiting from all the efficiency of the private sector that we shall see improvements.

The truth is that privatisation alone will ensure that the environmental achievements we all want to see are made as quickly as possible. The Government will set the standards, the regulators will police the standards, and the companies will deliver the standards using private sector resources. That is the way we shall get fresher rivers, cleaner bathing waters and purer drinking water. That is why the Opposition's amendments are wholly misconceived, and that is why our proposals deserve the wholehearted support of the House.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The hon. and learned Gentleman is becoming a caricature of a Minister under threat. I am not surprised that, except in the closing minutes of his speech, he spent all his time on the minutiae of the Bill and did not address the major issues of principle. We are opposed in principle to the privatisation of water. That is why we have proposed an amendment to exclude part II of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) is quoted in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* for 3 March 1989 as commenting:

> "Water is a natural commodity which cannot be commercially and competitively produced. Rainfall is not an area of entrepreneurial activity."

I notice that the hon. Lady is not in her place, but she is one Conservative Member who has got it right.

The Government are in a mess. The Bill has been badly presented. It is badly drafted and ill-conceived. The Government are finding that it is unpopular throughout the country. What do they do? They summon up the cavalry to charge to their assistance, ten good men and true—the chairmen of the water authorities, members of the Water Authorities Association—and an independent group if ever there was one. Surprise, surprise—10 supporters of the Conservative party, all appointed by Conservative Secretaries of State, think that privatisation is a good thing. I am not surprised. We know what will happen to the salaries of the directors of water authorities after privatisation. The top executive remuneration in British Airways before privatisation in 1979 was £45,000 at 1988 prices. In 1988 it was £253,000. In 1979 the remuneration of top executives at British Gas was £49,000 at 1988 prices. In 1988 it was £184,000. It has happened in every other privatised industry, so it will happen in the water industry. I am not surprised that the chairmen are in favour of privatisation and gallop to the assistance of a Government in a mess.

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House about the increase in profitability and efficiency of the industries that he has just been knocking?

Mr. Roberts: My electorate in Bootle are not too keen on a privatised British Telecom because they are never put through to the right number and they cannot find a call box that works.

Leaving aside the chairmen of the water authorities, there is great concern among Conservative Back Benchers. The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) galloped to the rescue of the Government and we have heard speeches from other Conservative Members along the same lines of the proposals advocated by the right hon. Member for Henley in yesterday's debate. The right hon. Member for Henley was Secretary of State for the Environment in 1987-88, but he has suddenly discovered the answer to the Government's difficulties. There will be massive increases in water charges to pay for environmental improvements in future. The consumer will have to pay. The right hon. Member for Henley and other Conservative Members have decided that it would be better if those improvements were paid for out of public expenditure, but they have not said that. They have said that the Government should sell the water authorities to the private water companies and then give back the proceeds of the sale to the private companies to spend on environmental improvements.

The right hon. Member for Henley should examine his own record. At 1987-88 prices, using GDP deflators, £1,062 million was spent in water authority capital expenditure in 1979-80. In 1980-81, under the right hon. Member for Henley, the figure was £1,026 million, and in 1981-82 was £938 million. There was a massive cut in water authority capital expenditure while the right hon. Gentleman was Secretary of State for the Environment. However, he tends to have conversions on the road to Conservative party leadership elections.

I must deal with some of the myths that the Government are creating in their attempt to justify the outrageous proposal to sell off our water assets. There is the myth that only privatisation can provide the capital expenditure to carry out all the necessary work. It will cost £3 billion to implement the EEC directive on drinking water and £1·6 billion to deal with sewage discharges above consent level. It will cost £1·3 billion to implement water metering, and the Secretary of State talks about a cost of £600 million to clean up our bathing beaches—and that is just the ones that he has identified. There will be the additional costs of dividends, profits for the shareholders and the servicing of shareholders which are not paid when the industry is in the public sector. There will be flotation and advertising costs, and the directors' fees which, as I have pointed out, will be grossly inflated. Consumers will have to pay corporation tax which is not paid by the public sector industry. All those expenses will have to be paid in addition to the capital expenditure required to clean up our rivers.

What investor seeking a return on capital would buy responsibility for the capital expenditure required to clean up the Mersey and all the other rivers in this country? No one in his right mind will buy into that responsibility if there is no return and no profit to be made from the proposals. The Government say that there will be private capital and that they will release the publicly-owned water industry from the public sector borrowing requirement. Why can they not release the publicly-owned water industry from the public sector borrowing requirement? It would be borrowing the same money from the same source, and for the same purpose—to improve quality and for capital expenditure.

The Government say that the consumer must pay, not the taxpayer or the polluter. Under their proposals, environmental considerations will come second to profit. That is why we seek to delete part II of the Bill. Clause 6 sets out general requirements to achieve profitability, economy, efficiency and return on capital. Clause 7, which relates to general environmental responsibilities, is a secondary consideration and is subject to clause 6. We want to delete part II because prices will rise if it is

implemented, partly because of environmental improvements but also as a consequence of privatisation and the costs that I have outlined.

We want a proper National Rivers Authority to be given wide-ranging powers over the water undertakers. The attraction for water undertakers and possible investors would fall if that happened and the price that the Government hope to realise thrqugh the flotation would be low. The Government are in a flotation dilemma. If the legislation gave the National Rivers Authority power to enforce environmental standards, and if the Director General of Water Services had sufficient power to control prices adequately, no one would buy shares in the flotation. The Government know that if EEC directives on the quality of drinking water had been written into the Bill, as we proposed in Committee, everyone would be deterred from buying shares in the privatised water companies.

Lord Crickhowell, who is chairman of the National Rivers Authority advisory committee and will be chairman of the National Rivers Authority—another independent individual appointed by the Government—is on record as saying:

"I think I should make it absolutely clear that I see it as one of the priority objectives of the new National Rivers Authority to operate a slim, efficient, cost conscious organisation."

That cost-conscious organisation will have inadequate resources to enforce necessary environmental standards and will sub-contract many of its responsibilities to the private water companies, establishing the gamekeeper and poacher as the same body.

The Opposition and the public are offended by the callous disregard shown by the Secretary of State and Conservative Members for those in the greatest need, introducing a regime which will cut off people's water if they have difficulty paying bills without regard to the public health of the nation. If people's electricity is cut off, it is bad for them and their families. If their water is cut off, it is not just bad for them and their families—it is a public health hazard and it is bad for the whole community. The Government fail to realise that. */Interruption./* It is obvious that the Secretary of State has not been drinking much water with his dinner.

The issue of principle for which we are arguing would keep this essential public asset in public ownership. The next Labour Government will take the water industry back into social ownership——

Sir Anthony Grant *rose——*

Mr. Roberts: —that is, if the Conservatives ever succeed in floating it in the first place.

I refer finally to the Prime Minister's statement at the weekend:

"Bag it and bin it and then we will win it."

She must have been taking lessons from Dan Quayle, but Mrs. Thatcher is no Dan Quayle. The only way out for the Government and their bankrupt policy for the water industry is to take the Water Bill and bag it and bin it. That is their only hope.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 199, Noes 300.

Division No. 132] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted

Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Travor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian

Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 10

APPOINTMENT OF UNDERTAKERS

Amendment proposed: No. 102, in page 9, line 36, after 'Chapter', insert

'and provided that no reference to the Monopolies Commission made in accordance with section 28(2)(b) in respect of that company is outstanding.'.—*[Mr. Nicholas Winterton.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 198, Noes 296.

Division No. 133] **[10.16 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Robert N. Wareing.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher

Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after half-past Ten o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [6 February] and the resolution yesterday, to put forthwith the Questions on amendments moved by a member of the Government up to the end of clause 98.*

Clause 19

ORDERS FOR SECURING COMPLIANCE WITH CERTAIN PROVISIONS

Amendment made: No. 141, in page 21, line 38, leave out 'or the commercial interests of any person'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 20

PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

Amendment made: No. 142, in page 24, line 26, leave out 'or the commercial interests of any person'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 26

PROTECTION OF CUSTOMER INTERESTS

Amendment made: No. 29, in page 29, line 2, leave out paragraph (a) and insert—

'(a) to keep under review all matters appearing to the committee to affect the interests of the persons who are customers or potential customers of the companies allocated to the committee, to consult each company so allocated about such of those matters as appear to affect the interests of the customers or potential customers of that company and to make to a company so allocated all such representations about any such matter as the committee considers appropriate; '.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 33

PUBLICATION OF INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Amendments made: No. 31, in page 37, line 32, at beginning insert—

'( ) The Secretary of State may arrange for the publication, in such form and in such manner as he considers appropriate, of such information relating to any matter which is connected with the carrying out by a company holding an appointment under this Chapter of the functions of a water undertaker or sewerage undertaker as it may appear to him to be in the public interest to publish.'.

No. 32, in page 37, line 38, at beginning insert 'the Secretary of State or'.

No. 33, in page 37, line 41, at end insert

'Secretary of State or (as the case may be) of the'.

No. 34, in page 37, line 46, at end insert

'Secretary of State or (as the case may be) of the'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 40

FINANCIAL CONDITIONS FOR WATER MAIN ACQUISITION

Amendments made: No. 15, in page 43, line 24, leave out from 'by' to end of line 27 and insert

'the annual borrowing costs of a loan of the amount required for the provision of that main.

(3A) The annual borrowing costs of a loan of the amount required for the provision of a water main is the aggregate amount which would fall to be paid in any year by way of payments of interest and repayments of capital if an amount equal to so much of the costs reasonably incurred in providing that main as were not incurred in the provision of additional capacity had been borrowed, by the water undertaker providing the main, on terms—

(a) requiring interest to be paid and capital to be repaid in twelve equal annual instalments; and

(b) providing for the amount of the interest to be calculated at such rate, and in accordance with such other provision, as may have been determined either by the undertaker with the approval of the Director or, in default of such a determination, by the Director.'.

No. 16, in page 44, line 11, leave out subsection (7) and insert—

'(6A) Where for the purposes of subsection (1)(b) above any sums have been deposited with a water undertaker by way of security for the discharge of any obligation, the undertaker shall pay interest at such rate as may be determined either—

(a) by the undertaker with the approval of the Director; or

(b) in default of a determination under paragraph (a) above, by the Director,

on every sum of 50p so deposited for every three months during which it remains in the hands of the undertaker.

(7) An approval or determination given or made by the Director for the purposes of subsection (3A) or (6A) above—

(a) may be given or made in relation to the provision of a particular water main, in relation to the provision of mains of a particular description or in relation to the provision of water mains generally; and

(b) may be revoked at any time except, in the case of an approval or direction for the purposes of subsection (3A) above, in relation to a water main that has already been provided.'.

No. 17, in page 44, line 24, leave out subsection (9).—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 42

CONDITIONS OF CONNECTION TO WATER MAIN

Amendment made: No. 18, in page 47, line 6, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

'(3) Where for the purposes of subsection (1)(a) above any sums have been deposited with a water undertaker by way of security for the discharge of any obligation, the undertaker shall pay interest at such rate as may be determined either—

(a) by the undertaker with the approval of the Director; or

(b) in default of a determination under paragraph (a) above, by the Director;

on every sum of 50p so deposited for every three months during which it remains in the hands of the undertaker; and an approval or determination by the Director for the purposes of this subsection may be given or made in relation to a particular case or description of cases or generally and may be revoked at any time.'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 70

FINANCIAL CONDITIONS OF SEWER REQUISITION

Amendment made: No. 19, in page 80, line 37, leave out from 'by' to end of line 40 and insert

'the annual borrowing costs of a loan of the amount required for the provision of that sewer.

(3A) The annual borrowing costs of a loan of the amount required for the provision of a public sewer is the aggregate amount which would fall to be paid in any year by way of payments of interest and repayments of capital if an amount equal to so much of the costs reasonably incurred in providing that sewer as were not incurred in the provision of additional capacity had been borrowed, by the sewerage undertaker providing the sewer, on terms—

(a) requiring interest to be paid and capital to be repaid in twelve equal annual instalments; and

(b) providing for the amount of the interest to be calculated at such rate, and in accordance with such other provision, as may have been determined either

by the undertaker with the approval of the Director or, in default of such a determination, by the Director.'.

No. 20, in page 81, line 33, clause 70, leave out subsection (7) and insert—

'(6A) Where for the purposes of subsection (1)(b) above any sums have been deposited with a sewerage undertaker by way of security for the discharge of any obligation, the undertaker shall pay interest at such rate as may be determined either—'

(a) by the undertaker with the approval of the Director; or

(b) in default of a determination under paragraph (a) above, by the Director,

on every sum of 50p so deposited for every three months during which it remains in the hands of the undertaker.

(7) An approval or determination given or made by the Director for the purposes of subsection (3A) or (6A) above—

(a) may be given or made in relation to the provision of a particular public sewer, in relation to the provision of sewers of a particular description or in relation to the provision of sewers generally; and

(b) may be revoked at any time except, in the case of an approval or direction for the purposes of subsection (3A) above, in relation to a public sewer that has already been provided.'.

No. 21, in page 81, line 46, leave out subsection (9). —*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 71

PERFORMANCE OF SEWERAGE FUNCTIONS BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES ETC.

Amendment made: No. 63, in page 82, line 3, leave out from 'out' to end of line 6 and insert

'sewerage functions on that undertaker's behalf in relation to such area comprising the whole or any part of that authority's relevant area, together (where that authority are a local authority or an urban development corporation and the arrangements so provide) with parts of any adjacent relevant areas of other relevant authorities, as may be specified in the arrangements.'—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 86

RESPONSIBILITY FOR LISTING PARTICULARS OF NOMINATED HOLDING COMPANIES

Amendment made: No. 43, in page 94, leave out lines 17 to 34 and insert—

'.—(1) Where—

(a) the same document contains listing particulars for securities of two or more nominated holding companies; and

(b) any person's responsibility for any information included in the document is stated in the document to be confined to its inclusion as part of the listing particulars for securities of any one of those companies,

that person shall not be treated as responsible for that information in so far as it is stated in the document to form part of the listing particulars for securities of any other of those companies.

(2) Sections 150 and 154 of the 1986 Act (advertisements etc. in connection with listing applications) shall have effect in relation to any information issued for purposes connected with any securities of a nominated holding company as if any reference to a person's incurring civil liability included a reference to any other person being entitled, as against that person, to be granted a civil remedy or to rescind or repudiate any contract.'.

No. 44, in page 94, line 36, leave out 'and'.

No. 45, in page 94, leave out lines 39 to 42 and insert

'"responsible" means responsible for the purposes of Part IV of the 1986 Act and "responsibility" shall be construed accordingly.'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 91

TAX PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 46, in page 98, line 10, after '(1)', insert

'The Secretary of State may, for the purposes of section 2 of the Capital Allowances Act 1968 (writing-down allowance), by order make provision specifying—

(a) the amount to be taken for the purposes of subsection (3) of that section as the residue on the transfer date of any expenditure in relation to which any property vested in a successor company in accordance with a scheme under Schedule 2 to this Act is a relevant interest for the purposes of that section; and

(b) the part of the period mentioned in subsection (3) of that section which is to be treated, in relation to any such property, as unexpired on that date.

(1A)'.

No. 47, in page 98, line 17, leave out from 'of' to 'had' in line 18 and insert

'such amount as may be specified for the purposes of this subsection in an order made by the Secretary of State'.

No. 48, in page 98, line 20, at end insert—

'(1B) The Secretary of State shall not make an order under subsection (1) or (1A) above in relation to any property of a successor company except with the consent of the Treasury and at a time when the company is wholly owned by the Crown; and the power to make such an order shall be exercisable by statutory instrument and shall include power to make different provision for different cases, including different provision in relation to different property or descriptions of property.'.—*[Mr. Howarth.]*

Clause 104

AUTHORITY FOR DISCHARGES AND OTHER DEFENCES FOR THE PURPOSES OF SECTION 103

Mr. Boswell: I beg to move amendment No. 98, in page 111, leave out line 47.

After the excitement of a few moments ago, I feel myself rather in the position of the dustcart after the Lord Mayor's show, though it would be indelicate if I were to speculate on which particular speeches require sweeping up. However, it is perhaps appropriate to start with that analogy because we now come to the parts of the Bill that are directed towards the control of pollution. This is an area in which hon. Members on both sides of the House have taken a keen interest. We are all anxious to ensure that standards are maintained and, wherever possible, raised.

The amendment would change slightly the existing provisions of the Control of Pollution Act, which, as the House will know, are reflected in the Bill. It is right and proper for me to acknowledge, though I do so with some regret, that there must be provision—as there is—for valid defences for causing pollution, provided that permission is very tightly controlled. Clearly, that applies to discharges in accordance with a consent issued by the National Rivers Authority or, in the case of this specific provision, to derogations from the penalties where there is an emergency, in order to avoid other dangers to the public. Perhaps I should say, en passant, that I am very pleased with Government amendment No. 64, which will further confine what might be called the emergency excuse.

It is right to provide for eventualities and to provide that these discharges follow the requirements of the National Rivers Authority. It is also right that there should be clarity for operators who discharge within consents and that they may do so without fear of prosecution. But, equally, I think that it will be agreed by all that there should be no easy loopholes—certainly no avoidable loopholes—in the legislation. There should be no way in which those who might pollute our rivers may do so with impunity.

Hon. Members—certainly those who served on the Standing Committee—will recall some of the debate on this clause. I am grateful for the opportunity to return to that debate, not least because the Government undertook to reflect on the very serious points that were made then. It should be remembered that the basis of clause 104 is no more than a continuation of the current law.

The defence is already available under the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Nevertheless, real problems have been drawn to my attention by the water authorities and I believe that it is right to ventilate them further. The amendment refers to waste disposal sites. Elsewhere in the clause there are references to mines and ships, but I shall confine my remarks to the issue of disposal licences. It should be made clear that where an operator wishes to obtain a site for a tip for disposal, his licence comes from the local authority, not from the water authority. I welcome the provision for the local authority to consult the water authority on such an application, which will carry forward into the new arrangements after privatisation.

Once the operator has obtained the disposal licence from the local authority, he can set up his waste disposal site. The House will be well aware of the problems that some sites cause. We are all aware of the recent report by the Select Committee on the Environment and of the articles in *The Times* this month. It is the experience of the water authorities that have contacted me that there are frequent examples of watercourses being directly polluted as a result of the seepage of toxic materials in leaching from such sites.

The Anglian water authority has drawn my attention specifically to three such recent incidents in its area—one at Rushton, which is in the county but not the constituency that I represent. Others are cropping up all the time. Such pollution incidents damage fisheries and damage or threaten the public water supply because this pollution is, as it were, unplanned for, is sometimes not easy to detect quickly and can be insidious. It is right to draw the House's attention to the fact that under clause 53 the water undertakers themselves will, for the first time, be guilty of a criminal offence if they supply unfit water for human consumption. Therefore, they, too, will have a close interest in avoiding the sort of pollution to which I am referring.

The House will certainly be aware that the problems with the sites arise mainly from the lack of proper provision and the lack of effective supervision of after-care arrangements by the disposal operators, especially where the site has been closed. It would be wrong in principle if such operators were also to have a special cast-iron defence because of their possession of a disposal licence, which is what the amendment seeks to strike out. As I have said, there are similar concerns over vessels and abandoned mines. These are real issues that worry hon. Members of all parties.

The water authorities have enough to do in trying to protect our rivers without this extra burden on them. Only last week I was given to understand that the Anglian water authority, which covers the greater part of my constituency, was faced with a major pollution incident in Suffolk. Pig slurry had gone into the river, affecting 30 miles, and killing thousands of fish. Tragically it was in a river that the authority had only recently restocked. No doubt there will be proceedings against the farmer involved, but I gather that that farmer has already been prosecuted four times. The water authority suggested that, when dealing with the overall issue of pollution, it might be wise to consider a provision for an injunction procedure as opposed simply to dealing with incidents on an ad hoc basis through prosecution.

In moving the amendment I put down a marker of continuing concern. I know that the Minister has expressed his own anxiety about these problems. I hope that he will note my suggestion, listen to the debate and, I hope, return with something before the final proceedings on the Bill.

Mr. Boateng: The hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) is, in more ways than one, the carthorse that comes along after the Lord Mayor's show. Not only does the hon. Gentleman follow through today's proceedings and the major debate that we had on previous amendments, but he picks up, in identical terms, the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), which I moved in Committee.

This is a modest little amendment. Committee members may remember that we proposed it in a spirit of good will—there was not much acrimony or argument between the parties, although such days did exist. To give Jack his jacket, the Minister responded in kind, which is why we look forward to hearing from him what positive steps he plans to take, having had time for mature reflection.

This is an important little amendment because it seeks to overcome a gap in the existing law and the fact that the present site regulations on waste disposal are seriously defective. The amendment says that there should be no exception from prosecution if the discharge of polluting waters takes place from the site where a disposal licence has been given under section 5 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. It is as simple as that, and is not—as was rather uncharitably suggested by the Minister before he fully appreciated the purport of the amendment—a duplication of controls. The amendment does not require the water authorities' controls to be applied through both the waste disposal licence and the discharge consent. He was concerned about that and said that he was not persuaded that anything was to be gained from such duplication. Nothing would be gained, which is precisely why the amendment does not propose such duplication.

The amendment merely says that there should be no automatic exemption where leachates discharge to land or percolate through surrounding rock strata and pollute the water supply. In such a case the prevention of pollution is clearly intended to be covered by the waste disposal licence. There does not appear to be any undue difficulty in stating that an offence could still occur in such circumstances, when, because of the gap in the existing laws—due to the withdrawal by the Local Government, Planning and Land (No. 2) Act 1980 of the powers to issue

[Mr. Boateng]

regulations under section 6 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974—it is possible for abuse to take place and for the public to be without proper remedy. That has happened.

The result of the unintended gap in the law is that a waste disposal authority can bring criminal proceedings against a discharger of pollutant only if waste has been deposited when the pollution is taking place. The chance of a waste disposal officer happening to visit the site just as this was occurring, who was able to give evidence that, as the waste was deposited the leachates or overflow was occurring, is—as you, Madam Deputy Speaker, could imagine, if you were to apply your mind to such an unpleasant course of events—unlikely to result in many successful prosecutions.

We are told that the reason for the gap between the Committee and Report stages is to allow the Minister time to reflect and to consult his advisers. I notice that not many papers have been passed to the Minister during the speech of the hon. Member for Daventry or during my speech. I see the Minister pointing to his head: that is only small consolation. I do not want to be offensive to the Minister, but we can take only small satisfaction from his gesturing to the size of his cerebral matter. In any event, I hope that the absence of passed notes denotes that the amendment is wholly acceptable and in the public interest.

10.45 pm

Unanimity has broken out in the House, as it did in Committee. We hope the Minister will respond in the spirit that has caused that unanimity to break out.

We want to give the Minister a warning. When we moved the amendment in Committee, we wanted to give him a lifeline. He was getting himself into hot water at the time—scalded is the word that springs to mind. He is not unaccustomed to that, but we wanted to give him a way out. We wanted him to be able to show that he was, after all, the consumers' friend, a man genuinely concerned about the environment. So we offered him this simple, easy little amendment in a spirit of helpfulness. In Committee, he put his hand halfway out; we should like him to stretch it right out tonight.

The Minister should bear in mind the warning given by the Earl of Rosebery all those years ago at the time of the formation of the London county council. It concerned the significance of water in the affairs of our nation.

"Water",

he said,

"is one of those points which have wrecked a powerful government before now and may wreck governments again."

The Minister should keep that in the forefront of his mind when considering his response to this little debate, and seek to salvage something from the wreckage.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I brought a particular problem to the Minister's attention in Committee. We bottled the problem, to show what it was about. This amendment would deal with that problem in the future, although we can do nothing about the past.

The Minister promised to discuss with other Departments how to deal with this problem from the past. I refer to discharges from closed collieries. Yesterday we discussed the restructuring of the mining industry in Committee. When the Government talk about restructuring, they mean more closures. It is imperative that we deal with the problem now at its source. I want to ask the Minister about the discharges from Bullhouse colliery. The Minister promised that he would discuss ways of dealing with that problem with the Department of the Environment.

We must recognise the extent of the Government's powers as a result of their majority in this House, but we should also recognise the power of the public who are speaking out openly against the Bill. If the Bill becomes an Act, the chances of the River Don being cleaned by British Coal or the NRA would be remote.

I spoke to Gordon Jones, the chairman of Yorkshire Water, and three of his four directors at 5 pm today. I was tied up in the Chamber for a while, but he told me that simply to clean the river to comply with EC standards on drinking water would cost £140 million. That gives us some idea of the massive task facing a privatised Yorkshire Water. There will be little room for financial manoeuvre to clean up the river. The river can be cleaned. I have examined the minutes of meetings held by South Yorkshire county council to discuss the problem. It admitted that it would be a costly process. It would cost about £300,000 to be effective and would require running costs of around £130,000 a year.

That may seem a lot of money to clear that stretch of the river, but correspondence from a constituent of mine, Mr. S. N. Crofts, puts the matter into perspective. Mr. Crofts, who has been following our proceedings very carefully, wrote to me on 9 January expessing his concerns about the Bill. In his latest letter he says that he has not written since then because all kinds of things have been happening in the House, which is true in many respects. Mr. Crofts brings to my attention a list of companies which are regularly, under licence, discharging toxic waste into the River Don. That pollution is in addition to the discharges from Bullhouse colliery.

I am glad that Mr. Crofts has written to me. I will be visiting him because he has kept records since 1985 and has produced graphs which show clearly where and when the pollution occurs. That information would be very useful. He also provides the Yorkshire water authority with information about the river. As the secretary of the Salmon and Trout Association in south Yorkshire, he has a strong vested interest in the quality of the water. In his most recent letter, Mr. Crofts points out clearly what could happen if the river was cleaned up:

"where industry or mine water does not affect the river and where trout and grayling abound along with kingfishers, dippers, moorhens and herons along with all the waterside plants when clean unpolluted water is available."

Amendment No. 98 would help to affect the river waters and improve the condition described by Mr. Crofts. This is a small amendment and it would reflect well on the Government if they would accept it. It would show that they are sincere in their views about the cleanliness of river water. I had hoped that the Minister would rise to accept the amendment because we had won through. If the Government will not accept the amendment, I hope that the Minister will provide an explanation. I hope that he will also explain what progress is being made with other Departments in relation to cleansing the River Don of the discharges to which I have referred.

Ms. Walley: I look forward to hearing whether the Minister has any assurances to give following our earlier discussions—which he has now had an opportunity fully

to consider—particularly as the amendment is in the name of his hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell).

If polluted discharges occur at a site where there is a disposal licence granted under section 5 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, there should be no exceptions to prosecution. We acknowledge, as I trust the Minister does, the genuine concern that exists among the public that there should be integrated pollution control. The amendment addresses a loophole in the 1974 Act. If no opportunity is offered by the Bill to close it in respect of disposal sites and licences, there is a real risk that any future legislation resulting from the current consultation paper on waste disposal will, far from being integrated, be likely to go off at an even greater tangent. Existing legislation must be tightened up, and that tightening up should be reflected in the Bill also.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) drew attention to the anxieties of those living in the vicinity of waste disposal sites, who are acutely aware of the problems that pollution creates. My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) argued that the amendment is wholly acceptable and in the public interest. I urge the Minister to recognise that the Government's credibility, in claiming to be an Administration concerned about pollution control, is at stake.

Mr. Moynihan: The debate has been helpful, not least in respect of the poetic contribution of the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) who, in characteristic style, sought to ensure that I extend my arm further towards the arguments made by both sides of the House and accept the amendment. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that my arm, which is already half extended, is moving rapidly towards the three quarter mark. I say that, because the points made by hon. Members were important and relevant, and because I recognise the water authorities' concern that existing arrangements are not operating satisfactorily. That point was made also in Committee.

The only reason why I hold back from fully extending my arm is to be found in the remarks of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley). My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) made the House aware that the Environment Committee has just published its report on toxic wastes, which deals with waste disposal sites and has an obvious bearing on the subject. We have not yet finished studying that report. Moreover, in the context of proposals for integrated pollution control, consideration is still being given to the overall regulation of waste disposal sites and to the links between land and water pollution.

We are still carefully considering the implications of policies affecting the issues that are the subject of the amendment. However, I assure the House that we are keen to ensure the best practical protection of water quality from pollution by waste disposal and landfill sites. If further strengthening is possible in the context of the Bill, we shall pursue it.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) raised an important point about discharges from collieries, particularly the Bullhouse colliery. I had the good fortune to discuss the matter with him, and I mentioned that I would provide him with comprehensive answers and additional information about the grants we were discussing in Committee. I shall hurry that along in view of his wish to pursue that constituency matter. I assure him that I will get back to him as soon as I possibly can.

11 pm

Mr. Boswell: As the Minister has extended his arm three quarters of the way to meet the issues that we have raised, I am prepared to wait one quarter longer for his final decision, in the confident hope that it will be a positive decision taken before the end of the passage of the Bill. In that spirit, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Moynihan: I beg to move amendment No. 64, in page 112, line 9, after 'public', insert—

'( ) that person takes all such steps as are reasonably practicable in the circumstances for minimising the extent of the entry or discharge and of its polluting effects;'.

I do so with confidence, because my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) welcomed the amendment when he saw it on the Amendment Paper and I am sure that it will be welcomed by Opposition Members.

Clause 104(2) provides that a person shall have a defence to a charge of polluting rivers and other controlled waters if he can show that the polluting discharge or entry was made in an emergency to avoid danger to the public.

The Government consider that that defence, which reproduces the existing provision in the Control of Pollution Act 1974, should be subject to an important condition. A person should be able to plead such a defence only if he can demonstrate that he has taken all reasonably practicable steps in the circumstances to minimise the discharge and its polluting effect. That is provided in this tightening-up amendment.

Even in the case of an emergency discharge, dischargers should have a clear obligation to do all they can to minimise the effects of their discharges. It will make a further small, but important and useful, contribution to a more effective system of pollution control, and I commend it to the House.

Ms. Walley: There is some concern that amendment No. 64 could be interpreted as a get-out or let-out provision. It is important that the Minister gives us some idea of what he means by "reasonably practicable". How subjective will that assessment be and who will judge whether something is "reasonably practicable"? Is the Minister concerned about whether the general public will consider something to be "reasonably practicable"? Will an action have to be "reasonably practicable" in the view of the water companies or in the opinion of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution which has been grossly under-resourced in terms of staff and so on?

The amendment appears to be highly subjective. The Minister needs to give the House some assurances on where the principle that the polluter pays fits into the amendment. For those reasons we seek further clarification from the Minister as to the purpose of the amendment.

Mr. Boateng: The uncharitable might believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) was being somewhat carping in her response to the Minister who has come to the Chamber at this time of night to move such an amendment. They would be deeply misguided in that view. The points that my hon. Friend

[Mr. Boateng]

raised have to be taken on board, because, sad to say, experience has shown that the water companies, which are to be regulated and controlled, and are subject to the legislation might seek to use the defence that the Minister has provided in the amendment. Those self-same water companies agree with Mr. Keith Court, who is chairman of South West Water. I note that the Minister for Water and Planning is even more languid than usual. One might think that he is the last Minister who can afford to be languid. He flings himself back on the Bench—were the cameras only present—a smile hovering on his lips, with mute resignation playing around those pearly gates.

Mr. Keith Court said:

"High calibre staff will be needed to outwit the regulators of the water industry after privatisation."

Those high-calibre staff will no doubt be paid the high sums mentioned quite properly by my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts).

If high-calibre staff are to be employed to outwit the regulators, it is vital that the question that we have asked is answered. There are circumstances in which a defence such as that provided by the amendment should properly exist. There should be a defence in an emergency, but what is meant by an "emergency"? In what circumstances does the Minister foresee that it would be reasonable for the polluter to draw himself or herself within the ambit of the defence?

That question becomes more important when one reflects on how existing law is administered and applied by the courts. Widespread concern has been expressed by not only Labour Members but Conservative Members about some interpretations of pollution control law, the fines imposed and the latitude that is sometimes extended to the polluter. We hoped for—I am sure that it is a hope shared by all reasonably minded people—the greening of the magistracy so that it might become more vigilant.

That is not an unreasonable hope, but Labour Members are not prepared to rely on hopes, which dominate the thoughts of Conservative Members. They hope that regulation will be effective and that somebody will purchase shares. We are not content to rest on hope; we want some certainty, which the Minister has not provided. When we receive that certainty, he may find that Labour Members are prepared to take a reasoned attitude to the amendment.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) omitted to mention the charity that might be offered by the amendment. That might be a let-out for polluters. I hope that it is not, but if one examines the amendment carefully a number of questions arise.

As the hon. Member for Brent, South rightly said, an emergency has not been accurately defined. Will the words "reasonably practicable" be defined? What steps should be taken when an emergency occurs to prevent it getting out of hand? The word "minimising" could also have various interpretations. One would have thought that "preventing" would have been better than "minimising". I trust that my suspicions will be dispelled by the Minister. I hope that he will be able to convince me that the use of those words is specific and that he can explain their meaning in detail so that we can all be reassured.

Mr. Moynihan: It is in the nature of an emergency that it is impossible accurately to define what it will be. It is absurd for Opposition Members to suggest that the Bill could describe in detail a range of possible emergencies to back up the case. If an accident occurred, for example, at a water treatment plant and chemicals used in the treatment process got into the water, the water plc would have to make a decision as to the most important step to be taken in the light of public health. The company might conclude that the best step to take would be to discharge the affected water into the water course rather than allow it to find its way into the system. The company might not need to make that decision, but it is impossible to predict accurately all the factors that would need to be assessed in an emergency.

As the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) so accurately stated, it is important that proper provision is made for an emergency, but it is rich indeed for the hon. Gentleman—a distinguished lawyer in his own right—to wish to define in greater detail the long-standing defence of "reasonably practicable". *[Interruption.]* There is a certain amount of barracking about whether the hon. Gentleman is a distinguished lawyer—a highly paid lawyer might be a more accurate description.

Mr. Boateng: Get on with it.

Mr. Moynihan: Suffice it to say, in the last two minutes of this debate, that it is for the courts to make the judgment in the light of all the circumstances. That is the key point. We seek to tighten the defence available before the courts by bringing forward amendment No. 64.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 126

GENERAL DROUGHT ORDERS

Amendment made: No. 35, in page 127, leave out lines 16 to 24 and insert—

'(5) The following provisions apply where an order under this section contains a provision authorising a water undertaker to prohibit or limit the use of water, that is to say—

(a) the power may be exercised in relation to consumers generally, a class of consumer or a particular consumer;

(b) the water undertaker shall take such steps as it thinks appropriate for bringing the prohibition or limitation to the attention of the persons to whom the prohibition or limitation will apply and, in particular, shall (as the undertaker thinks appropriate)—

(i) cause notice of the prohibition of limitation to be published in one or more local newspapers circulating within that part of the water undertaker's area which would be affected by the provision of the order; or

(ii) send notice of the prohibition or limitation to the persons to whom the prohibition or limitation will apply;

(c) the prohibition or limitation shall not come into operation until the expiration of the period of seventy-two hours beginning with the day on which the notice is published or, as the case may be, sent to the person in question.'.—*[Mr. Moynihan.]*

Clause 136

FUNCTIONS OF AUTHORITY IN RELATION TO FISHERIES

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I beg to move amendment No. 78, in page 139, line 1, leave out 'advisory'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 79, in page 139, line 1, leave out
'who appear to it to be'.

No. 80, in page 139, line 5, at end insert—
'and to delegate to them such powers and duties as it may from time to time think fit'.

No. 153, in page 139, line 5, at end insert—
'(2) The chairmen of the regional committees shall be appointed by the Minister in consultation with the Authority.'

No. 81, in page 139, line 6, leave out 'advisory'.

No. 82, in page 139, line 9, leave out 'advisory'.

No. 83, in page 139, line 13, leave out 'advisory'.

No. 85, in page 139, line 15, at end, insert—
'(2A) There shall be appointed by the Authority for each area, a Chairman who has an interest in the fisheries within the area and members nominated by riparian owners and anglers representative of rivers and still waters within the area. The number of members appointed shall not exceed twenty and will vary according to the extent of the fisheries within the area'.

No. 84, in page 139, line 17, leave out 'an advisory' and insert 'a'.

11.15 pm

Mr. Onslow: I do not want to delay the House, so I shall be brief as possible. I should first declare an interest. I am a riparian owner, in a small way. I have been a keen fisherman for many years, I have fished in many parts of the British Isles and I sit on a number of bodies that represent anglers collectively such as the Anglers Co-operative Association, the Salmon and Trout Association and the British Field Sports Society. The points that I want to make are not mine alone, but are shared by many anglers. I hope that the Minister will be able to reassure them.

The most important amendment of the group is No. 80. I shall concentrate mainly on that, with a few words about amendments Nos. 153 and 85. The others are purely consequential.

I hope that the House will agree that amendment No. 80 has three things to commend it: it would improve the representation of anglers in fishery matters; it would improve the management of fisheries, and it could, I think, be accepted without damaging a principle that the Government hold dear, which is that the National Rivers Authority should not be undercut by having its powers limited by decision of Parliament. The powers of the NRA will derive from the House, and some hon. Members may feel that it should have more, but my argument will relate to the NRA's use of powers that we know it will have, one of which is the power to levy charges on anglers and owners and occupiers of fisheries through licences or other means.

I invite the Minister to anticipate Government amendment No. 5, which we may or may not get a chance to debate in the later stages of the Bill. He will at least agree that that sets out clearly that the NRA will have considerable powers to levy charges. It does not say how the money is to be spent or who is to spend it, but I am nevertheless attracted by the proposition that those who contribute should have some say in deciding how the money is to be spent. I hope that the Minister will agree that that proposition is basically a democratic one and accept its corollary, which is that they can have such powers only if they are delegated to the regional fisheries committee, on which we hope and believe anglers will be powerfully represented. It is hard to envisage what checks there will be on the NRA's fisheries activities if that does not happen.

While I have no quarrel with the choice of Lord Crickhowell as chairman-designate of the NRA and I am glad to discover that Lord Mason is to be at his elbow —and I know both of them to be keen and experienced anglers—we cannot look forward with confidence to keen and experienced anglers always occupying those positions. We must anticipate circumstances in which it might, more than ever, be necessary for anglers to have more say in the management of their fisheries.

A number of anglers are not as confident as one would wish them to be that all will be well under the proposed NRA structure. Broadly speaking, the anglers support the Bill, for very good reasons. They have always been in the forefront of the fight against pollution, and they regard the separation of the powers of the water authority as managers and the NRA as inspectors as an important step forward. It would be wrong, however, for Ministers to suppose that all anglers take an entirely rosy view of the future. In that context, I can do no better than to quote from a letter sent by a keen and experienced angler who has considerable reservations about the circumstances that will prevail once the NRA is established:

"The Regional Organisation at present envisaged is simply a carbon copy of the existing W.A.'s perpetuating most of their faults and even introducing new ones"

He adds:

"it is absolutely certain that the legal obligation of the present W.A.'s and the future N.R.A. to maintain, improve, and develop fisheries has no chance whatever of being fulfilled without River Catchment Fishery Committees with executive powers.

The justification for this categorical statement is simply that the Fishery Organisation of the present W.A.'s has not always proved satisfactory because the Fishery Function was far too small and often considered unimportant in far too large an organisation for anyone of importance to take any interest in it. Officers, at least in some W.A.'s, have therefore been able to ignore Advisory Committees and to take decisions—or fail to take decisions—in situations that they really did not understand. Experts are dangerous unless they are responsible to an informed and confident lay committee. They need to be questioned and forced to justify their case".

Of course, in the House we spend our time questioning and seeking Ministers' justification for their cases. I hope that Ministers would not object to that pressure. I hope, therefore, that the Minister will not think that this is too much to ask of the NRA.

The letter goes on:

"Fisheries may be very small compared with most of the other proposed functions of the NRA, but from the point of view of recreation, conservation and the environment they are most important."

I do not believe that any hon. Member would challenge that view. I hope, too, that there is general agreement with the proposition that anglers are entitled to a real opportunity to make constructive contributions and to participate in the management of the fisheries that they value and enjoy.

I said earlier that I realised that the Government were anxious not to devalue the NRA by shackling it. If that is what they fear the amendment will do, I hope that they will

[Mr. Onslow]

think again. I certainly hope that the amendment will be used, but it will be for the NRA to use it. I hope that it would willingly and freely delegate powers. I do not believe that it will be jealous and will want to keep the power to itself. I hope that there are not bureaucrats in water authorities' fishery management who will consider that they will have some cosy billet that they can look forward to enjoying, without anyone having any real control over what they do or how the money is spent. I can see no objection to the proposition that the NRA should be empowered to delegate some of its functions to executive regional fishery committees.

Amendment No. 153 is self-explanatory. I am sure that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food would like a say in the appointment of officers in the NRA, if only so that he can remain accountable to Parliament.

Amendment No. 85 is simply probing, because I hope that the Minister can indicate how many people and what sort of people he expects will comprise the fishery committees. They should be committees that will be capable of exercising power, even if we do not necessarily feel that they must change their name. Whether we are talking about shooting or matters connected with fishing, we should make it clear that we expect the committees to be noticed. I am afraid that there is some reason to suppose that, when they are given an advisory label—as often happens—they will not be noticed at all.

Mr. Livsey: Being an angler, I welcome the amendments. Anglers have a great interest in the environment and the purity of water, especially of rivers. I believe that after the Committee stage anglers felt that they were under-represented on the NRA. That was the principle of no taxation without representation. Anglers, after all, who are paying considerable sums of money to enjoy their sport, should be recognised. Indeed, in any delegation of powers to regional authorities anglers should have a proper say in fisheries. The feeling is that they have been shut out in the cold. That is unfortunate, because, if anglers were given the opportunity of executive powers to help develop fisheries, that would have great significance. I believe that that is one of the aims of the amendments.

To be effective fisheries management must be proactive, and actions such as stocking the rivers with migratory fish such as salmon, sea trout and the like are vital. There is no doubt that our fishing resource is undeveloped and that what exists has substantially deteriorated over the years. There is great work to be done to revive the fisheries in many of our rivers. The expertise that our anglers could provide in that respect could be significant not only in creating a better resource for sport, but in developing tourism and employment opportunities in rural areas.

Not long ago we spent some time discussing the Salmon Bill and we thought that we had improved matters. However, unless the advisory committees to the NRA have executive powers, angling interests will suffer a considerable setback.

We all know that angling is the most popular recreation in the United Kingdom, with about 3 million participants. The Bill provides a great opportunity to develop that resource. After all, angling is a pleasant, quiet occupation which is in tune with the environment. Advisory committees which represented angling interests and had executive powers would bring benefit to the rural areas and the waters that flow through them.

Sir Charles Morrison (Devizes): Nothing that I say should be taken as a criticism, direct or by implication, of Lord Crickhowell, the chairman-elect, if that is the right description, of the NRA. There is only one weakness in Lord Crickhowell and that is that he is not immortal. That is why I am concerned about the Bill as presently drafted.

In common with my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) I declare an interest—not as a riparian owner, but as an angler, particularly as I happen to be president of the National Anglers Council. That council claims to represent the millions of anglers of the United Kingdom and their families, who are extremely concerned. The fundamental reason for that concern is that they believe, as I do, that advisory committees have a limited useful life. What will ensure that the NRA will pay any attention to an advisory committee? All too often, advisory committees become a facade to which less and less attention is paid or, in this instance, needs to be paid.

There is nothing in the Bill to suggest that the NRA must pay any attention to the advisory committees. All the Bill says is that those committees must be consulted. To start with, I suspect that will mean something, but as time goes by, it will mean nothing.

Clause 136(1)(a) imposes a duty on the NRA to

"maintain, improve and develop salmon fisheries, trout fisheries, freshwater fisheries and eel fisheries"

What does that mean, precisely? It may mean a great deal to the chairman-elect, Lord Crickhowell, but to his successor that duty may mean little or nothing, or no more than a statement to demonstrate that he is living up to his duty. If the committees established by clause 136 are to mean anything permanent, it is essential to make them more important and give them greater executive power.

This is emphasised by the fact that much of the funding for fisheries will come from the anglers and riparian owners. They should therefore be represented in a more executive role than is envisaged, and the committees should be strengthened in the Bill. Those committees should not be composed of people whom the NRA considers to be interested in the issues involved. They should have a definite interest in those issues, as is made clear in the amendment. The committee chairmen should be appointed by the Minister with responsibility for fisheries, and not by the NRA, which may have a vested interest in having a weak person, or even a placeman, at the helm.

After all, these committees amount to quangos and could be a nice way of pensioning off some good party hack who seems to have done his bit over the years. The chairmen of these committees should be appointed by the responsible Minister, and that would ensure that the chairmen and committee members would not act entirely in accord with, and comfortably alongside, the NRA.

Each committee should be a consistent and continuing gadfly in the side of the NRA, and for that to happen, the NRA should not be responsible for appointing the membership and the chairmen and for consulting them, which, as I say, could mean something or nothing. I hope that the Minister will give this issue further thought, if he cannot accept the amendment.

11.30 pm

Mr. Allen McKay: In debating an earlier amendment I mentioned my constituent Mr. Crofts, who is chairman of the South Yorkshire anglers association. I quoted from a letter he sent me, but I omitted a part of it that is relevant to the issue we are now discussing.

I hope that the Minister has noted that, despite the lateness of the hour, we have a coalition of Back Benchers in favour of the amendment. I agreed with everything that the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) said about anglers and, not being an angler, I can stand back and take a dispassionate look at what the angling associations do.

My local authority has approached anglers on many occasions to seek their views about the quality of the rivers and similar matters. We have always found them extremely helpful, and their services are given free. The amendment would not cost anything to implement, so the Government cannot accuse us of demanding large sums of money, an accusation that they have made during our consideration of the Bill.

My constituent Mr. Crofts refers in his letter to the whole stretch of the River Don down to below Sheffield. Using his own time and money and by his own efforts, he uses information from the water authority sampling stations to keep a check on that stretch of river. He does that because, as an angler, he is interested in the conservation of the countryside and, in particular, of our waterways. He writes about the wildlife that he comes across and the plant life at the side of the river. He gives a report to Yorkshire Water, exactly as suggested in the amendments. We can give such people a place as of right under the Bill. That is all the amendments are asking for.

Another of my constituents who has written to me has always been a conservationist. He is a farmer and a landowner. He is a lawyer and also a member of the Labour party. He is a very commendable person. He is also an educationist. He is an environmentalist, as are both his sons, who are interested in angling. Someone wants a piece of his land to set up a piggery, so he could make a substantial amount of money by selling the land. He will not sell it, because he does not wish the river to be polluted by the discharge from a piggery; also, he does not think that a piggery would be a good thing environmentally. Although he could make a lot of money, for the sake of angling and river quality, he has decided that the land is better left as it is.

British Coal has a lease on part of his land for the next 99 years. Although the board has finished with the land, he refuses to release it, because within the lease it has to keep the river clear and clean. Water has to be pumped from the old workings so that it does not pollute the river.

Those constituents have adopted a commendable attitude. They would be an asset to Yorkshire Water and to the environment if the amendments were accepted. I accept the arguments that have been put from all sides of the House. The Minister should take note of these constructive amendments that would strengthen the National Rivers Authority. Unless it is well funded, it will not have teeth. The amendments would strengthen it, without extra funding, and would make it more acceptable to the great body of conservationists who look after the environment and enjoy their fishing at the same time.

Mr. Boateng: I was concerned at the rather unseemly outbreak of consensus among the parties, but when I saw the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) making his entry I knew that any hope of consensus had gone out of the window. I expect numerous interventions from the hon. Gentleman in his usual, firmly sedentary position, but he may yet surprise us and manage to contain himself. We shall have to see.

I do not want anything that I say to break the consensus that has emerged. I do not have an interest to declare. I am not a riparian owner. My little plot is some half a mile away from the river in Brent. In a borough where much changes, the river seems to be firmly established and is not likely to come my way.

I am very fond of fish, not just for their culinary attributes but because they play an enormously important environmental role. They are environmental barometers. When the fish start to go a little green about the gills or, worst of all, upturn altogether, it is obvious that something is wrong with the water.

My fondness for fish extends to fishermen and all who are connected with angling, of whom there are large numbers in my constituency, which falls within the boundaries of the Mid Thames Fisheries Consultative Council. It is the particular concerns of that council that I am anxious to share with the House this morning.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Evening.

Mr. Boateng: It is evening now—it will be morning shortly. I do not wish to anticipate how long I shall take to share with the House the concerns of the Mid Thames Fisheries Consultative Council.

Needless to say, within the boundaries of the council there falls the middle section of the River Thames, from Cleeve lock to Mosley lock, including the main tributaries —the Rivers Kennet, Lauden, Pang and Wey, and the rivers running into them, the Whitewater, the Blackwater, the Lambourn, and so on. Amongst those, I might add, is the river Brent. It s possible that some 80,000 to 100,000 anglers use those waters in the course of a year. The Mid Thames Fisheries Consultative Council does a splendid job and is represented on the regional fisheries advisory committee at Thames Water. It is precisely because of the job that that body does—the service and benefit that it provides to anglers—that I wholeheartedly support the amendment.

There are a number of issues that the Mid Thames Fisheries Consultative Council is anxious that we should have at the forefront of our minds in considering the merits of these amendments. Its concern about water obstruction is very real. It is anxious that there should be a review of water obstruction licences and that, wherever possible, they should be withdrawn. If feels, with cause, that within the Thames Water region there are sufficient licences to take out more water than is available. Fortunately, the CEGB does not demand its full capacity, but obstructions are having an adverse effect on the streams. Some have been lost, and rivers have been downgraded in terms of water flow.

It is on precisely this sort of issue that anglers and fisheries interests are well able to bring their particular expertise and concern to bear. As has been said by hon. Members in all parts of the House, one does not want a situation in which those people are relegated to a merely advisory and consultative role. There is a part for them to

[Mr. Boateng]

play in monitoring the environmental quality of our rivers, and they should be encouraged and assisted, as these amendments seek to encourage and assist them, to that end. River quality objectives are also a matter of concern to my angling constituents and their council. They are concerned that, at present, the quality of our rivers is determined against a set of criteria which include both chemical and biological components.

It is believed that, if fisheries are to flourish, with properly structured ecosystems, those criteria ought not to be downgraded. In particular, there is concern about the biological element and about the importance of ensuring that, because the chemical criteria can be met in water conditions incompatible with fish, the biological criteria must be taken on board. Those people want to see the river quality objectives protected and, wherever possible, enhanced. If the amendments are accepted, as I hope that they will be—I hope that the Minister will at least take some steps in that direction—interested bodies would be in a position to ensure that the river quality objectives are protected.

11.45 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept an invitation to come down to Dorset with me, with or without his five children. I will show him the River Allen, which has exactly the problems of over-abstraction that he has described. I was therefore interested to hear what he had to say.

Mr. Boateng: I shall be delighted to come down to Dorset, with my five children whom the hon. Gentleman was kind enough to mention—*[Interruption.]* From a sedentary position, the Minister of State expresses concern that they might be disciplined in a car park. I assure him that that occurs but rarely, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) would not take us anywhere near any car parks. Moreover, I am confident that we shall be able to regulate the children's behaviour in the ordinary way, which does not involve disciplining in car parks—it involves a hard stare, with the promise of discipline to come if they do not respond to the stare. That is how one deals with children. I am sure that that view strikes a chord with a number of Conservative Members —[HON. MEMBERS: "In the Whips Office."] I do not wish to be sidetracked, least of all down the avenue of the Whips Office.

It is important that we should recognise exactly what is happening in some parts of the River Thames, especially the mid-Thames which affects my constituents in Brent. I will give the House just one example which has been drawn to my attention by the Mid Thames Fisheries Consultative Council. The native cray fish has virtually been destroyed by the disease brought in by the single cray fish——

Mr. Onslow: If the hon. Gentleman would read the brief properly, he would realise that it is the signal cray fish. May we please have an end to this and a reply from the Minister?

Mr. Boateng: I resent that intervention as the Mid Thames Fisheries Consultative Council has done its best to provide me with a proper and accurate briefing. A simple typographical error is no cause for the hon. Gentleman to sneer. He should not imagine that anglers come only from the country interests that he so stoutly represents. There are many urban anglers and I am determined that their voice should be heard today. Urban anglers are extremely concerned about the cray fish and about the spring viraemia of carp which has forced the closure of a local fishery. A ban exists at the moment——

Mr. Morley: I wish to reinforce my hon. Friend's remarks about the way in which anglers are spread across a wide spectrum of society and regions. I received letters from the Appleby and Froddingham angling club, which was formed at the old steelworks and which has one of the largest memberships of any angling club in my region. Its members are all steelworkers and they have expressed many of the concerns that my hon. Friend has put so eloquently about water quality standards and the influence of the fisheries advisory committees. They feel that at present the fisheries advisory committees are not given the influence that they deserve.

Mr. Boateng: I am obliged to my hon. Friend, who has a wealth of experience in these matters which he brought to bear over many hours in Committee. We are grateful to him. He is right that this issue goes right across the board.

In conclusion, one wants a strong voice to be given to angling interests and to see them have proper representation, with means and resources to make their voice heard and to make it count, so that they can deliver the goods not only to anglers and fishermen, whether urban or rural, but to all of us who benefit from a safe, clean environment.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Richard Ryder): As my hon. and learned Friends the Minister for Water and Planning and the Solicitor-General know, I have for a long time been an eager proponent of reform of our legal system. If I harboured any doubts about my desires for reform, they were dispelled by listening to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) who is—as my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) acknowledges—a solicitor.

Mr. Soames: He is indeed.

Mr. Ryder: As a solicitor he deserves a wider audience. He is a powerful advocate and, if the Lord Chancellor's recommendations in the Green Paper ever come into law, the hon. Gentleman will do very well out of them.

Many important points have been raised during our brief debate, and related issues have also been brought to the fore by the amendments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) and my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Sir C. Morrison). The debate will be followed by not only anglers but others who have interests in fisheries. In the remaining time available to me I shall try to answer some of those points.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking was concerned that, in the past, fisheries had had too small a voice in the water authorities. I take issue with him on that matter and I should certainly have to deny that that would be the case in the new National Rivers Authority. In addition to the regional fisheries committees, my right hon. Friend the Minister is to appoint a fisheries member to the main NRA board, and fisheries will be represented on the new regional rivers advisory committees.

Fisheries will, and must, in recognition of their importance, have a powerful voice. The Government have

no doubts about the importance of fisheries. That is why they want to ensure, through the Bill, that my right hon. Friend the Minister retains one appointment to the NRA board.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking was also concerned about the competence of the committees and the NRA to administer fisheries. I have heard that view expressed before, although not particularly widely. It was my impression that the water authorities, with the aid of their regional fisheries advisory committees, had exercised their fisheries function admirably in the past, and I have every reason to believe that the NRA—as an important national body—will have an even greater opportunity to co-ordinate and develop fisheries policies, building on the sound foundation laid down by the water authorities.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking and my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes tabled a number of amendments. I shall deal with each in turn. Amendment No. 153 aims to give my right hon. Friend the Minister more powers than envisaged under present legislation. Despite the fact that my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking and my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes intend, through the amendment, to give the Minister more powers, I cannot accept the amendment.

As I have said, the NRA will be an important and—I stress the word—autonomous national body, charged, among other things, with maintaining, improving and developing the salmon, trout, eel and freshwater fisheries in England and Wales. That will be the responsibility of the national corporate body. Of course, the NRA will discharge that responsibility through a strong, regional organisation—that is essential given the great diversity of our fisheries.

However, it will be for the NRA to decide the membership of its regional advisory committees, including their chairmen. I stress to my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking that Ministers will appoint members to the NRA main board. I have already referred to the one person to be appointed by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. He will co-ordinate the authority's regional fisheries advisory activity and will oversee the way in which the NRA's fisheries responsibilities are being discharged in each of its regions.

Amendments Nos. 79 and 85 would limit the membership of the regional fisheries advisory committes to people who are directly interested in fisheries in a particular area. I have to tell the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) that the environmentalist to whom he referred would be excluded if the amendment were accepted. If we divided on it, he would have to vote against it.

Only anglers' representatives and riparian owners could be appointed. There would be no place for representatives of netsmen or fish farmers. It would not be possible, as has been the general practice, for the chairmen of the regional flood defence committees to sit on the committees. Nor would it be open to the NRA under amendment No. 85 to include environmental, scientific or any other interests on the committees. I believe that it is essential that the NRA should be allowed the maximum flexibility in establishing these committees to appoint relevant interests on a local basis, according to local needs and circumstances.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Woking argued that the powers to delegate fisheries to the regional fisheries advisory committees would be entirely permissive. However, I would have considerable difficulty about accepting the principle that functions should be delegated to the committees, now or at a later date. The RFACs have always been advisory in nature. There has been no suggestion that this advisory nature has been ineffective in the protection of fisheries' interests in the water authorities. Indeed, I believe that the RFACs are widely regarded as having made a highly significant contribution to the conservation and management of fisheries by the water authorities.

The question to be addressed is this: how would things change for the better by delegating to the committees some of the NRA's functions? I am afraid that the case for that is still to be made. I am still unclear about what kinds of responsibility might be delegated and how the committees would effectively discharge those responsibilities.

Moreover, I fear that this may result in an undermining of the NRA at both regional and national levels as a new, cohesive and effective national autonomous body. It seems to me that fisheries' interests might not be best served by encouraging the degree of separation implied by specific and executive powers. The great thing about fisheries' interests in the water authorities—this will be much more so in the NRA—is the central role they have occupied in recreational and environmental matters. Fisheries cannot be divorced from water chemistry and quality, or land drainage and flood protection—or matters of access and river basin usage. My worry is that the amendments could tend to diminish that role and the freedom of fisheries' interests at all levels to act as an influence for the good of their own cause. We want the NRA to pull together a coherent national strategy for the maintenance, improvement and development of salmon, trout, eel and freshwater fisheries.

I hope that I have answered many of the points that have been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes. If my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking wishes, I will respond again.

Mr. Onslow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. I am sorry that I have not been able to persuade him. In the certain knowledge that these matters can and will be raised again in another place, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 139, line 15, at end insert—

'and it shall be the duty of the Authority in determining the regions for which regional advisory committees are established and maintained to ensure that one of those regions consists (apart from territorial waters) wholly or mainly of or of most of Wales.'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Clause 161

DIRECTIONS IN THE INTERESTS OF NATIONAL SECURITY ETC

Amendments made: No. 94, in page 161, line 16, leave out

'or the commercial interests of any person'.

No. 95, in page 161, line 21, leave out

'or the commercial interests of some other person'.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Further consideration adjourned.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), to be further considered tomorrow.

Legal Aid

12 midnight

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move,

That the draft Legal Advice and Assistance (Scope) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 3rd March, be approved.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I understand that it would be for the convenience of the House if we discussed also the next two motions:

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Matrimonial Proceedings) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 3rd March, be approved.

That the draft Legal Aid (Functions) Order 1989, which were laid before this House on 3rd March, be approved.

The Solicitor-General: Perhaps it would also be for the convenience of the House if we discussed the six Opposition prayers:

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Legal Advice and Assistance (Duty Solicitor) (Remuneration) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 341), dated 3rd March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 9th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Legal Advice and Assistance Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 340), dated 3rd March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Legal Advice and Assistance at Police Stations (Remuneration) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 342), dated 3rd March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 9th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Legal Aid in Criminal and Care Proceedings (Costs) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 343), dated 3rd March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 9th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Civil Legal Aid (Assessment of Resources) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 338), dated 3rd March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th March, be annulled.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Legal Aid in Criminal and Care Proceedings (General) Regulations 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 344), dated 3rd March 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th March, be annulled.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand that there is no objection to that.

The Solicitor-General: All the regulations relate to legal aid or to advice and assistance. They are made under the Legal Aid Act 1988 and constitute a package designed to implement the Act from 1 April.

Within the framework of the 1988 Act this package will form the basis of the operation of legal aid for the coming years. Subject to a few specific exceptions, the regulations for the most part recreate the existing arrangements. However, the opportunity has been taken to carry out some measure of consolidation and revision and to give effect to some of the recommendations accepted by the Government in their White Paper on legal aid which foreshadowed the Legal Aid Act 1988. The regulations have been subject to wide consultation in draft.

The biggest change is that the responsibility for the administration of legal aid will pass from the Law Society to the new Legal Aid Board. I should like to take this opportunity to express the Government's appreciation of the service which the Law Society has provided to the public in administering legal aid for nearly 40 years. It might also be appropriate at the same time to wish the Legal Aid Board well in taking up the functions that the Law Society is now relinquishing.

The most significant of the regulations are the Legal Advice and Assistance (Scope) Regulations which prescribe the scope of ABWOR—assistance by way of representation—as well as of green form assistance. In the White Paper on legal aid in 1987 the Government announced their decision that assistance in the making of wills and conveyancing should not normally be paid for out of public funds, and that they would take steps to restrict the green form scheme in those areas. In any publicly funded scheme such as legal aid the money available cannot be unbounded. It must, therefore, be directed to those areas where it is most needed and away from areas where there is a lesser need.

The Government have concluded that the use of green form advice and assistance to carry out a conveyance or to make a will are just such areas of lesser need. It cannot be right that the taxpayer should be asked to subsidise those who simply wish to arrange their own affairs. However, we have recognised that in particular cases there may be special needs and we have sought to ensure that hardship is not caused to vulnerable people as a result of the proposed change. Accordingly, the draft regulations contain a series of exceptions from the general exclusion of conveyancying and will-making from the green form scheme.

The Lord Chancellor's Department, following wide consultation, has provided that conveyancing services will continue to be available under the green form scheme in all cases where they are necessary in order to give effect to any court order, effect to the terms of a settlement in a divorce and to rental purchase agreements or conditional sales. Those are methods of house purchase where, unlike a purchase under a mortgage where the property is transferred immediately but acts as security for a loan, the ownership of the property does not change hands until the final instalment of the purchase money has been paid.

Participants in such transactions, who tend to be at the lower end of the housing market, can often find themselves in difficulties. Nevertheless, although the provision of conveyancing services is generally to be excluded from the green form scheme, I should stress that other forms of advice and assistance in relation to housing or land law are not. Thus, for example, a leaseholder concerned over his or her position under the lease may receive advice under the green form scheme. If, however, the advice is that some form of conveyance is required, the leaseholder will usually have to pay for that conveyance. In the area of will-making, advice and assistance will continue to be available for wills to be made by those aged 70 or over, by single parents wishing to appoint a testamentary guardian, by the physically or mentally disabled and the mentally ill, and by a parent or guardian who wishes to provide for such a disabled person.

The remainder of the scope regulations set out the extent to which ABWOR will be available. Subject to certain modifications, the regulations extend ABWOR to those areas where it is currently available. However, there are three differences. First, during the passage of the Legal Aid Bill the Lord Chancellor agreed that all child care proceedings should be treated in the same way for legal aid purposes. As a result, all child care proceedings attract legal aid under part VI of the Act, which is granted by the

court and not by the Legal Aid Board. Some of the proceedings relating to child care that now appear in part VI previously attracted ABWOR. As legal aid can now be granted by the magistrates court in question, ABWOR is no longer required and the regulations do not extend it to any of the proceedings for which legal aid is available under part VI.

The second difference concerns the duty solicitor schemes at magistrates courts provided under the Legal Aid Act 1982. Technically, those services constituted a distinct form of legal aid, that is "advice and representation". Under the Legal Aid Act 1988, "advice and representation" became part of ABWOR and the regulations therefore extend ABWOR to cover all representation within the scope of the existing duty solicitor scheme.

The third qualification relates to the granting of ABWOR by a magistrates court or county court. At present, a magistrates court or county court may approve the provision of assistance by way of representation by a solicitor who is at that time in the precincts of the court and whose client is not already in receipt of legal aid. Those arrangements bypass the normal mechanisms for the granting of ABWOR through the Law Society and are intended to provide for representation where it is required as a matter of urgency. The regulations will ensure that such arrangements will continue. However, the wording of the regulations has been revised to make it clear that ABWOR is to be made available by that means only in cases where there is a genuine urgent need and not as a form of routine provision of representation—as has been happening in some places—or as a means of avoiding the usual application procedures.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Will representation at magistrates courts still be available under the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 where there is extended detention?

The Solicitor-General: I think that the answer to my hon. Friend's question is yes, but I shall check and confirm that that is the case when I wind up.

The next set of regulations for which approval is sought are those reproducing the effect of the existing Legal Aid (Matrimonial Proceedings) Regulations 1977, which exclude civil legal aid from undefended divorce proceedings, subject to certain exceptions where full representation is required. The new regulations simply recreate the existing position.

The final measure requiring affirmative resolution is the Legal Aid (Functions) Order 1989. The Legal Aid Board's functions in relation to legal aid in criminal or child care proceedings are extremely limited. However, at present criminal legal aid committees of the Law Society may hear applications for review of a refusal by magistrates courts to grant criminal legal aid. They may also hear other applications in relation to the amendment or withdrawal of legal aid in criminal or child care proceedings and applications for prior authority to incur expenditure.

The order gives the Legal Aid Board the necessary power to enable its area committees to carry out the same functions. It will allow the existing arrangements to continue in effect unchanged. The order will also allow the Legal Aid Board to take over responsibility for the promotion and publicity of criminal legal aid. That function has hitherto been carried out by the Lord Chancellor's Department. The board already has responsibility for publicity in relation to civil legal aid and advice and assistance.

Turning to the regulations that have been prayed against, the Civil Legal Aid (Assessment of Resources) Regulations generally seek to recreate the existing position and follow the current regulations closely. However, they contain the financial eligibility limits relating to civil legal aid that previously appeared in primary legislation. The Lord Chancellor increased a number of the legal aid financial eligibility limits relating to civil and criminal legal aid and to advice and assistance. Those increases are generally of the order of 4·7 per cent., which reflects the rise in the level of social security benefits. However, the capital limit above which civil legal aid is not normally available has been raised by 20 per cent. to £6,000. He has also increased the capital allowances made for dependants in assessing eligibility for advice and assistance by nearly 68 per cent. to £335 for the first dependant, £200 for the second and £100 for other dependants. The limits governing the amount by which an assisted person's resources may change before they have to be reassessed have been substantially expanded for both criminal and civil legal aid. There is no reassessment for advice and assistance.

The regulations also implement a recommendation of the legal aid advisory committee that the resources of cohabitants should be treated in the same way as those of married couples in assessing legal aid eligibility. Their resources are already treated in the same way for determining eligibility for social security benefits. The legal aid allowances available to spouses will now extend to cohabiting partners. That applies in both civil and criminal legal aid, and in advice and assistance.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the Solicitor-General agree that that will effectively remove a number of people from the legal aid system? Does he further agree that in cases in which the opposing parties are cohabitees, they will be effectively banned from legal aid?

The Solicitor-General: I certainly do not agree wih the hon. Gentleman's first point. Extending to cohabiting partners the legal aid provision available to spouses can be beneficial, depending on the incomes of the respective partners.

The Legal Aid in Criminal and Care Proceedings (General) Regulations are the result of a consolidation exercise, but, again, seek generally to recreate the current position. However, they also introduce some useful reforms. They provide for there to be a single common and mandatory application form for criminal legal aid in the Crown court and magistrates courts. The use of that form should assist in the provision of uniform information and, together with revised guidance on the grant of legal aid, lead to a more consistent approach on the grant or refusal of applications.

As was announced in the White Paper in 1987, court staff are to be able to refuse as well as grant criminal legal aid. The arrangements set out in the regulations will enable a justices' clerk or the appropriate Crown court officer to refuse any application in the first instance. That will speed up the process of handling applications and lead to applicants receiving earlier notification of the decision. However, the existing arrangements for appeals against

[The Solicitor-General]

refusal remain and will continue unchanged, and an application may be renewed to the court at any time. Officials will not be able to refuse applications after the first time. The regulations also provide that only judges may make or refuse a legal order for the assignment of more than one counsel, subject to a limited exception in respect of the magistrates court, and may have regard to the choice of the assisted person.

The Legal Advice and Assistance Regulations relate to ordinary green form, ABWOR and the duty solicitor schemes in magistrates courts and at police stations. I have already mentioned the regulations which relate to the scope of advice and assistance and which require an affirmative resolution. Because of the need to deal with scope in separate regulations, the Legal Advice and Assistance Regulations which do not require affirmative resolution have had to be recast and as a result have a new appearance, but, for the most part, they have the same effect.

However, the House may know that the Lord Chancellor has agreed to the raising of the administrative cost limits for the green form scheme from its present £50, or £90 for the preparation of a divorce petition or judicial separation. The regulations now set the limit as the equivalent of two hours' preparation work, or three hours in connection with divorce or judicial separation. That means that in 1989-90 the cost limits will now be £73 and £109·50p respectively for most of the country and £77·50 and £116·25 in London. Moreover, the £50 limit applicable to advice and assistance at police stations in respect of non-arrestable offences has been abolished. All advice and assistance at police stations will now attract the higher and extendable limit.

The Civil Legal Aid (General) Regulations from which the Opposition have withdrawn a prayer give effect to the Government's decision, announced in the White Paper, that solicitors should be required to certify to the Legal Aid Board that public funding for the case is still reasonable when applying for a payment on account. It is intended that the report from solicitors should be required 18 months from the date on which the legal aid certificate was first issued—18 months being the limit on which an initial payment on account can be sought. It is therefore proposed that the Legal Aid Board should automatically send out to a solicitor a request for a report at the same time as it advises the solicitor of the entitlement to make a claim for payment on account. The regulations repeat the effect of the recent regulations which permit the postponement of the enforcement of the statutory charge in appropriate cases and the payment of interest on the postponed sum. They do not extend the scope for postponement beyond those cases already provided for.

The remaining regulations prescribe the rates of remuneration for solicitors providing advice and assistance at police stations and duty solicitor services at magistrates courts, and for the rates of remuneration payable to solicitors and barristers undertaking criminal and child care legal aid work. These rates also apply to ABWOR and to civil legal aid in the magistrates courts. The rates payable are to be increased by 6 per cent. from 1 April. Moreover, duty solicitors who attend magistrates courts on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays will in future be paid at an enhanced rate, and new and higher rates of remuneration are introduced for solicitors undertaking child care work in the magistrates courts.

The regulations have inadvertently created an anomaly whereby a duty solicitor who provides assistance by way of representation in relation to a warrant of further detention in unsocial hours will be paid less than he is now. As a result the Lord Chancellor will be making further regulations, to take effect from 1 April, to rectify that anomaly.

The rates of payment for legal aid work have been set following extensive discussions with both sides of the profession. In reaching a view on the increase to be awarded this year, the Lord Chancellor took into account the factors set out in the Legal Aid Act 1988.

Overall, the proposed package forms a sound basis for the future operation of legal aid and contains some useful reforms. I invite the House to approve the three draft instruments laid before it on 3 March and reject the motions praying against the other regulations.

12.15 am

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): As a solicitor holding a practising certificate, I declare an interest.

I should make it clear to people who follow our proceedings that due to the lateness of the hour we have been disabled from voting on our prayers against statutory instruments Nos. 338 to 343. Had we been able to do so, we should have voted to oppose those instruments, which introduce the new rules and take into account the resources of a cohabitee—or cohabitees in the case of a bigamist. We should have expressed our indignation at the miserly increase of 6 per cent. in legal aid fees for criminal legal aid work. That is well below the rate of inflation and far less than the profession asked for in its discussions with the Lord Chancellor.

We oppose the Legal Advice and Assistance (Scope) Regulations 1989 because of their new restriction on advice about making wills and property transactions and the likelihood that they are a precursor of further restrictions on green form advice. We further oppose the regulations because of the restrictions described by the Solicitor-General on the growing duty solicitor schemes in county courts. We shall vote against those regulations as a token of our opposition to the other orders, to which we take exception but on which we shall be unable to vote.

The regulations confirm a pattern in the reduction of the number of people who are eligible for legal aid. In 1950, 80 per cent. of the population were eligible, but by 1974 the figure had fallen to about 40 per cent. In 1979, the Lord Chancellor announced that eligibility would be raised to restore it to 80 per cent. of the population, as had obtained when the scheme was first introduced in 1950.

In 1986, when Lord Hailsham was Lord Chancellor, the allowances were down-rated, leading to an extra 25,000 applications for legal aid being withdrawn or refused. That was the first occasion on which there had been a deliberate reduction in eligibility. In 1989, compared with when the scheme first started, only about 50 per cent. of the population are eligible. I used population figures because using the percentage of households as a measure of eligibility for legal aid can be highly misleading, for reasons too complex to go into now. Between 1979 and 1986, about a quarter of the population lost access and

eligibility to legal aid. The policy has been to reverse the open and universal access to justice that the legal aid and advice schemes are intended to implement.

I should be grateful if, in winding up, the Solicitor-General would give us his estimate of the percentage of the adult population—not of households—currently eligible for legal aid, and the extent to which the percentage has fallen since 1986. That question has been asked of the Law Officers and of the Lord Chancellor for the past year and I should be grateful to have the figures tonight. All the signs are that eligibility is continuing to shrink and that the regulations—not dramatically, but to some degree—will continue that process. There is no doubt that the new cohabitation rules on contributions will further reduce eligibility without any compensating increase in the cover of legal aid. They represent not an adjustment between one class of people applying for legal aid and another, but an attempt by the Treasury to claw back an admittedly modest amount of legal aid resources.

The new rules are at best impracticable and at worst oppressive. From my experience of criminal legal aid cases, extra-marital partnerships are common but not easy to define. They are often unstable and a common law partnership may dissolve as a consequence of the alleged offence. The advocate will have to make a judgment not only about the quality of the defence and the way in which it will be necessary to plead and present the evidence, but about the quality of the relationship—often, as a duty solicitor, having to work in a short time spane. He may have to ask questions in a difficult situation about relationships between a man and a woman, rather than getting on with representation of the case.

Those are the reasons why the new rules will be impracticable, but they may also be oppressive. There is no point in having contribution regulations unless one believes in the theory that the common law spouse or partner will contribute the amount that the regulations take into account. In practice, it is a different story. If Janet and John are living together, we cannot assume that Janet—assuming she has an income—will stump up to pay for John's defence when he is on a burglary charge or that she will contribute to the cost of custody proceedings between her common law husband and his previous wife.

The Solicitor-General may say that rules exist at present for contributions between husbands and wives and that the cohabition rules will extend that practice to those in common law relationships. There are three points about that. First, the existing joint contribution rules are already oppressive. One has only to ask any unemployed man who has run out of his entitlement to unemployment benefit after 300 days or so and who finds that he has no entitlement to any other benefit because his wife is working. Many married people regard the cohabitation rule, which applies to the married and the unmarried, as oppressive. People do not welcome it.

Secondly, the trend in our taxation is to favour separate assessment far more than joint assessment. The Solicitor-General is therefore running contrary to what the Chancellor of the Exchequer is doing in relation to income tax. Thirdly, the cohabitee does not possess the property rights that a wife has. The common law wife may be asked to contribute towards her partner's defence, but if he later throws her out of the joint home which is in his name only, she will have no protection. There is not an exact equality of interest and rights between the common law spouse and the married spouse. That is a reason for not extending the rules to cover common law relationships.

Another important point is that not once in the course of debates on the Legal Aid Bill in 1988 was it suggested that there would be what is now a fairly major change in contribution relations. The common law spouse contribution principle is being slipped through Parliament after midnight without any possibility of voting on it. That is not just wrong in principle—it is an abuse of the procedures of the House. An unfair and impracticable system is being introduced without proper parliamentary consideration and without any chance for Parliament to reach a decision on that aspect of the regulations.

As for the reduction in green form cover, in practice there has already been a considerable reduction in the availability or use of legal advice and assistance. Between April 1988 and January 1989, one in 13 potential users of the green form scheme dropped out, mainly due to rising housing costs, which are not deductible under the green form scheme—particularly the increases in mortgage repayments engineered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Now the scope of the advice scheme is to be restricted in respect of certain aspects of wills and conveyancing.

The green form scheme was described in the Lord Chancellor's Department study as

"efficient and most cost-effective"

and the restriction will save only a tiny percentage of the cost of legal advice and assistance, at the expense of poor people who exceptionally—already the occasions are fairly rare—require advice on a will or property transaction. The scheme will be complicated by a list of difficult exceptions—for instance, by the confusing proposition that one can get a will under the green form system if one is poor and over 70 but not if one is poor and merely an old-age pensioner. Moreover, the savings from disallowance will be tiny.

Coupled with our views on that is our regret at the ending of duty solicitor schemes in the county courts, which look after people facing eviction. Such people can get representation in the court because a rota system has been introduced by a local law society. The Solicitor-General seems to dismiss such schemes as affording representation to people who do not really need it. I do not regard it as a luxury to provide legal aid to someone faced with losing their home and perhaps with moving into bed-and-breakfast accommodation, especially as the state will be faced with meeting the cost of such accommodation. It may well save money for the local authority and for the family involved and also save the time of the court. It is very much to be regretted that the scheme is to be cut.

The Government's game is not worth the candle ends that it will save. We fear that this is just the first cut, which may lead to cuts in important areas of advice—on immigration or housing generally. If the Solicitor-General can give a solemn assurance that this is the last and only restriction of the scope of the scheme, perhaps he will intervene to say so—if not, we fear that the proposals represent the first step in the erosion of the green form legal aid scheme.

So far, I have discussed the steps which erode the legal aid scheme and restrict access to it. I want now to deal with remuneration for legal aid work, and what is, in my view and in that of most commentators, a wholly inadequate

[Mr. John Fraser]

rise in pay for those engaged in criminal legal aid work on a wholly inadequate base. A year ago, a Law Society survey of criminal legal aid work found that 40 per cent. of solicitors' offices had given up, or were seriously thinking of giving up, criminal legal aid work, and 80 per cent. gave low pay as their reason. A year later a study appeared, the results of which were sensational. Both the method used and the authors of the survey, conducted by Touche Ross, are unimpeachable.

Touche Ross found that the overwhelming number of firms involved in criminal legal aid work do it at a loss. The average profit ratio in the provinces was minus 33 per cent. —the average, of, course, includes those making a profit as well as those making a loss—and in London it was minus 44 per cent. Out of 8,000 firms doing legal aid work, only 70 firms in London were grossing more than £100,000, which is not a great deal in terms of legal aid income, and making a profit, and 450 firms in the provinces were grossing more than £50,000 per year. If all the firms losing money dropped out, only one tenth of those offices now doing criminal legal aid work would be left in business. That would be an enormous reduction in choice and access for criminal legal aid defences.

The orders raise remuneration by 6 per cent., with enhancements for unsocial hours and Saturdays, when evidence shows that last year many firms were making a loss and thinking of giving up legal aid work altogether, inflation is already 7 per cent. and likely to go higher, and salary rises for solicitors generally are charted as running at about 15 per cent. per annum.

The Lord Chancellor is an advocate and a friend of market forces. He believes in the market forces philosophy for the law, but he obviously does not believe, any more than the Government do, that there should be a market rate for the job. The 6 per cent. increase is a miserly rise on a loss-making base and it will drive even more firms to make a loss. In those circumstances, it is an abuse of people with a sense of duty. The same kind of abuse has been inflicted on others who have ethical rules and perform public duties, such as doctors and nurses in the National Health Services and teachers and lecturers in the education service. It means that the quality of representation will be at risk. The more experienced advocates will give up criminal legal aid work and will be replaced by the less experienced. The danger is that there will be a second-class service on second-class pay. Firms will be supported by a cost subsidy from more profitable private work of the sort that the Lord Chancellor is putting into the melting pot with the legal services review.

We all recognise that legal aid work will always be less remunerative than private work, even though the cash flow on legal aid work is much worse than on private work. There will always be some differential between the rates of remuneration for the two kinds of work, but it is grossly unjust that the rates for legal aid work are so far below the market rate as to make it a predominantly loss-making activity for the people involved.

I will adopt some of the arguments of Andrew Thomas —my partner, but also a member of the Legal Aid Practitioners Group—when commenting on the gross discrepancy between the rates of remuneration for those doing legal aid work and those doing private work. He said that remuneration is based on an utterly wrong principle. We do not pay a judge less money when he is trying a legal aid case than he would be paid trying a private case. We do not pay the policeman who arrests the man who will receive legal aid less money than the policeman who arrests someone who will be privately represented. We do not discriminate in that way.

We do not pay the Lord Chancellor less money when sitting in that part of the Lord Chancellor's Department which deals with legal aid as opposed to that part of the Department which deals with other matters. The Solicitor-General will not take a 50 per cent. cut in his pay to participate in a debate in unsocial hours because we are discussing legal aid rather than some other aspect of legal work such as the law of property legislation that we were discussing in committee 14 hours ago. We do not pay a jury a lower allowance for trying a man who is legally aided as opposed to privately defended.

It is monstrous that a large part of the profession, which now makes heavy losses to deal with criminal aid work, should be penalised because it has a sense of duty and because it is tied to the system. Such people are cross-subsidised from other forms of work. Because of that we shall have a token vote on one of the regulations. I hope that the Solicitor-General will take on board the deep dissatisfaction felt about the restriction and cover of legal aid and about the way in which the professions have been treated.

12.34 am

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I apologise to my hon. and learned Friend for bowling him a googly about the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and whether representation will still apply. I now know that the answer is yes, but my hon. and learned Friend has told us that, as a result of the regulations, solicitors who go out to police stations to represent people who are detained for extended periods under PACE will receive less remuneration than hitherto. That worries me greatly and, as the House will know, I voted against the Third Reading of the Bill because of that.

I considered that the 96 hours of detention were unreasonable and that they represented an affront to civil liberties. The only saving grace in the Bill was the fact that people who were detained for a long time would have representation. If there is any suggestion that, as a result of the regulations, people will not be represented and that solicitors will be unwilling to go out to the police stations, I urge my hon. and learned Friend to come back to the House with amendments. It is essential that such people should be represented.

When we discussed the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill the Government told us not to worry about the 96 hours of detention. They told us that people kept for extended periods would be looked after and represented by solicitors. If, as a result of the regulations, such people are not to be looked after, that represents a breach of the undertaking then given by the Government. That worries me greatly.

I welcome the safeguards that exist for the disadvantaged regarding wills, but I do not see why legal aid should be extended to people who make wills. I do not see anything wrong in respect of cohabitees. One is dealing with money that goes into the family and if the joint income of cohabitees is above the specified level, I do not

see why legal aid should be extended to them. It may be that the level is too low, but I do not disagree with the principle.

I am disappointed that the regulations have not been extended to cover tribunals. Tribunals are fundamental as they deal with the nitty-gritty of people's lives. What happens to ordinary or disadvantaged people who lose their jobs through unfair dismissal? They go along to a tribunal in the belief that they will receive justice, but they face a wealthy company with an array of solicitors and barristers brought down from London. The ordinary person believes that he will be able to present his case, but he is cross-examined into the ground and overwhelmed. A little bit of legal aid would bring a great deal of justice to such people, and it should be extended to tribunals.

It is important that we do not forget that we do not have an expensive legal system. While I agree that the total amount of legal aid has greatly increased, we do not have an expensive system of justice. Despite what the popular press says, the remuneration of solicitors and barristers in this country is much lower than the profession gets for ordinary work in France, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands. If a solicitor or barrister wants to make money, he or she should go to the continent—it can be done now—where the remuneration is four or five times greater than it is here.

The value of a person being represented in the courts is that it represents an enormous saving in money and time. The cost of cases does not lie in the advocates, as the popular press makes out. The expenditure is to be found in the cost of the buildings. There is a Crown court next door to Harrods; I wonder what that is worth in property terms. Then there are the ushers, police officers, judges, juries and all the back-up staff.

When a person is properly represented, a great deal of money and time is saved because witnesses are interviewed and only relevant witnesses are called. Experienced lawyers call witnesses to deal only with points that are required and not with peripheral matters or waste the time of the court. No matter what certain people, including the popular press, say, there is little wastage of court time. The efficient lawyer saves an enormous amount of time, and time is money.

Trying to get law on the cheap only increases overall costs. I had not heard of the report by Touche Ross and I am sorry, if not surprised, to hear that so many solicitors are saying that they will not do criminal legal aid work. I have solicitor friends, and people who have instructed me, who have said that they will not do such work, but most of them have hitherto been saying not quite that.

They have been saying, "We are making a little loss on the criminal legal aid work. It does not pay much, but we must regard it as swings and roundabouts; we are making a bit on conveyancing and getting some money here and there, so we will do the criminal legal aid work, and overall the practice will be profitable." But now we are faced with a Green Paper and solicitors are finding their conveyancing work under attack. That will reduce the ability of solicitors to subsidise the less profitable areas.

I do not think we will get much change out of the Lord Chancellor's department and have more money going to legal aid. The overall effect of this concerted attack on the profession will be that the poor person who is just outside the legal aid limits will not be able to find a solicitor. Solicitors will not be prepared to do legal aid work if there is nothing else to subsidise it. The whole issue must be viewed in the round, but I fear that people are not doing that. We are seeing it in bits and pieces. We have the legal aid legislation and the regulations and we have the Green Paper. We are not considering it in the round to try to ensure that solicitors have adequate remuneration for the amount of work that is required.

For those reasons, I put in my reservations. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will take them into account because it is very important to look at the overall picture.

12.44 am

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I will be extremely brief. Exactly three hours ago, at a quarter to ten, I was responding to a telephone message from a constituent, one of many calls that I was trying to make before the 10 o'clock vote. It happened to be about legal aid. The lady, Mrs. Lane, did not know about the debate that was to take place. She made a few points that are appropriate to raise now, bearing in mind the change in the system.

I will not give all the details. Mrs. Lane, a young widow, told me about her difficulties. Her house was under constant attack. The police would not do anything; they told her that she needed an injunction. She went to a local solicitor and got an injunction. Her total income—not disposable income—is only £88 per week, made up of the widowed mother's allowance of £51, child benefit of £7 and part-time earnings of £30. She has never received supplementary benefit or any other social security benefit.

Mrs. Lane got an injunction. The hassle did not stop. Last September, without warning, up popped a bill for £360. It goes without saying that she has no savings. She got in touch with the legal aid authorities in Preston or London; I am not sure which it was. There was no answer. Next, she had bailiffs at the door because she had not paid her bill. She told them to go away.

Checks were made and it appeared that the authorities had forgotten that she was a single parent and all kinds of things. She has still ended up with a bill for nearly £300. I did not go into all the details because there was not time, but I will provide the Solicitor-General with further details within a few days. I cannot understand how a young widow, who has sought help from the police and who is told to get an injunction, should end up with such a bill when she is struggling along on a low income, without any means-tested benefit. She has been told that she will have to pay off the bill in less than a year. The bill was miscalculated originally, After complaining, she heard nothing until the legal aid authorities sent the bailiffs round.

That is an example of the disgraceful administration of the legal aid system. I do not want to give any information about her solicitors. They do not seem to have given her the best advice about the circumstances that she would get into. If it helps the Minister, the lady's name is Mrs. Lane and the reference number is 1347118-6. I am told that the legal aid office in Preston knows all about the case.

Someone should ensure that the legal aid authorities, even under the new system, do not send the bailiffs round to constituents who have legitimately questioned bills, before those constituents have received answers. Whoever is responsible for it, that is disgraceful administration. No doubt the Solicitor-General will be as appalled as I am. I hope that Mrs. Lane will have some respite and that her bill will be checked properly.

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

Taking into account Mrs. Lane's total income and the bill she has to pay, it is outrageous, even considering the figures contained in the regulations, that she has been put in such a position as a result of going to court to defend herself and her daughter because they were under attack. That is the only point I want to make. I hope that the system under the regulations will be better than the system under which my constituent suffered. I hope too that something can be done about her case.

12.50 am

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I shall be brief. I shall not go into the merits of the regulations, save to say that statutory instrument 1989, No. 340, and statutory instrument 1989, No. 344, carry the rubric that the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments has not yet completed its consideration of them. I protest at the constitutional outrage that has been visited upon Parliament by the Government. These instruments were sent to the Committee, which, I remind hon. Members, has a duty to report to the House if there are any technical faults, if a Minister is abusing his or her power, if there is a fault in drafting, or if an instrument is ultra vires.

These two instruments and others in respect of which faults were not found—there is no qualification on the Order Paper—were sent on Thursday and Friday of last week. The Committee meets every Tuesday at 4.15 pm, so it was quite clear to the Government that by the time we received the instruments we would have only one day in which to consider them before reporting to the House. In respect of the two instruments concerned, we have asked the Department for memoranda. That is what we have to do in order to report an instrument to the House. We have to give the Department an opportunity to present its answer to our queries, yet, by so doing, we lose the opportunity to present a report to the House, because the debate is being held tonight.

There is worse to come. The instruments come into force on 1 April. In the case of statutory instrument No. 344, the fault about which we are particularly concerned involves the calculation of the means of a person being considered for legal aid. Practitioners will be expected to operate this instrument from 1 April, and a parliamentary Committee, whose membership is in accordance with party strengths in the House, is being denied the opportunity to report effectively on it. The Committee is being thwarted in the task that the House has given to it. It really is completely and utterly outrageous.

There is another point. The Committee arranged to meet the Leader of the House on Tuesday to discuss this very problem. I am talking not just about myself, but about Conservative Members also; they accompanied me to see the Leader of the House. We expressed very strong reservations. We do not wish to see our work set at naught by having instruments debated on such a date and at such a time that the Committee simply cannot do its job. That is what is happening tonight, and it is an abuse of Government powers to trample over a Select Committee of the House in such a way. We have been denied the opportunity to report to the House the defects of an instrument.

I should point out to the Minister that the defects in respect of these two instruments were not raised by members of the Committee but were brought to our attention by counsel to the Committee. If the Minister is thinking of arguing that somebody on the Committee is playing politics, let him know that that would be quite erroneous. As he knows, our adviser is the counsel to the Speaker, and he advises us purely on technicalities. In any case, the Committee does not deal with the merits of instruments.

I am sure that I am registering a protest for all members of the Committee, Conservative and Labour alike. It is an abuse of our procedures to bring regulations forward without giving the Committee an opportunity to report, and to do so in such a way that the prayers cannot be dealt with because they were taken after 11.30 pm. The Government are crowding parliamentary time too much. They are getting too much legislation through, and democracy is being trampled on.

12.55 am

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): We must look at the draft regulations in the context of the Government's policies on legal aid and the way in which the profession now views the Government. The profession has lost confidence in the way in which the Government have been operating the legal aid scheme, as have the consumers.

The past 10 years have seen a multiplicity of legislation that has had a great effect on social and welfare law. Before I was elected to the House, I served as a solicitor in a law centre in Leicester. I hoped that, once elected, I would cease to act as a legal adviser to my constituents. Although I hold a practising certificate and I declare an interest for that, I do not practise as a solicitor.

All of us who represent inner-city seats know the level of case work at our surgeries that has been generated by the changes in social security law, housing law and immigration law—in all aspects of social welfare law. What we needed from the Government in the regulations was an extension of legal aid and greater provision for those who seek justice through our legal aid system.

However, what we have is a situation in which consumers cannot afford to go to private solicitors. They cannot afford legal assistance, because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) said, the number of people eligible for legal aid has diminished greatly over the past decade. Many people cannot afford to go to solicitors or to pay for the cost of private legal services. Therefore, they have to go to their Members of Parliament, they have to seek advice from those who are not qualified to give advice, or they simply cannot obtain justice.

I hold no brief for solicitors. I have yet to meet a solicitor who is on the dole or who is starving because he or she cannot make a living. I know many solicitors and barristers who do very well out of the legal aid system and I know many more who do very well out of our private legal system. However, if solicitors are not being properly remunerated for their legal aid work—a survey conducted by the Law Society shows that many solicitors are either giving up legal aid work or are about to give it up because they are not properly remunerated—it means that people are going without proper legal advice, and that is a problem.

In a city such as Leicester different forms of agencies provide legal advice and assistance, and thriving and flourishing private firms of solicitors are essential for

providing that network of legal services. We have two law centres in Leicester—one of which has been in crisis over the past two years, although I hope that at 8 o'clock this evening it will form itself again into a properly functioning law centre. We also have a citizens advice bureau which gives advice and assistance, and we have a private sector. Each of those arms of the network of legal service is essential for my constituents to get proper advice and assistance.

I conducted my own survey of local solicitors firms when I served on the Committee on the Legal Aid Act 1988, sitting opposite the Solicitor-General. I asked them whether they were satisfied with the present administration of the legal aid system, and not a single one replied that it was satisfied. They all felt that they would have to choose between continuing in that work and providing advice and assistance, and doing company and commercial work and conveyancing.

I cannot understand why, having accepted that there are special cases of people who should get assistance under the green form schemes for wills and conveyancing the Solicitor-General does not go that little bit further and allow all the other cases to be admitted. It is essential that if someone is 69, and therefore does not qualify for the exemptions set out by the Solicitor-General, he or she should be able to obtain proper advice on how to prepare his or her will. I support the arguments put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood and others about the duty solicitors scheme. It is essential that those who go to the county court—tenants facing possible evictions or possession orders from local authorities and others—should be able to obtain proper advice, assistance and representation.

There is no evidence that the system is being abused by solicitors. We need a network of legal services throughout the country. I should prefer it if legal aid was not operated on the basis of a business, but as it is in America, which has a public defender scheme in which solicitors are paid a fixed salary through a network of law centres. I accept that, under this Government, who have cut the amount of resources available, we shall not obtain a system of that kind.

I support what the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) said about the need to extend legal aid. So much could have been achieved by the draft regulations. The Solicitor-General could have presented proposals for the extension of legal aid to industrial tribunals, to provide proper assistance for people. Under the Employment Bill currently going through the House, people will be required to put down deposits to guarantee their case before they can go before industrial tribunals. These proposals are further attempts to prevent people from exercising their rights.

When the Legal Aid Act was in Committee, I asked the Solicitor-General whether he felt that justice was cost-effective. He told me—this seemed strange coming from a lawyer, and Solicitor-General—that it should be. That is where we part company. Resources should be made available for people to exercise their rights and obtain proper justice. The Solicitor-General should not kow-tow to the views of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and cut funds which are necessary for people to obtain justice and proper legal services.

1.2 am

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I shall join my hon. Friends in voting against these regulations for the reasons explained by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and my other hon. Friends who have participated in the debate. I shall do so particularly because of the Government's failure to extend legal aid to representation at tribunals, which leaves a serious gap in legal aid provision. In Birmingham, that gap is to some extent filled by the establishment of a number of organisations—notably the Birmingham tribunal unit and the legal unit of the citizens advice bureau. However, this means that the gap is being filled by bodies which are financed largely by city council grants, so Birmingham's ratepayers are paying for people to be legally represented who would not otherwise be represented. Tribunals may deal with matters which are extremely important for the individuals involved.

The Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) referred to industrial tribunals, but there are other extremely important tribunals which deal with social security legislation and people's rights to tenancies, mobility allowance and income support. In the past, there have been applications for single payments and appeals when they were refused. In that range of social security benefits it is extremely important that claimants should have the opportunity to be represented by people who are more articulate, skilled and experienced in those complicated regulations.

I wish to draw the attention of the House and particularly of the Solicitor-General to another omission from the regulations. In recent months, a number of constituents have complained to me about having their legal aid certificates discharged against their will. These people do not consider that they have exhausted the procedure for taking legal proceedings against doctors or neighbours. Such matters can be extremely important in peoples' lives. A constituent of mine, with my assistance, went to appeal against a discharge of her legal aid certificate in a complicated case involving alleged negligence by doctors. After my representations to legal aid head office, a second hearing was arranged because it was agreed that the original hearing of her appeal had not been satisfactorily considered and the procedures had not been followed in such a way as to satisfy the regulations.

I was disturbed to learn that a person who goes to the area committee to appeal against a discharge by the area director is not given the report known as the case note, which is prepared by the staff in the legal aid office. That is incredible. I know of no other example of a person going to court and not being shown the evidence against him —or the evidence of the other side in a civil action. To have to explain why one does not think one's legal aid certificate should be discharged without knowing the reasons for its discharge is extraordinary. I know of no tribunal that would consider a person's appeal against the refusal of a social security benefit without showing the person an explanatory statement. Many of my constituents have appealed against decisions on immigration, and they are always given an explanatory statement prepared by the entry clearance officer.

It is not enough to provide, as the regulations do, for a person to be given the grounds for the discharge of a legal aid certificate. We are used to seeing two or three-line grounds for refusal of entry clearance or of a social

[Mr. Terry Davis]

security benefit. It is important to understand the reasons why the entry clearance officer, or the adjudication officer in the social security system, has come to his or her decision to refuse the person something. Yet the regulations do not provide for people to be given explanatory statements. I imagine that the Solicitor-General, like me, did not know that that was necessary before, but the principles of natural justice require that a person be given the reasons for a decision.

My constituent who wished to appeal against the discharge of a legal aid certificate went to the area committee and explained why she thought that her legal aid certificate should be reinstated, but she was not given any information about the reasons for the decision by the legal aid staff—reasons which were given in writing to the area committee. She was expected to argue her case against reasons that she had not been told. That is amazing.

That decision was not made by the legal aid area director, who sheltered behind a decision which she said had been made by the Legal Aid Committee in London —that people should not be given reasons for a decision to discharge a legal aid certificate. That is grossly unfair. Hon. Members on both sides of the House would consider it so. I hope that the Solicitor-General does, too, and that he will join me in making strong representations to the new Legal Aid Board which will replace the present Legal Aid Committee to ensure that this bad practice is changed immediately.

1.8 am

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I declare an interest—past, present, and probably future: I have been both barrister and solicitor.

I read the regulations with growing horror. I ran a large practice in the north of England—it included a large legal aid element—and experience has taught me that profitability in legal aid has slowly decreased over the years. That presents a real danger. Not only are the numbers of people who are eligible for legal aid falling, but the incentive to solicitors' firms to undertake legal aid work has decreased.

It is all very well for hon. Members to say that there are no poor solicitors. A solicitor practising in a rural area is already under threat from the reform of the conveyancing rules. At the same time, according to Law Society surveys, legal aid work is clearly unremunerative. Therefore, the solicitor has two choices: either to forsake work or to move to a large city or a company in that city. That means that practices are moving from the rural and semi-suburban areas whether or not they depend on legal aid work. The right to representation is denied to people in those areas.

When we introduced the legal aid system years ago I thought that the objective was to increase people's rights to representation in the courts. Over the past 20 years I have seen that the law is slowly concentrating in the hands of those who can afford to pay for it. As was said earlier, a company is represented at an industrial tribunal with all its might, ammunition and armaments. The applicant may sometimes be assisted by his trade union official, but very often he is on his own. What price justice?

The Law Society recently produced a document which shows that the representation in county courts for the unassisted plaintiff provided by solicitors on a voluntary basis, is diminishing. The amount of remuneration available makes that representation uneconomical. Legal aid is being withdrawn in that area.

In the county courts and before registrars, the unrepresented defendant, very often the plaintiff in person, appears without the necessary skills—*[Interruption.]* I hope that the Government Whip who has just entered the Chamber will concentrate on this debate rather than on his social life. Manners are precious, even in this place.

Justice is being denied. The plaintiff in the circumstances that I have just described does not know all the rules or regulations. He does not know when the affidavit must be filed and he is unaware of the procedural minefield through which most plaintiffs must proceed if they wish to succeed. Very often in possession cases a plaintiff will face the might and main of a major company landlord who will be armed with counsel, solicitor and all the good advice that they can give.

Matters are currently striking at the very heart of our system of justice in respect of the criminal law. The first of these is the serious matter of the provision of expert witnesses at Crown court trials. I am aware of occasions when I and my colleagues at the Bar have advised that expert evidence is required. You have no idea, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the difficulty in obtaining permission to call expert witnesses on behalf of the defence. Those witnesses may be able to give evidence on handwriting or fingerprints or they may be engineering witnesses in car-ringing cases. However, the defence is told that those witnesses are not allowed. Justice is not being served when that happens. We do not advise that experts are necessary in those cases if they are not, because counsel who so advise run the professional risk of being criticised. No one would undertake that risk lightly. However, legal aid authorities are reluctant to allow such witnesses and the usual excuse is the cost involved.

Justice is again put at risk by the meanness or the cash limits being applied to legal aid work. It is easy for lawyers to plead their own cause. We are often the subject of fun and the butt of humour because we appear to be asking for more, like Oliver Twist. However, the issues that I raise tonight have nothing to do with the remuneration of lawyers, because there will always be lawyers who are prepared to do legal aid work. Lawyers have a sense of morality and a commitment to justice.

The point I make is that because of the meanness of the legal aid authority and the denial of assistance to the plaintiff or to the person in the dock, his or her case or cause—and sometimes his or her liberty—is put at risk. That is because somewhere there is a bureaucrat who does not understand the system but who is the arbitrary judge of whether expert advice or help should be made available to the person whose liberty may be at risk.

The regulations do nothing to serve justice. They will probably diminish the number of lawyers who are prepared to undertake legal aid work. They will probably make justice less accessible to many people. The Solicitor-General need not reply to me tonight, but perhaps he will at some stage explain what tables 1 and 2 on page 20 of the regulations mean. I suspect that they constitute another attempt to cut the income of those preparing to serve justice by undertaking legal aid work.

1.15 am

The Solicitor-General: I shall endeavour to answer briefly the questions raised by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and by other hon. Members. The first question of the hon. Member for Norwood concerned eligibility, which quickly became linked with other points on remuneration. As those hon. Members who participated in debates on the Legal Aid Bill will recall, it is extremely difficult accurately to answer what proportion of the population—let alone of households—is eligible for legal aid. It depends very much on the circumstances of the individual household. It may not be eligible as a whole, but if the family breaks up, one of the spouses may become so.

Legal aid is reaching more people than ever before. Since 1979-80, the number of criminal legal aid orders granted has increased by 40 per cent. to nearly 600,000. Over the same 10-year period, the number of bills paid for those receiving advice and assistance under the green form scheme has increased also by about 40 per cent. and now stands at more than 1 million. The number of new legal aid certificates issued has increased by about 30 per cent. to 250,000. In addition, assistance by way of representation —ABWOR—was introduced and has been provided in about 60,000 cases.

The Government have also made provision for duty solicitor schemes at magistrates courts and for advice and assistance at police stations. In the 10 years since 1979, overall expenditure on legal aid has increased from about £100 million in 1979-80 to nearly £550 million in 1989-90, which is an increase way ahead of inflation. Of course it relates to many more people receiving legal aid, but that is what legal aid is about.

As to remuneration, there have been detailed discussions between the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Law Society. Mention has been made in the debate of the Touche Ross report, which was well designed to inform debate on what levels of remuneration ought to be. It is true that, according to the tests applied, legal aid remuneration does not appear to be profitable in the case of a small firm undertaking a low volume of such work.

The difficulty is that, at present, the same levels of remuneration are payable regardless of whether a practice undertakes one or two cases over a lengthy period, or a large number of cases, week in and week out. However, the figures—which have been the subject of much discussion between the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Law Society—show that, provided a practice undertakes a substantial volume of legal aid work, it can be very profitable. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) will understand that very well.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Solicitor-General accept that the cost of running a solicitors' practice is between £40 and £60 an hour in an urban area and probably between £30 and £40 an hour in a rural area? I may be going back a few years as I have not checked recently. If the Solicitor-General would only look at the legal aid rates, he would see that the amount paid per hour is less than the cost of running a practice, so it cannot be profitable.

The Solicitor-General: I did not intend to incense the hon. Gentleman. I wanted to draw it to the attention of the House that, if a firm does a substantial amount of legal aid work, it can be very profitable. The problem is not that the figures are wrong, but to find a fair way to deal with small firms in rural areas, just as one looks for a fair way to deal with medical practitioners with scattered rural practices. The Lord Chancellor's Department intends to study the matter carefully. However, the Touche Ross report demonstrates that legal aid can be substantially profitable if a firm does sufficient work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, North-West (Mr. Ashby), the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and other hon. Members called for legal aid for tribunals. The position is not static and we discussed the matter in relation to the Legal Aid Bill. The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) will remember that research is in course, particularly into legal aid for industrial tribunals, social security appeal tribunals, immigration adjudicators and mental health review tribunals. That research team will report shortly.

Mr. Vaz: Will the Solicitor-General give way on that point?

The Solicitor-General: No. I must press on, as I have to deal with a number of points.

Green form assistance is already available. The hon. Member for Hodge Hill raised a particular case in which there appeared to be some lack of natural justice in an appeal to an area committee. The general reasons why legal aid has been refused are given, although individual committees may have different practices; if the hon. Gentleman writes to me, I shall look into the case he raised.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) raised another detailed case. If he sends me further details, I shall look into the case and do my best to answer him.

An apology may be owed to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), as the regulations have had to be brought before the House in some hurry. He recognised that we had to bring the measures forward because some citizens might lose because the regulations must be in effect by 1 April. To put the matter into some perspective, I am told that the instruments were laid on 8 March and drafts of them were supplied in advance to the officials of his Committee in January. If there is fault on our part, I shall look into it, and if an apology is owed I give it now. We certainly do not wish to be disrespectful to his Committee, but I hope that the points that I have made and our attempts to do things in advance have at least eased the position.

I have covered most of the points raised in the debate. We are dealing with a serious matter. I emphasise the very large increase in the provision of legal aid. The object of legal aid is to provide those who cannot afford it with sufficient means to litigate when litigation is necessary for circumstances beyond their control or where they should reasonably have support. The objective of the regulations is to put the Legal Aid Act into effect, and I commend them to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 73, Noes 32.

Division No. 134] **[1.24 am**

AYES

Amess, David	Boswell, Tim
Amos, Alan	Bowis, John
Arbuthnot, James	Brazier, Julian
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Bright, Graham
Ashby, David	Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Batiste, Spencer	Carrington, Matthew
Bellingham, Henry	Chapman, Sydney
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*

Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forth, Eric
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Lang, Ian
Lightbown, David
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Widdecombe, Ann
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. John M. Taylor.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bermingham, Gerald
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Livsey, Richard
Nellist, Dave
Pike, Peter L.
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rooker, Jeff
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Joan
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Legal Advice and Assistance (Scope) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 3rd March, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Matrimonial Proceedings) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 3rd March, be approved.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Legal Aid (Functions) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 3rd March, be approved.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Value Added Tax

That the Value Added Tax (Education) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 267), dated 27th February 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 1st March, be approved.

Coal Industry

That the draft Coal Industry (Restructuring Grants) Order 1989, which was laid before this House on 24th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Question agreed to.

Water Rates (Grampian Region)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

1.35 am

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I am glad to have the opportunity to raise the issue of metered water rates. I shall refer specifically to Grampian region, although it is an issue throughout Scotland. Before I ask the Minister a number of questions, I should like to put the problem into perspective.

Grampian regional council has always had a very positive attitude towards business and industry. The present Social and Liberal Democrat-led administration has continued to develop what I freely acknowledge to be the previous Conservative administration's pro-business attitude. It has adopted a positive approach to promoting the attractive business environment and enterprising character of the north east of Scotland through its small business enterprise scheme, which dispenses more than £1 million per year in grants and loans. The Grampian Initiative, chaired by Councillor Nicol Stephen has continued this promotional stance with all-party support. Non-domestic rates for Grampian remain the lowest in Scotland. The general climate is positive and pro-business and the council is anxious to ensure that opportunities are encouraged and that businesses flourish in the area.

The rapid expansion of the oil industry in Grampian during the 1970s led to the progressive withdrawal of assisted area status, and traditional industries faced rising local costs as a result of pressure while capital assistance was being removed. In the circumstances, the council was forced to invest in substantial new schemes to provide for the extra demands for water services. The Minister may recall that a proposal to create a large stored water catchment area in the Cabrach in the 1960s was resisted by local landowners. It is a matter of continuing regret that that did not go ahead.

Water in Grampian continues to be drawn from the region's rivers and a high proportion of capital charges are of recent origin, with a consequently high debt service charge—£9·89 million for 1989-90. The region also faces costs well above average for electricity for pumping water out of the rivers in the absence of adequate storage facilities. The council took full advantage of the provision under the Water (Scotland) Act 1980 to provide extra support for the 7,000 metered water users out of the general rate. That legislation was of particular help to the region, given the background that I have described.

The very positive support allowed under the 1980 Act is irreversibly compromised, however, by the requirement of schedule 5, paragraph 4 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, which effectively removes the option. The Act says:

"A local authority may apportion their estimated expenditure under paragraph 2 above on whatever basis they consider appropriate, but"—

and this is a very big but—

"they shall ensure that the apportionment is not such as to show undue preference to, or discriminate unduly against, any class or classes of person liable to pay—

(a) the direct charges;

(b) the community water charges; or

(c) the non-domestic water rate, respectively."

Properly, and quite understandably, Grampian regional council consulted its legal advisers and COSLA to determine the range of discretion open to it in the light of that change in the law. The council had to ensure that the region's water costs—estimated at £20,062,000 for 1989-90—were fully covered by water charges and fairly allocated among the three classes of user. Total consumption is estimated at 58,807,000 cu m. Some 51 per cent. of that is domestic, 40·7 per cent. is metered and 8·3 per cent. is for other non-domestic users.

COSLA's proposals for how the allocation should be applied were based, as I am sure the Minister will acknowledge, on a technical appraisal of the application of the law and can in no way be interpreted as a political comment. The Scottish Development Department was represented on the working party so presumably it accepted the objective nature of the formula that COSLA worked out. The council did not apply the formula without modification for local circumstances. It did not slavishly follow COSLA's guidelines. It was agreed, for example, that only 80 per cent. of leakages should be allocated across all classes of water, because it was known that 20 per cent. of leaks come from consumers' private pipework. That had a mitigating effect on the metered water charge, but was nevertheless a small proportion of the total amount.

The council concluded that the law

"very severely restricts the Council's ability to assist metered consumers to any material extent."

The council maintains that 10p of the total increase of 22·5p per cubic metre—an increase from 20·5p to 43p—results directly from the abolition of the public water rate, and 10p from the abolition of the provision in the 1980 Act allowing for cross-subsidy from the domestic rate. That leaves only 2·5p to be attributed to the rising cost of providing water, so it is a marginal percentage. In other words, the overwhelming majority of the increase is outside the council's discretion. If it showed more than due preference to any class of user, it could face legal action from other classes of user who felt that they had been discriminated against.

I am sure that the Minister recognises from the representations that he has received from me and from others that the increase has caused widespread concern among metered water users who are facing dramatic and abrupt cost increases. The increases range from several hundred pounds at the bottom—that is still a significant amount because we are talking about small farms and businesses, for which that kind of increase in cost is still significant—to more than £100,000 for the largest users. That is a substantial extra cost to absorb on the bottom line.

The situation is especially unfortunate for the food industry, which is of established and growing importance for Grampian. The region is renowned for its quality products from land and sea, and adding value to these is of major importance to the future direction of the local economy. That is why the region is actively promoting food parks at Inverurie in my constituency and also in Forres in Moray. Such substantial increases in water charges as in the council's judgment are required by law are neither helpful nor in any way what the region wishes to impose. Barry Evans of Buchan Meat is chairman of the Grampian Initiative food task force which is spending £75,000 marketing the region's food processing potential. Mr. Evans has expressed considerable concern at the impact of the increases on promotional activities.

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

On the basis of my meetings with the Minister and our exchange of letters, I must say that if the Minister believes that there is scope within the law for a substantially different apportionment of charges between metered water users and others than the legal advisers to Grampian and COSLA believe, it seems only reasonable that his officials should at least agree to have a private meeting with Grampian officials to discuss the interpretation. That view is strongly pressed by councillors and users.

Although the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) is not present, he supports my request to the Minister to encourage such a meeting to take place. There is a fundamental difference of view between his interpretation and that of his legal advisers and that of the legal advisers to the council. It does not help to make political statements when the issue at stake is the legal advice given to respective bodies.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The hon. Gentleman may be aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and I are organising a meeting of the many affected businesses in our constituencies at the end of the month in Portsoy. We have sent an invitation for the Minister or one of his colleagues to come to the meeting to explain the Scottish Office case. Would it not be extraordinarily disappointing if, having already refused a meeting with Grampian regional council, representatives of the Scottish Office also refused to attend that meeting?

Mr. Bruce: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is not acceptable for the Minister to refuse to meet the council officials and representatives or the users at either a public meeting at Portsoy or at a private meeting. It is essential that the matter is cleared up at a meeting, and I understand why the hon. Gentleman and his colleague are anxious to learn what is happening from a Government representative.

The Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 is the source of the change and I believe that the Minister steered it through the House. Therefore, he knows the intentions behind that Act and the expected outturn. The impact is not exclusively confined to Grampian, but it is the area worst effected. That observation is borne out by the fact that metered water rates throughout Scotland have increased sharply, Grampian's increase of 110 per cent. is the largest because, ironically, it has done much to help water users in the past and, for physical reasons, it has the highest water costs in Scotland.

Increases elsewhere include 72 per cent. in Highland, 69 per cent. in Strathclyde, 64 per cent. in Dumfries and Galloway and 53 per cent. in Lothian. Even the lowest increases of 18 per cent. in Fife, 24 per cent. in Central and 27 per cent. in Borders are well above inflation. Those increases are mostly due to the fact that those councils had not taken full account of the previous legislation.

The impact is so serious that the Government should be prepared to provide some form of transitional funding, especially as the requirement is that the apportionment of sewerage charges should follow suit—over a longer period —and charges for that and water may also be subjected to VAT.

The Minister has said that he has no power to intervene, but I question that. He could make allocation under revenue support grant orders to provide transitional funding. I remind the Minister that the Government found time for primary legislation to provide for transitional funding to compensate people for the effects of rating revaluation and this is an exact parallel. It is causing considerable hardship and affecting people who would support the Government.

Time could quickly and easily be made in the parliamentary programme. I am sure that the hon. Members for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) would agree that there is one Bill which we could do without. If that Bill went we would have the legislative space and time needed to deal with this problem.

The crunch question is why the change in the law was introduced. Apparently the main objective is to put water charges on a separate footing from other local authority accounts. Inevitably that appears as the first step towards the privatisation of Scotland's water services. The fact that the Government inserted a major new Scottish section into the Water Bill yesterday reinforces the case to suggest that paving measures for privatisation are being effected.

The increases are only the beginning. Once privatisation gathers momentum, all water users will face sustained and rising costs and, of course, all water supplies will eventually be metered.

The Minister's refusal so far to meet Grampian regional council or representatives of the 7,000 metered water users shows that the Government are unwilling to admit responsibility for their own laws. Grampian regional council's legal advice is that it had no choice but to impose the increases so as to conform with the law. The council has demonstrated, as my speech has shown, that it is pro-business, has always supported business, is anxious to promote the food industry and would like help it to adjust to the change that has been imposed.

If the Minister believes that his Department has a judgment different from Grampian region about what can be done, the least I ask him to do is to agree to a meeting —even a private meeting—at which officials can get together to discuss the matter so tht if we cannot reduce the charges this year, we can ensure that reductions are possible in the following years. Otherwise the Minister will be putting businesses and jobs unnecessarily at risk. I challenge him to explain how the bulk of the increase is not due to the law introduced by the Government.

1.51 am

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has afforded the House a useful opportunity to debate the new arrangements for water rates, especially metered water rates, in Grampian region.

At present, under the Water (Scotland) Act 1980, water supplied to the non-domestic sector is paid for in three ways. First non-domestic consumers with an unmetered supply pay the domestic water rate levied on a proportion, usually one half, of the net annual value of the premises concerned. Secondly, metered water users pay a charge according to the volume of water consumed. Thirdly, in addition, in Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Grampian, Highland and Strathclyde regional councils and Orkney and Western Isles island councils, all ratepayers, domestic

and non-domestic, pay, through their regional or general rate, a public water rate which can meet up to one third of the net expenditure on water supply. Water consumed in the domestic sector is paid for by the domestic water rate and, in those councils where it is applicable, by the public water rate.

The existing system had to change. People did not know how much it cost to provide their water supply, authorities could charge part of the cost to the general account and there were no provisions in the legislation that required the charges to be fair at all. It is right that everyone should know the true cost of services they receive or commodities they use. Water is a valuable resource and while it may be delivered from the heavens free, it has to be collected, stored, treated and distributed to individual properties. In many places it has to be pumped as well, and this is particularly true of Grampian region.

Mr. Bruce: In the light of what the Minister just said, may I ask him to explain why the Government introduced the 1980 Act, which did exactly the opposite and allowed cross-subsidisation from the general rate? What happened in those eight years that made the Government decide that they wanted to change the system?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is inviting me to stray down avenues which would prevent me from replying to his concerns about metered water charges. I have given him the reason why we believe that a change is now desirable.

Under the present system, water is paid for on the basis of rateable value, quantity used or a combination of both. The new arrangements for paying for water are contained in the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 and the provisions in the Act have been known since 1986. Specifically, the Act requires that in apportioning costs between community water charges, non-domestic water rates and metered charges, water authorities shall not show undue preference to, or discriminate unduly against, any class of consumer. It also abolishes the public water rate.

The Act does not specify how each authority should make its even-handed apportionment of costs. That is up to them, but almost all have chosen to distribute the costs in proportion to the volume used by each class of consumer. For the first time, authorities had to establish how much of their expenditure should be allocated to each sector. Their apportionments have shown that metered consumers had in the past not borne their full share of the cost of supply. A significant adjustment in metered rates was called for in order not to discriminate against other classes of consumer.

However, the increase in metered rates does not present the whole picture. Offsetting savings from the abolition of the public water rate reduce the impact significantly. Those with high rateable values and low consumptions will pay less than before. For example, in Grampian a business with a rateable value of £10,000 could use up to 500 cu m of water per year and still pay less under the new arrangements. A company with a rateable value of £1 million could use up to 50,000 cu m and still be better off.

Within the fairness provisions, there is, however, scope for authorities to exercise some discretion without making any undue discrimination. In fact, many authorities have made adjustments to the basic volume apportionments to reduce the impact on metered consumers. Grampian, in fact, has modified the straight "volume used" criteria recommended by COSLA and has reduced its metered water charge by 2½p below what it would otherwise have been.

There is also provision in the Act to allow different meter rates to be set for different circumstances. This could mean lower rates for bulk users, but equally I have to say that there can be arguments for higher unit charges with increased consumption—to encourage conservation of water or the postponement of major capital investment in new reservoirs. Variable metered rates are not, however, normal practice in the water industry and no council has chosen this course of action.

The total cost of water in Grampian next year is rising by only 6·5 per cent.—less than the rate of inflation—and the new arrangements will do nothing to increase that cost. But although the total operating cost of supplying water will not be increased by the new arrangements, the cost to each class of consumer has varied. Metered water charges have risen generally throughout Scotland and now range from 21p per cubic metre in Central region to 43p per cubic metre in Grampian region, as the hon. Gentleman said. The increases themselves will be from 18 per cent. in Fife to 109 per cent. in Grampian.

We have heard tonight, and in the media over recent weeks, the effect that the increases in metered charges will have on Grampian region. Let us look at the reasons for these increases. First, domestic water ratepayers have in the past subsidised the metered water rate by nearly one third. Secondly, the abolition of the public water rate, which was based on rateable values and could meet up to one third of the net cost, has resulted in that largely hidden element being incorporated in the new charges. Thirdly, the water supply system in Grampian is based almost entirely on river abstraction, a situation unique in Scotland but more familiar in England and Wales. This results in higher operating costs from pumping. Finally, the high level of capital expenditure, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, in recent years to service oil-related developments has incurred substantial loan charges, making the running costs for the region very high compared with the rest of Scotland. All these factors have combined to make the metered water rate of 43p per cubic metre the highest in Scotland.

I do not seek to underrate the impact that this year's increase, decided upon by Grampian regional council, will have on high users paying metered charges. However, industry should also bear in mind that the non-domestic rate poundage in Grampian is among the lowest in the country.

The legislation to give effect to the new arrangements was enacted by Parliament in 1987. Grampian regional council, if it had wished, could have prepared for the new charges by reducing the contribution from the public water rate in 1988-89. However, first warning of the new charges was given by the regional council in a statement issued in November 1988, and at a subsequent meeting with non-domestic ratepayers in December, guide figures were issued. Final figures were made known towards the end of January. There is little doubt that industries which use large amounts of water in Grampian and elsewhere will pay more under the new arrangements. However, there will be offsetting reductions to most consumers from the abolition of the public water rate in Grampian and elsewhere in Scotland.

[Mr. Lang]

We must remember that the baseline for calculating the business rate was reduced by 1·4p in Grampian to take account of the public water element. I can tell the House that many businesses, offices and shops will pay less for their water next year; in the case of large offices and shops in Aberdeen, the reduction could be over 80 per cent. For example, a major high street retail store in Aberdeen will actually save 87 per cent. on its water charges, despite the substantial increase in the metered rate.

Agricultural premises do not pay rates, except on the dwelling houses. They will therefore obtain minimal benefits from the abolition of the public water rate, in Grampian or elsewhere, and will have to pay the new metered charges. However, most farms have a metered supply, and those adults living in farm houses or cottages sharing that supply will not have to pay a personal community charge. In Grampian, this offsetting saving will amount this year to £30 per adult receiving water from the farm's metered supply, which would in many cases include agricultural workers and their wives living in the farm cottages. For the farms themselves, there may be opportunities to conserve water, and I have no doubt that it will be possible to eliminate unnecessary waste.

The hon. Gentleman has suggested phasing in the new arrangements, as was done in England and Wales when the Water Bill 1973 introduced fairness provisions for the first time. But at that time the basis of charging was not changed. We, however, had to introduce a completely new charge—the community water charge—and, as I have already explained, had to lay down the framework within which authorities have to decide how much of their expenditure should be apportioned to each class. Fairness provisions were therefore needed at the outset.

The hon. Gentleman and others have complained about high metered rates. I make no apology for prohibiting authorities from showing undue discrimination for or against any class of consumer in making their apportionment. That is only fair. Had the fairness provisions not been incorporated in the legislation, community water charges could have risen to subsidise the metered water charges in one area, and the reverse in others. It is only right that all sectors should pay their fair share.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about a meeting with Grampian regional council. Because the law gives Ministers no discretion over these matters, very little would be achieved by a meeting. However, I am sure that officials of Grampian regional council will have explored all their anxieties with my officials in the Scottish Office, and if such exploration were to indicate that a meeting between officials would be useful, of course one could take place.

The average metered charge for water in Scotland will be just over 28p per cubic metre. This is to be compared with the average equated meter charge in England and Wales, which is likely to be around 40p per cubic metre for 1989-90. In Europe, metered rates for 1988 were generally higher, with Germany at 67p per cubic metre, Belgium 53p and France 44p, and can be expected to be even higher in 1989-90.

Water in Scotland is still a good buy. Scotland remains an attractive location for companies seeking a European base, and the increase in metered water charges should not have a significant effect on the ability to attract new industries.

Industry is constantly pressing us to introduce a level playing field for business rates, and we are working towards this along a number of avenues. Change in the water charging arrangements is one.

It is only right that people should pay for what they use, and get what they pay for. I believe that there is a general acceptance among those who have commented on the changes that the move towards transparency of costs and fair allocation among users is not only just but long overdue.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 23 March 1989

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

MERCHANT SHIPPING

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Weighing of Goods Vehicles and other Cargo) (Application to non-UK Ships) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 2nd March, be approved.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Loading and Stability Assessment of Ro/Ro Passenger Ships) (Non-United Kingdom Ships) Regulations 1989, which were laid before this House on 2nd March, be approved.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Plessey (GEC takeover)

9.35 am

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of over 500 workers in Plessey in my constituency. The company was founded in my constituency over 60 years ago and the registered office is still there. The petition has been organised by Mr. Eddie Lewis, the convenor of the shop stewards. The workers are upset that within two and a half years they are again having to organise a petition against the proposed takeover by GEC, which is a predator company wishing to asset-strip and strip the research and development that has been so carefully carried out over the years. The petition states:

"the undersigned object to the proposed takeover of The Plessey Company plc by General Electric Company-Siemens because such a takeover would result in very heavy job losses, serious harm to the research and development in which The Plessey Company plc has up to now been involved and the creation of a monopoly which would limit the choice facing major customers in the electronics and defence markets.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House do urge the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to take all such steps as are open to him to prevent the said takeover."

That is the petition and I hope that the House will take due notice of the concern of my constituents in this important matter.

To lie upon the Table.

HM Coastguard

9.36 am

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I beg to ask leave to present a petition containing 25,000 signatures concerning HM coastguard. It is a great honour, not only as an Opposition spokesman but as an ex-seafarer, to present the petition, which represents the views of people from local councils, coastal dwellers, auxiliary coastguard volunteers, lifeboat crews, fishing fleets, merchant seamen, yacht, boat and sub-aqua clubs. They wish to petition against the cutbacks in Her Majesty's coastguard. Stations have been cut from 28 to 21, sectors reduced from 150 to 110 and manpower from 700 to 500 while incidents increased by over 10 per cent. last year alone.

"The Humble Petition of the undersigned sheweth that the coastguard provides a vital service to the mariners, coastal dwellers and holidaymakers alike, is currently threatened by cutbacks in resources available to the service and the proposed closure of coastguard stations at Hartland (North Devon), Moray (Peterhead), Ramsey (Isle of Man) leading to deteriorated service.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House ensure that Her Majesty's coastguard receives the resources necessary to the maintenance of full and thorough rescue service throughout the length and breadth of the United Kingdom's coastline and coastal waters; and that no coastguard station closures take place, in particular that the threat to Hartland, Moray and Ramsey be lifted."

I hope that the House will pay due attention to the petitioners.

To lie upon the Table.

Community Care (Dundee)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

9.37 am

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I first applied for an Adjournment debate on this topic at a time when the immediate fate of 10 community care projects in Dundee and 23 in Tayside as a whole hung in the balance. Those projects had been brought into existence under the old community programme and had therefore, been fully funded by the Government. They provided a variety of community-based services for some of the most needy and disadvantaged groups in Dundee, including many elderly people.

There were involved projects such as Crossroads in Dundee, which provides a home-care service for the severely handicapped and chronically ill as well as for the carers who look after them. They also involved Kandahar house, Dundee, which provides day facilities for the mentally and physically handicapped and former psychiatric patients, and Menziehill community care project in Dundee, which provides a home visiting and caring service for the single elderly and other vulnerable groups and which plays an important preventive role in keeping people in the community and out of institutional care. Whitfield court playgroup, which provides playgroup facilities for children from an area of multiple deprivation and which also provides educational and training opportunities for the parents of those children was another of the projects. St. Salvador's day care is a day centre for the mentally handicapped adults in Dundee and assists them to become better integrated into the community.

Such projects, along with the Coldside and Ardler community care projects and the adult learning support and agency teams, provided Dundee with a range of vital personal services which were available to vulnerable groups in our city. The initial threat to the continued survival of those projects arose when the Government announced their intention to scrap the community programme from September 1988 and to replace it with the new employment training scheme. The Government's message to the Dundee community care projects was simple: if they wanted to go on, they had to get into the new employment training scheme, which was the only source of funding that the Government were prepared to make available to them.

Of course, such a proposal was impractical and unacceptable to everyone who understood the nature of the projects and who wanted them to continue on the same basis. The Government's case does not bear examination. For example, the Secretary of State for Scotland made much of the fact that the Clydeside branch of Crossroads had already agreed to go into employment training. He singled it out as an example that should be followed by all the other Crossroads schemes. However, the Secretary of State and other Ministers ignored the fact that 47 other Crossroads branches across Scotland had already taken an informed decision not to follow Clydeside's example. The minutes of the executive committee of the Scottish Council on Disability said:

"the other 47 had given careful consideration and decided that this employment training scheme was not designed for Crossroad care attendant schemes."

Ministers would be better advised to listen to the advice of 47 of the 48 Crossroads branches in Scotland instead of latching on to the one branch that happens to suit the Government's argument.

It was not just a matter of the Crossroads care attendant schemes. In Tayside, voluntary day care units at Brechin, Montrose, Forfar and Kinross agreed to enter employment training when the community programme was wound up last year. After five months' experience of employment training, they wrote to the Minister of State with responsibility for education and health, saying that, having had the opportunity to evaluate ET, their blunt opinion was that the system did not work satisfactorily. They pointed out that employment training rules were different from the old community programme rules. They did not allow, for example, for sufficient full-time staff members on the projects. They said that it was difficult to recruit suitable personnel, leading to gaps in the core staff who were essential to the success of the projects. Elderly clients were unhappy with the constant changes in staff, which are inevitable under employment training. The voluntary day care units said that the uncertainty in service provision caused by employment training was discouraging private sector support for the projects.

Those schemes had learned from experience that the Government's advice was impractical and that alternatives for ongoing funding were essential if they were to continue to provide the service that they had provided. Fortunately, the 10 Dundee projects and 13 other similar Tayside projects were saved from the bitter experience of the voluntary day care schemes by the minority Labour administration of Tayside regional council. Last September, the council intervened to extend the funding of the projects until the end of this month. The question was: who would provide the funding beyond 1 April?

At that point, I had hoped to raise this issue with an Adjournment debate. Unfortunately, some sharp practice by the Government Whips succeeded in scuppering the final scheduled debate on housing, and with it my Adjournment debate. I am therefore grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for having allowed me a further opportunity to raise this matter in one of the debates this morning.

Events have moved on in the interim period. On Wednesday 15 March, the policy and resources committee of Tayside regional council unanimously agreed to intervene and to grant an 11th-hour reprieve to the projects. All 23 projects in Tayside will receive continued financial support from the council for six months, beginning on 1 April. The permanent staff members are to be retained in the meantime on their existing terms and conditions of service. Temporary staff will be similarly retained until 30 September or the completion of their 52 weeks, whichever comes earlier. Council officers have been instructed to identify with the care groups their minimum staffing requirements and to report on the feasibility of continuing the projects beyond the six-month period from 1 April.

The Office of the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)—contacted my office during the week to ask whether I still wished to pursue this Adjournment debate following those developments. Of course, the answer is yes. That approach speaks volumes about that Office's deplorable attitude to this affair. The only point that concerned it was that, wherever else funding was to be found to save the projects, it would not come from the Minister or from direct Government

funding. As far as the Minister is concerned, now that Tayside region has stepped in to save the projects, that is the end of the story.

It is, of course, anything but the end of the story because a number of vital questions remain to be answered by the Minister. Why have the Government refused to accept responsibility for funding the projects when the Government alone are responsible for the funding crisis that threatens the projects' existence? Why have the Government failed to respond to the wide-ranging criticism of their suggestion that community care projects of this kind can be accommodated within the employment training scheme? Why do the Government leave regional councils to pick up the pieces when those councils are severely strapped for cash, whereas the Government had a huge budget surplus of billions of pounds which they wasted in the recent Budget in paying back the national debt? What do the Government intend to do about the long-term funding future for such projects in Dundee and elsewhere in Scotland?

The Griffiths report on care in the community has been carefully ingored by the Minister since its publication just over a year ago. The kind of infrastructure of community care that would make possible the transfer of patients from long-term institutional care back into the community is not in place. That is why projects of this kind have developed through schemes such as the community programme. Instead of withdrawing support funding from the projects as the Minister has done, he should have provided development funding through health boards and social work departments to enable the work of the projects to be built on and developed into the sort of community care that Griffiths envisaged.

It is surely ironic that, far from providing additional development funding to councils, the Minister and his friends are hounding councils to cut the resources available to them. For example, had Tayside levied a poll tax of £178 as Scottish Office Ministers advised it to do, instead of the £220 poll tax upon which it finally decided, Tayside region would have had between £11 million and £12 million less to spend on its social work education and other services. Had that happened, not just the community care projects that I have described would have been at risk.

For the moment, the projects have been saved by a council that cares, but their long-term future and the long-term future of community care as a whole remain depressing because of a Government who do not care and will not live up to their funding responsibilities. I hope that, in responding to the debate, the Minister will address the issue of funding for the long-term future of community care projects such as envisaged in the Griffiths report—something that the hon. Gentleman and other Ministers have failed lamentably to do in the recent White Paper. I look forward to hearing the Minister's response.

9.48 am

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on obtaining an Adjournment debate on a subject which is important to many thousands of individuals and to families and concerned organisations in Dundee and Tayside.

It is important to remind ourselves who is involved in care in the community. We are talking about people whose families find it difficult to look after them and for whom voluntary organisations have formed groups to provide services that normally would have been provided by the social work department of Tayside regional council or Tayside health board in day care centres or hostels. If the council or the health board had to take on the responsibilities of the voluntary organisations they would have to reduce services in other areas. That would increase pressure on individuals in Dundee and Tayside.

It is important not only to outline the views of my hon. Friend and myself, but to remind ourselves of some of the main players in the drama and some of their comments. I shall spell out the views of those who are supposed to be concerned and of those who are genuinely concerned. On 25 January, the Secretary of State wrote to the chairman of Crossroads (Scotland) saying:

"I find it most regrettable that Crossroads organisations have largely rejected Employment Training as a source of funding and I remain unconvinced that other Crossroads organisations could not follow the Crossroads (Clydesdale) example if the will to do so existed. Crossroads (Clydesdale) clearly believes that it has a future operating within Employment Training and I welcome and share that belief. More generally, I remain convinced that caring organisations like Crossroads could provide excellent Employment Training opportunities. I have however to accept that the management of other Crossroads schemes, having assessed what Crossroads (Clydesdale) proposes to do, have decided not to follow that example. That is of course a decision for them."

The executive committee of Crossroads in Scotland held a meeting on 23 February, having had time to consider the correspondence from the Secretary of State. The chairman, Dr. Kuenssberg reported that it was totally absurd of the Secretary of State to have said what he did in his letter of 25 January. One branch out of 48 had joined the employment training scheme and the other 47 had given careful consideration and decided that the employment training scheme was not suitable for Crossroads care attendant schemes. He also reported that a number of Crossroads schemes had folded.

You represent an English constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and there may be other hon. Members who do not understand the differences between the system that operated for Crossroads in Scotland and that in England and Wales. Ms. Hunt from the Scottish Office said that Crossroads schemes in England and Wales were run very differently, as they were based on funds from health boards and local authorities. It is clear that there were two methods of achieving the caring facility. It was far more beneficial to the Crossroads care schemes in Scotland to use the community programme for funding and looking after those with whom they were concerned.

The community programme in Scotland was far more centred on the caring aspects of the voluntary sector—that is, the sector outside the statutory bodies which have responsibility in these matters. Against that background, the Scottish National Council for Voluntary Organisations had a series of meetings with the Minister of State, Scottish Office with responsibility for industry and employment in Scotland prior to the ending of the community programme to make it clear to him that many of the care schemes would not be suitable to go into the new employment training programme. I put it on record that the association did not say simply that it saw the matter as wholly or only the responsibility of the Government. It offered the Government, and the Scottish Office in particular, a package. It said that if the Department of Employment and the Minister of State

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

would agree to establish a separate fund under the Department of Employment—on which it put a figure of £1 million—those caring organisations could continue.

Some of the caring organisations have not only invested considerable time in training the carers whom they have used under the community programme, but have built up a great deal of expertise and have gathered together equipment which they used on community programmes. The association's request was simple. It asked not for a continual handout, but for a breathing space of two years and for £1 million to be set aside from the money allocated to employment training. During the two years, the care organisations would be able to redefine their needs and priorities and gather together extra funding. That was not an unreasonable request, but to this day we have had no formal response to it other than the views of the Secretary of State, set out in his letter of 25 January. He said that all the money previously spent on the community programme would now be given to employment training and that, whether they liked it or not, caring organisations had better get themselves into employment training.

That mistake was further compounded when I went to see the Minister of State to discuss the problems of the Menzieshill community organisation. The organisation was formed to provide basic caring services to the elderly who live in the Menzieshill area of Dundee. Simple care was provided such as visiting the elderly, disabled or ill in their homes, collecting retirement and other benefits and doing the daily or weekly shopping—in other words, the type of jobs that we normally associate with home helps. The group also drives the elderly and infirm to the lunch club in the Menzieshill community centre. With the greatest stretch of imagination, one could hardly believe that a person would need to be trained to talk to the elderly and disabled, to take the benefit book to the local post office, to buy provisions from the local shops or to assist people from their homes to the community centre. Even the Minister would find it difficult to say that such tasks could be fitted into employment training.

At a meeting on 2 February, the Minister of State suggested that we had not looked properly at the proposals and that we should look at them again. He believed that we might be able to fit the Menzieshill community organisation into employment training. He said that instead of asking simply for money, I should be prepared to argue the case. I agreed and I went back to the Menzieshill group which agreed immediately to hold discussions once more with officials from the Department of Employment. That meeting has taken place and both sides agree that there is no way that such a service could be included in employment training. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East said, if Tayside regional council had not stepped in and found the extra money, the Crossroads scheme in Dundee would have ended. That would have added to the misery of the individuals who have enjoyed the benefits of the service.

It is not only my hon. Friend and myself whose words should be heard in this debate. One of the Minister's friends—in the sense that he shares his political views—is one W. Loe CBE, JP, who wrote on behalf of a number of caring organisations, including the voluntary day care units in Kirriemuir, Forfar, Brechin and Montrose. The Kinross day care centre had also associated itself with the thoughts expressed in the letter. William Low, CBE, JP is not a radical politician in the Tayside area, but even he thinks that the Minister should think again.

I hope that the Minister will show an awareness in his reply of the concern felt by the caring organisations in the Dundee and Tayside area and that the Government are at long last prepared to do something other than mouthing platitudes.

10 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I may have many faults, but I do not think that mouthing platitudes is one of them.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) based his explanation of why we missed the opportunity to debate the matter on a previous Adjournment debate on what he described as "sharp practice" by the Government Whips. I recall that as I waited in the Chamber to discuss the matter, the business moved on, because the Opposition did not choose to speak on previous business, and while I am delighted that we have this opportunity to return to the matter, I think that the blame lay with the hon. Gentleman for not being present rather than with anyone else.

I shall try to answer some of the questions asked by the hon. Members for Dundee, East and for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross). First, however, I will explain our overall policy on community care. We shall be bringing forward proposals for further development of community care in due course, but hon. Members will accept that this is a complex subject, and I do not think that I can say anything definite at this stage about when an announcement is likely to be made.

Before dealing with the circumstances of the community project about which the hon. Member for Dundee, East is concerned, I will say something about the provision of community care nationally. Gross expenditure on the Health Service in Scotland has increased by 34 per cent. in real terms since the Government took office and the planning figure for social work services has risen by no less than 67 per cent. in real terms over the same period. Those remarkable resource increases should be borne in mind in assessing the scope for futher development in community care.

We have heard a great deal about the generosity of Tayside region and how it stepped into the breach. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Dundee, East did not tell the House that Tayside's grant for the coming year is very substantial. It represents an 11·1 per cent. increase over this year—well above the rate of inflation and the average increase of 9·8 per cent. that authorities have received. Moreover, grant penalties have been abolished so Tayside will receive the sum in full. It is true that Tayside's grant has been abated in the past, but that was the result of overspending and inability to control its financial affairs.

Mr. McAllion: As I understand it, the Minister's assessment of the need for social work spending in Tayside is not yet matched by actual expenditure. That is the result of the activities of a Conservative administration, which consistently underspent on social work provision over a long period. Since it came into office, the Labour administration has increased expenditure on social work services every year until this year and it has been penalised by the Minister and the Government for doing so.

Mr. Forsyth: Since the Government took office, the resources made available for planning for social work have increased by 67 per cent. in real terms. The hon. Gentleman is right to point out that Tayside spends less on the elderly than a number of local authorities. That is because of the way in which the Labour group has chosen to allocate the very substantial additional resources made available to the local authority. I would certainly wish to encourage the authority to redress the balance and make more resources available for the elderly from the substantial pool available to it. The background in Scotland has been of substantial additional support for the elderly. There has been a 16 per cent. increase in residential places for the elderly, a 68 per cent. increase in the number of day centre places and an increase of about 29 per cent. in home help provision. That is a result of the substantial resources that the Government have provided for local Government.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: No, I want to make a little progress. I know that the hon. Member for Dundee, East is particularly interested in Tayside.

Primary responsibility for community care provision lies with the local authorities, health boards and housing agencies. The increased resources for the NHS in Scotland have led to a 40 per cent. increase in the number of beds and day places in psychogeriatric provision. National Health Service hospital provision for the elderly in Tayside stands at 26 beds per 1,000, compared with a national average of 24 beds.

The hon. Members for Dundee, East and for Dundee, West referred to the difficulties allegedly faced by care schemes in adapting to the employment training arrangements. We believe that employment training marks a significant development—in our view, an improvement—over its predecessor, the community programme. Employment training is targeted specifically at providing training designed to enhance full-time job opportunities for those taking part in the programme. That means that the Training Agency and local training managers must ensure that individual projects or schemes wishing to be involved in the ET arrangements must show that their activities contain an element of training which will benefit individuals looking for full-time jobs.

Many of the care schemes about which we hear are closely linked to the types of services that local authority social work departments or health boards can often provide at their own hand. It seems to follow, therefore, that the care schemes must be doing work which is relevant to functions already exercised by those statutory bodies.

There are claims—the hon. Member for Dundee, West has touched on them—that inflexibilities in employment training mean a reduction in the independence of individual schemes if they participate in ET. That seems to mean that for fairly small individual schemes it often makes more sense for the local training managers to bring together a number of projects for training purposes because this is the most cost-effective way of monitoring the training element. It is not the Training Agency or local training manager's intention to usurp the proper management responsibilities of individual scheme managers, nor does it mean that the aims or objectives of schemes should be significantly altered or influenced by this administrative arrangement.

A further allegation is that care schemes cannot hope to attract a sufficient number or quality of trainees because of the type of activity and the anti-social hours—that is, weekends—which those schemes often involve. I find it hard to believe that that is an overriding argument against care schemes participating in ET. Local training managers have been flexible in trying to identify and select suitable trainees and terms, and conditions of working have been adapted to suit the needs of individual schemes. The proof of this and of the other points I have made in this connection is that there are care schemes within ET that operate satisfactorily and have not suffered any of the traumatic effects that the hon. Member for Dundee, East and other detractors of ET seem to envisage. Many care organisations in Tayside have successfully made the transition from community programme to employment training. These include, Broughty Ferry community care and Clepington parish church. Indeed, I understand that both these projects are to all intents and purposes identical to Menzieshill. I am sure that the schemes are known to the hon. Member for Dundee, East, as they clearly were to the hon. Member for Dundee, West.

The obstructive attitude of the Scottish TUC and COSLA, including some local authorities such as Tayside regional council and Dundee district council, had an initial adverse impact on the implementation of employment training in Scotland. Many community programme providers were pressurised into following the STUC-COSLA line and declined to transfer to the new programme. Most of the people lost from Government training programmes in consequence reverted to unemployment. What does that tell us about local authority attitudes to the plight of the unemployed? Employment training is now progressing well, however, with more than 20,000 places filled in Scotland and more than 500 in Dundee. The national training programme cannot, of course, be revised to accommodate every peculiarity of every scheme. There is enough flexibility and discretion within the programme, and with co-operation and realism on both sides the scheme can be made to fit most circumstances.

The Menzieshill project was formerly funded under the community programme, but since September last year it has relied significantly on grants from Tayside regional council. The project, in common with several others in Tayside, chose not to participate in employment training. I have already set out the Government's views on the wider matter of how care schemes can take advantage of ET if there is a willingness and flexibility to do so.

The hon. Member for Dundee, West mentioned Crossroads. We have been saying to health boards and local authorities that they should use the powers and substantial resources available to them to assist organisations such as Crossroads. We have also been encouraging Crossroads to try to find patterns of operation which will meet the ET rules.

The Menzieshill project is clearly a broad-based community scheme aimed at helping a range of people, including the elderly, with ordinary day-to-day tasks. The original aim of the project was to provide a home visiting-caring service for the elderly, infirm, disabled and housebound within the local housing estate. That is community care in a very general sense, not specifically related to the health or social work services in quite the way that they were addressed in Sir Roy Griffiths' report.

[Mr. Forsyth]

None the less, I can see that for the 300 to 400 people who use or benefit from the project each year, it is a worthwhile venture.

The latest information that the hon. Member for Dundee, West has given suggests that project managers may not be particularly interested in exploring the scope for identifying suitable training elements in their activities and that project representatives see no possibility of ET being able to provide assistance to the project.

The hon. Gentleman said that Tayside regional council agreed earlier this month to continue for a further six-month period its present grant support to a number of community care schemes in Dundee, including the Menzieshill project. I understand that council officers have been instructed to discuss with each of the projects concerned their normal core funding arrangements. The council will then be in a position to assess the budget implications of its providing continuing grant support for those projects on a longer term basis. I very much welcome the positive and constructive approach taken by the regional council in the circumstances, but I must say that it is in rather stark contrast with its outlook on employment training.

The hon. Gentleman seemed to be asking whether that further six-month period would provide a breathing space and whether the Government should consider adjustments to ET more easily to accommodate community care projects. As I have said, I find that difficult to accept in principle, given that a number of projects—and one or two in Dundee which seem virtually identical to Menzieshill—have not found too much difficulty in meeting the ET criteria. On the face of it, therefore, I do not think that there is a strong case to be made for changes in the ET rules, and nothing that the hon. Gentleman has said amounts to new evidence or facts which have not already been considered.

I believe that ET can and will continue to play its part in support of community care projects. I accept that some adaptation to meet the different needs of ET is often required, but it would be unfortunate if worthwhile projects of benefit to vulnerable groups such as the elderly were to cease, not as a result of practical considerations but because of ideological resistance to ET from local authorities, trade unions and the Labour party.

We have done all that we can to make funding available for community care services in Scotland. It is clear from the organisations and care projects already within the ET arrangement that there is no intrinsic barrier to involvement. I have mentioned two schemes in or around Dundee which carry out the same type of activities as Menzieshill. If, however, schemes are forced to close or to contract significantly because of an unwillingness to look toward employment training for funding, the collective opposition of local authorities, STUC and the Labour party in Scotland must bear their share of the responsibility.

Mr. McAllion: The Minister is trying to say that Labour and the STUC oppose the schemes. Does he understand that the Conservative group on Tayside regional council, who originally thought that ET could be used, has reversed its position and agrees that there should be special provision for community projects of that kind?

Mr. Forsyth: Regrettably, the Conservative group is not in power in Tayside region. If the behaviour of the Labour party in Tayside region in respect of ET is anything to go by, I look forward to the day, which may not be far ahead, when the Conservative group is in power as a result of the strong feelings of the electorate about the way in which politics are being used to the disadvantage of the elderly and other vulnerable groups in the community.

The unhelpful background of prejudice cannot detract from the success of ET in Scotland. The voluntary sector is already helping to provide over 10,000 project places—50 per cent. of all ET places in Scotland. Nor can it diminish the high standard of community care development in health and social work that was achieved during this Government's term of office.

Animal Experiments (Cosmetics)

10.15 am

Dame Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): I put a simple and stark proposition in relation to the testing of cosmetics on laboratory animals. In 1987, 14,534 animals died needlessly, and often suffered needlessly before they died. No more licences for such animal suffering should be granted.

I will not harrow the House with details of what some experiments involve, but they are, perhaps, symbolised by the irritancy test which is applied to the eyes of rabbits. Scientists want to see whether a human being would suffer irritation and other unfortunate effects from a substance. Those substances are applied to rabbits' eyes, and they must be secured so that the animals cannot interfere. Many of us have been sickened by such experiments when we have seen either descriptions, or even worse, illustrations of them.

I shall explain to the House and to my hon. Friend the Minister why my opposition is entirely practical and not simply pie in the sky. First, my understanding is that there are no regulations in this country requiring animal experiments for the purposes of cosmetics. The 1984 regulations, which relate to the safety of cosmetics, state only that

"a cosmetic product shall not be liable to cause damage to human health when it is applied under normal conditions of use."

The term "cosmetics" covers a wider range than simply what one might think of as lipstick, mascara, face powder and the like. It applies to any substance which goes on the body to cleanse it, improve its look, protect it in some way from the sun, or improve its smell. That includes a range of substances such as toilet soaps, perfumes, anti-perspirants, hair lacquer, hair tint and bleaches, anti-wrinkle products, and sun-bathing products.

As far as I can judge, there are no mandatory requirements for animal testing of such products in northern European countries, the United States, or Australia. France has its own twist. The authorities there ask for a detailed dossier on a certain ingredient or formulation, and can require animal testing if they think that it is necessary, but it is by no means a mandatory universal requirement. There are particularly interesting arrangements in the United States. They have a list of ingredients which are generally recognised as safe—GRAS, they call it for short. Those substances which have a long proven record of safety and reliability, primarily in household products and cosmetics, can go on the list, and no further testing is required.

My main point is that, irrespective of whether such applications are mandatory—and I hope that I have proved they are not—it is unnecessary to test such products by the use of animal experiments. There is a very long history of the application of some ingredients and formulations. If we want to have proof positive of that, it lies in the number of firms that state now that they have either never tested on animals or no longer do so. The impressive list includes such well-known names as Yardley, the own brands of Boots, Marks and Spencer, and Sainsbury, Rimmel, Innoxa, Body Shop products and a host of others.

Indeed, if anyone is interested, the RSPCA has produced an interesting booklet which I have in my hand, listing the firms that do not use animal tests, and their products. The list is as comprehensive as it is possible to be, although it is never easy to keep it up-to-date.

At the end of the booklet is a very interesting statement of the policies of various companies and I shall read two of them to give an indication of their appoach. For example, Rose Laird International says:

"first stage of testing is under laboratory conditions for culture testing. Each batch of manufactured goods is tested on approximately 30 to 50 women, prior to filling into final packaging. Samples of each batch are kept as a matter of course for historical testing."

Yardley, a very well-known name in cosmetics, says:

"The safety of our products is confirmed by human patch test studies, no animal studies, either on formulations or ingredients, are undertaken on behalf of or at the request of the company."

If it is good enough for such major companies and household names not to test, I fail to see why any tests are necessary.

Let me deal now more specifically with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, under which licences for cosmetic testing must be applied for. I recall that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), when he was piloting the Bill through the House made it very clear in his direct and forthright way that he did not regard the Act as static. He deliberately tried to formulate the Act so as to respond to new needs and requirements, and a new approach. I am sorry to see, so far, that that point has not been taken on board sufficiently clearly with regard to cosmetics experiments.

Under the Act, all cosmetic licence applications must be referred to the Secretary of State's statutory advisory body, the Animal Procedures Committee. It should take a very much harder line, and should recommend that a new requirement is attached to applications for licences, to ensure that unnecessary experiments do not take place. There should be some form of needs condition, whereby a company would have to indicate that human volunteers are not possible. Even more important—I stress this to the Minister today—there should not be other products on the market that would fulfil the role that the new product has in mind. On that basis, 99 per cent. of licences would be turned down.

In many ways, I am surprised that licences have been granted under the Act. A useful cost-benefit analysis is provided by the Act, whereby the benefit that will accrue is weighed against the pain, suffering and loss of life suffered by the animals. It would be hard for any cosmetics company to put hand on heart and sign that declaration with sincerity. The procedures committee should look hard at that formulation to see whether the committee should allow licence applications to succeed, as that criterion is already built into arrangements for licensing.

In many cases, it is not possible for members of the public lawfully to take direct action. I would be the very last to commend anyone to do an act that broke the law. But here we have a superb example of where women and men—some items are used by men, including shampoos and after-shave lotions—can decide whether it is acceptable that an animal should suffer during testing. They can choose from the very wide range of products that are no longer tested on animals, or never have been. I commend to anyone who feels strongly about this, as I do, to look at the lists available and make their views known

[Dame Janet Fookes]

by buying the cruelty-free products, as well as writing to firms whose products they usually buy to say that they will no longer do so unless action is taken to stop the testing.

I hope, too, that cosmetic companies will not be too coy about saying in their advertising that they do not test on animals, or no longer do so. I recognise that some of them might feel awkward because they have commissioned studies in the past but we are concerned with what they are doing now and what they intend to do. I hope that they will not be backward in coming forward in that respect. I am sure, from the number of letters that I and other hon. Members have received, and from the many signatories to early-day motion 44, that there is a groundswell of opinion that this activity is no longer acceptable.

People may say reluctantly that testing is necessary and must be accepted because of its role in medicine to save human life and suffering, but I for one do not want to use make-up or other toiletries that have been used on animals. In order to beautify ourselves, we have made unhappy, innocent animals suffer.

I hope that my hon. Friend will reply in a forthright way on the lines that I have so strongly advocated this morning.

10.27 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I am sure that the whole House is grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) for bringing the subject of the safety testing of cosmetics before the House this morning. It is undboutedly a matter of public concern. It is also one in which it is very important to strike a balance between ensuring that the substances that we use every day are safe, and reducing the number of animals and the severity of procedures that are used in this essential safety testing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Drake was right to draw the attention of the House to the broad interpretation given to the word "cosmetic". We must be clear about its meaning. In ordinary language one would assume that it was confined to ornamental substances such as lipstick or mascara, but as my hon. Friend rightly says, that would be a mistake; "cosmetic" has a very wide meaning.

Under the European Community cosmetic directive 76/768, which was promulgated on 27 July 1976, cosmetics include any substance intended for placing in contact with the external parts of the body, the skin, the hair, nails, lips, genital organs, the teeth and the mouth in order to clean, perfume or protect them, so as to keep them in good condition, change their appearance or to correct body odours.

Clearly, cosmetics are a wide category. As my hon. Friend fairly said and as I have already stated, we are not talking exclusively about lipsticks and perfumes. We are also talking about virtually any cream, lotion or oil; virtually any powder; soaps, shampoos and shaving creams; toothpastes and mouthwashes; deodorants and products for what is known technically as "intimate hygiene"; and a range of products used in factories such as a form of gel to remove oil from people's skin. It is a long list, that could go on and on.

Inevitably, some of the substances are applied to sensitive parts of the body for prolonged periods, so the House will agree that we must ensure that they are safe and that the very best and most effective procedures are used for establishing the safety of these products when in use. When I say that we must do those things, I mean that we are under a legal obligation, a moral obligation and a social obligation to do so. My hon. Friend has set before the House her case for the reduced use of animals in cosmetics testing. I agree with her objective of the reduced use of living animals. That is the Government's position. However, where I disagree with her is on the possibility of the total elimination of such testing.

My hon. Friend has been kind enough to recognise that, under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, which was so successfully steered through the House by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Department of Health, we have introduced a substantially more rigorous system of control over the conduct of all scientific procedures on animals. All work now has to be authorised by project licences.

Under section 5 of the 1986 Act, the Secretary of State shall

"weigh the likely adverse effects on the animals concerned against the benefit likely to accrue"

and

"not grant a project licence unless he is satisfied that the applicant has given adequate consideration to the feasibility of achieving the purpose of the programme . . . by means not involving the use of protected animals."

It is thus a balancing exercise.

All project licence applications for the testing of cosmetic substances are subject to special conditions. They are carefully scrutinised by the inspectorate and all are referred to the Animal Procedures Committee.

We are not talking here about a very large number of licensees—there are currently only six project licences. All are held by commercial concerns with special expertise in safety testing.

All the licencees have an obligation to ensure that substances which might be expected to have a severe reaction are not tested under a cosmetic project licence, and all the licensees are aware that the purpose of safety tests on cosmetics is to establish the mildness of the substances they are testing. That point was highlighted in the discussion of cosmetics in paragraphs 3.6 to 3.14 of the 1987 annual report of the Animal Procedures Committee.

The effect of the stringent conditions that we have put on cosmetic testing using living animals for many years, and the concern of the industry to use animals only when strictly necessary, has led, I am glad to say, to a progressive reduction in the use of animals for cosmetic testing over recent years. In 1980, for example, the number was 31,300: by 1987, this had fallen to 14,500, or less than 0·5 per cent. of all animal procedures.

I come now to the part of my hon. Friend's argument where I cannot wholly agree with her. I cannot agree with her when she suggests that we can now bring an end to all cosmetics testing on living animals because the effect of that would inevitably be to stop the innovation and development of new ingredients.

It is important that I emphasise once again that we are not talking merely about mascaras and lipsticks, because there might be a case for saying that we know quite enough about mascaras and lipsticks and so there is no need to develop our knowledge further; as my hon. Friend fairly said, "cosmetics" is given a broad definition. I do not think

that it would be right to put a prohibition on development and innovation across the broad spectrum of products that are covered by the definition of "cosmetics".

I shall give some examples that might be worth thinking about. This morning the House could easily have been discussing aerosols and the threat to the ozone layer. All hon. Members are now wholly persuaded of the need to find alternatives to CFCs for use in aerosols, but many of the products for which aerosols are necessary are cosmetics. It is inevitable and right that the alternatives to CFCs must be tried for safety before they can be marketed.

I shall give another example. For reasons that are well known to the House, the House has been concerned about food safety. One question concerning the industry is the safety of preservatives used in food. The same thing applies to cosmetics because, by the nature of cosmetics, when broadly defined as I have defined them, preservatives play an important part. It is essential that we should ascertain the safety of those preservatives. We must ascertain whether chemical or microbiological degradation is likely to lead to infection or adverse reaction. Preservatives are one of the more common causes of allergic responses to cosmetic products. I do not think that we should say that we can now draw a line under our knowledge of preservatives. I find that proposition difficult to accept.

It is right that work should continue to make preservatives safe. The only way of guaranteeing that they are safe—in so far as guarantees are possible—is to carry out some tests on living animals. The testing of such preservatives counts for statistical purposes as the testing of cosmetics.

The plain fact is that similar arguments apply for a wide range of other cosmetic products. It goes without saying that shampoos must not irritate the eyes or cause hair loss, that toothpaste must not inflame the gums and that creams to protect the skin must not produce a rash.

Even substances which we may use very rarely must be tested to make sure that the workers who produce them, and are therefore exposed daily to large quantities, are not at risk. Again, such testing counts in our statistics on cosmetics testing.

Understandably, my hon. Friend raised questions of law. The point is that, if cosmetics are to be made in this country, manufacturers must comply with a common law requirement to ensure that their products are safe as well as meeting both our own and European Community legislation, in particular the Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations 1984, which implement the European Community's cosmetics directives, and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Indeed, without proper testing involving animals, manufacturers could become liable—in my view, rightly so—for heavy damages if they sold cosmetic products which seriously injured the health of their customers.

Taking a broad view of the matter and having regard to the liability, or potential liability, of manufacturers, it seems to me that they simply could not establish that they had taken "all reasonable care"—which is the test in negligence actions—if in certain cases they had failed to carry out procedures on living animals. I do not see how they could satisfy their common law, not to say their statutory, duties in that respect.

We should also note that the European "Notes for Guidance for the Toxicity Testing of Cosmetic Ingredients" make the requirement for testing in living animals explicit, following an earlier report by the Scientific Committee on Cosmetology.

That report stated:

"some *in vitro* systems have been developed so that they can be used as screening tests to indicate the possibility of a long-term risk, but the results still have to be confirmed in mammals. Most of the adverse effects associated with cosmetics . . . are such that they can only be demonstrated in mammals".

As I have told the House, we share the concern of hon. Members to ensure that this testing is kept to a minimum. The Home Secretary has specifically sought the advice of the Animal Procedures Committee about cosmetic testing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Drake will agree, that committee is an unusually distinguished and independent-minded committee.

In its annual report laid before Parliament in December the APC set out its current position on cosmetics testing. It has asked for special reporting requirements to be imposed on cosmetic project licences to enable it to carry out a thorough review of the subject in due course. We are also encouraging alternatives to the use of living animals whenever possible, and I am glad to say that the industry has responded.

At the moment, alternative methods are used to screen substances before they are tested on living animals. This is particularly important with tests such as the Draize eye test to which my hon. Friend referred. Before embarking on such tests, a safety evaluation must be carried out using published information to establish lack of irritancy. When available, tests not involving living animals must also be used. Only if those are satisfactory are tests performed using living animals, and, whenever possible, the substances are diluted for the test.

My hon. Friend, in an interesting speech, talked at some length about so-called "cruelty-free" cosmetics produced by companies which claim not to test their products on living animals. I do not pretend that we in the Home Office are particularly expert in that sphere. Our concerns, as my hon. Friend will be aware, are to ensure that all procedures involving living animals are properly justified and correctly carried out.

One should approach some of the claims with a degree of caution. The term "cruelty-free" is certainly vague. It could be judged to be emotive. Like a number of similar claims for products, such as those which are described as "home made" or "organic", it is not always clear exactly what is being claimed.

The phrase "cruelty-free" may imply that the product has not been tested on living animals or that when it was, the testing did not involve cruelty. It is of course always possible for a company to market a product which is known to be non-toxic without the need for further testing —we would encourage that whenever possible—but I am told that some of the claims about "cruelty-free" substances are not always what they seem. I know that some companies claim that their finished products are not tested on animals, but that as a proposition is true for the majority of products, as, in general, it is only the ingredients which are tested, and then only when they are being developed.

I know, too, that some companies claim that the substances they use have not been tested on living animals within the last five years. But most companies could claim that with a degree of justice. Because of the time it takes to develop a new ingredient and obtain European

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

Community acceptance, it is relatively uncommon for a new ingredient to be marketed within five years of its safety clearance.

I share the wish of my hon. Friend that, whenever possible and whenever it is safe to do so, the safety of cosmetics should be established without recourse to animal testing. In the meantime, we should be clearer what the claim to be "cruelty-free" means, and perhaps we would be wise not to take all these claims at face value.

I am sure that this is not the last time that the House will debate these issues. It is right that there should be a continuing awareness of them. It is right, too, that my hon. Friend, with her knowledge and expertise of this issue, should take opportunities to bring the matter before the House.

The Government are concerned to ensure a correct balance. The correct balance, as we judge it to be, is the balance between, on the one hand, the proper and effective safety testing of everyday personal hygiene and toilet preparations and other cosmetics broadly defined and, on the other, the use of living animals in this testing.

We believe that the controls that we have introduced in the 1986 legislation are effective in ensuring that the only testing which is done is that which is necessary and which is required by proper regulatory authorities and testing which is properly conducted.

We are keeping the matter under review and are in discussion with licensees about the conduct of their work. The public must be reassured that experiments on living animals are conducted only when there is no alternative and, equally, that the wide range of what are defined as cosmetic substances which they may use every day are safe for them and for their children.

Gwynedd Health Authority

10.47 am

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I now understand what it means when hon. Members tell me that the timetable of the House is extremely fluid. I am reminded of the time when I was an advocate in the magistrates court, standing outside the court waiting for my case to come on, to be told that the best estimate was such and such a time, only to discover that that estimate was wildly inaccurate. I am grateful that I have not been caught out on this occasion.

I am grateful to the Minister of State for being here to respond to this important debate. In normal times, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary would have been at the Dispatch Box, but unfortunately he has been indisposed of late. I trust that the Minister will convey to him my best wishes and those of my hon. Friends for a speedy recovery. Indeed, I am sure that that is the wish of the House generally.

On 3 March of this year the Secretary of State for Wales approved plans by Gwynedd health authority to close a number of hospitals in the county and to transfer some services to other sites. This could be seen as the culmination of a long period of public discussion and concern which began in the autumn of 1987 when the plans were first announced.

What else, may one be forgiven for asking, is there to say? The Secretary of State has given what some will see as the final word on the matter, save that there will be a further short period of consultation on the future of Caernarfon cottage hospital. I say that some people might come to that conclusion, but my hon. Friends and I have not. I aim through this debate to highlight the profound concerns which remain.

The Secretary of State carries the ultimate responsibility for the provision of health services in Wales. That duty is clearly set out in section 1 of the National Health Service Act 1977 which states:

> "It is the Secretary of State's duty to continue the promotion in England and Wales of a comprehensive health service designed to secure improvement—
>
> (a) in the physical and mental health of the people of those countries, and—
>
> (b) in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness, and for that purpose to provide or secure the effective provision of services in accordance with this Act."

I stress the word "comprehensive". It does not mean the provision of an unbalanced, incomplete or disjointed service, but that provision of services should be across the board, dealing with all aspects of mental and physical health for children, young, middle-aged and old people in the acute sector and in the community.

The Secretary of State is also charged with a more specific duty in section 3 of the Act, which states:

> "It is the Secretary of State's duty to provide throughout England and Wales, to such extent as he considers necessary to meet all reasonable requirements—
>
> (a) hospital accommodation;
>
> (b) other accommodation for the purpose of any service provided under this Act;
>
> (c) medical, dental, nursing and ambulance services;
>
> (d) such other facilities for the care of expectant and nursing mothers and young children as he considers appropriate as part of the health service;
>
> (e) such facilities for the prevention of illness, the care of persons suffering from illnesses and the after-care

of persons who have suffered from illness as he considers are appropriate as part of the health service;

(f) such other services as are required for the diagnosis and treatment of illness."

That is the Secretary of State's remit. He fails in his duty if the Health Service in any part of Wales does not meet the general requirement in section 1 and the specific requirements in section 3 which are subject to some qualifications.

Neither the Secretary of State nor his Department have day-to-day conduct or control of the service. Under sections 13 and 15 of the Act, he has powers to direct district health authorities to carry out those functions on his behalf.

I shall outline the background leading to the rationalisation plan and seek to persuade the Minister to set up an inquiry under section 85 of the Act, having regard to the fact that the authority is not providing a comprehensive health service in Gwynedd.

The Welsh Office commissioned a firm of management consultants, Deloitte, Haskins and Sells, to report on the health authority's financial affairs. As the Under-Secretary of State admitted in a debate in the House on 14 June 1988, that was a direct result of Welsh Office concern at the way in which the authority ran its finances. The Under-Secretary of State for Wales said:

"I cannot say that I am satisfied with the level of financial management shown by the authority. That was one of the reasons for calling in management consultants. The consultants' recommendations bear out that."—[*Official Report*, 14 June 1988; Vol. 135, c. 549.]

The report was scathing in its condemnation of the authority's management team and its lack of financial planning, budgetary control and management accounting system. I shall quote some examples of the comments in that report, but there were many others. Paragraph 54 states:

"Insufficient management action was taken".

Paragraph 55 continues:

"We have to conclude that the authority's senior managers have not addressed the difficult but necessary task with sufficient urgency and co-ordination"

and paragraph 86 goes on:

"Planning operates outside the general management structure".

The clear implication is that the Welsh Office demanded that the authority implement the package of measures proposed by Deloittes to bring it back into balance and avert a major financial catastrophe. The measures suggested by Deloittes largely formed the basis of the rationalisation plan which was ultimately backed by the Secretary of State in toto except for the hospital at Caernarfon, which had a temporary reprieve.

The part played by the Welsh Office in the plan cannot be denied. It appointed Deloittes in May 1987 to report on the authority and that was quite clear from the terms of reference it gave. Arising directly from the instructions to the consultants are the hospital closure plans. In giving the consultants terms of reference which did not mention the need to have regard to the adequacy of health care in the county, the Welsh Office effectively directed the consultants to produce a report which would recommend cuts.

The Welsh Office wrote to Deloittes on 6 October 1987 referring to assurances of continued support to the authority

"so long as they accept the need for full implementation of the programme".

When the authority told the public during the consultation period that the package had to go through as a whole, it obviously had that stricture very much in mind.

The inevitable question which now arises is why was the authority in such a financial predicament. The clear implication is that once again the financial difficulties arose in the 1980s, partly due to the authority's failure to control the capital and revenue costs of ysbyty Gwynedd. That is referred to in Deloittes report.

The willingness of the health authority to axe community hospital services because of financial pressure and its reluctance to give priority to community service development led many to believe that those with a preference for the further growth of ysbyty Gwynedd wielded real power at the expense of the outlying communities. In my opinion, the authority's current management structure contributes to the concentration of resources at ysbyty Gwynedd. The management team includes officers who represent geographical districts rather than clinical disciplines. There is a strong case for arguing that discussions on spending should be based on priorities within disciplines rather than geography. Effectively, that means that no one person is responsible for community services. As a result, weaker districts constantly lose out in the battle for cash. Cuts are nearly always made in community provision because of the geographical strength of the district in which ysbyty Gwynedd is located.

It is true that Gwynedd health authority has a strategic plan which includes plans for community hospitals, but they are nothing more than academic exercise. In my view and those of my colleagues, the authority should have grasped the nettle long ago. Clwyd health authority did so in the mid-1970s and it now has a network of small community hospitals with full attendant services. I challenge the Minister to say that Gwynedd has a single community hospital anywhere in the county which meets those basic requirements. I refer the Minister to the remarks of the junior Health Minister responding to a similar debate on 21 March setting out four basic provisions which are required for community hospitals, none of which are present in Gwynedd.

Gwynedd health authority says that it does not have the resources to contemplate such a programme, yet the Welsh Office claims that it is one of the best-funded health authorities in Wales, based on the latest capital and revenue formulae. Who is right? The debate continues and while statistics and formulae are discussed ad nauseam the public suffer. The general public, who are not responsible for the authority's financial crisis, have been denied a comprehensive health service. Elderly people are being denied dignity in their old age and some are being hospitalised and institutionalised due to the lack of adequate day-care facilities and support for carers. There is a chronic shortage of speech therapists for children with speech problems and elderly people who have suffered strokes. Gwynedd has 11 speech therapists when it should have 45. There is also intense pressure on physiotherapists and occupational therapists. I have seen elderly people suffering from senile dementia shunted from establishment to establishment because of the lack of adequate facilities to care for them. Relatives of elderly people have telephoned me late at night in desperation and at their wits' end because they have been told that they must find accommodation for their elderly relative urgently as the hospital bed is required by another patient.

[Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones]

I am particularly worried about the lack of provision for the elderly mentally ill. Why should Gwynedd be denied these services? Who in reality pays the price for the health authority's inability to come to terms with its financial and planning responsibilities? Why has it failed to develope a coherent strategy? The health authority seems to get away scot free——

It being 11 o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of Robert McTaggart Esquire, the Member for Glasgow, Central. I desire on behalf of the House to express our sense of the loss that we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the hon. Member.

Explosion (Peterborough)

11 am

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Peter Bottomley): With permission, I shall make a statement about the explosion at Vibroplant, Fengate, Peterborough.

At 9.35 yesterday an ICI Nobel's Explosives lorry of standard design, carrying 800 kg of explosives, caught fire while on a routine delivery. I understand that the driver pulled into the nearest yard, which was that of Vibroplant plc, Newark road, Fengate, Peterborough, and called the fire brigade. While in attendance, the lorry exploded, killing one fireman and injuring more than 80 people. Some have serious injuries. I want to convey the Government's sympathy to the families of the dead fire officer and the injured.

At least five premises were seriously damaged and the police declared a major emergency. The scale of this tragic incident has been major. My hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) is at the site and will be giving us an urgent report. My noble Friend the Minister of State, Home Office is visiting the Cambridgeshire fire brigade. Two factory inspectors and two explosives inspectors are at the site to conduct an investigation. The Health and Safety Executive will be preparing a report. I will not pre-empt the conclusions of the investigation. The report will be published and a further statement will be made to the House then.

The relevant legislation is the Conveyance of Explosives on Roads Byelaws which lay down rules for the carriage of explosives by road. New Carriage of Explosives by Road Regulations, to be made under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, will be laid before the House in early April. A copy is being placed in the Library.

The current byelaws do not require vehicles carrying explosives to display any warning signs. For security and safety reasons, it was believed that the presence of a two-man crew should be sufficient. During the drafting of the new regulations and after detailed consultations, the Health and Safety Commission has concluded that the balance now lies in favour of secondary safety. The new regulations will require appropriate description placards to be displayed on vehicles. We accepted that judgment when I approved the regulations earlier this month. I apologise to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) for not giving him earlier a copy of the statement.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): First, I thank the Minister for his statement. I extend my sympathy and that of my right hon. Friends to the family of Mr. John Humphries, the fire fighter who lost his life in the furtherance of his duty and in the service of the community. I also extend our sympathy and concern to those who were injured and those who are anxiously waiting at their bedsides. I note that the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) is at the scene of the accident, and I appreciate what a difficult time it is for him.

We share the admiration of the whole House for the devotion and commitment shown by all the emergency services involved and for the hospital staff, many of whom will now share the heavy burdens of trying to heal serious injury and trauma.

Sadly, in recent months the House has had occasion to debate far too many tragic accidents involving ships, trains, planes and now, regrettably, lorries. No one can doubt that in this complex society of ours, where people and goods are constantly on the move, safety in transportation must have the highest priority. We will give every possible support to the Government in their quest for that greater safety, and in that context I welcome the Minister's statement. The issue before the House this morning is whether enough has been done to ensure the safe transport of explosive materials and whether the tragic loss of life and the injuries could have been prevented.

As with all such tragedies, some immediate questions must be asked, but asking them has not been straight forward. When I first telephoned the Department at 4 pm yesterday I was told that it was not the Department's responsibility but that of the Department of the Environment. I am grateful both that the Minister has clarified the position and to have the opportunity to ask him the following questions, particularly those with relevance to the part of his statement on new regulations.

How long has the process of consultation on the new regulations for the transport of explosives taken? When were the consultations completed? At what point were they ready to come before the House? I appreciate and support the fact that they are now coming before the House in early April. Naturally, we guarantee our support for them and we are pleased that we shall have the opportunity to give that support. Does the Minister agree that, given the clear intention of the Government to regulate, it would now be possible for the industry to act immediately, thus ensuring that, should any similar emergency occur, the fire fighters would be warned that such a dangerous cargo was on board?

While I appreciate that there have been few serious accidents of this nature, as the Minister has said on other occasions, the potential for tragedy with such hazardous loads is all too obvious. Will the Minister confirm that the regulations to which he has referred deal solely with the issue of labelling such vehicles? We support clear labelling of the hazards contained in vehicles transporting explosives. Does the Minister not consider that he should make a complete review of all aspects of the transportation of explosives? Will he undertake to make such a review and will he tell the House the number of movements of such loads of explosive cocktails on our roads each year?

In so many of these tragedies, a conflict has emerged between the needs of confidentiality and security, and those of safety. We believe that the safety of the public, the communities through which the vehicles pass and particularly of our emergency services must take priority over other considerations. In these matters, the people must have the right to know.

We welcome the new regulations and we shall support their speedy progress through the House. This latest tragedy has placed a special duty on all of us again to ask: is enough being done? I think that today the House would like to call upon safety officers, workers, managers, owners and all who work in transportation, particularly those involved in the transportation of hazardous goods, to give some extra attention and thought voluntarily to reviewing their procedures to ensure that such a tragedy does not happen again.

Mr. Bottomley: I agree with nearly everything that the hon. Lady has said. I want to reinforce her message of sympathy, which I am sure comes from all sides of the House, for the fire service in particular, which gets called out to incidents, not knowing what caused the incident, what the incident may be or what consequences it will have. We know that they are brave people and we pay tribute to them. It is right to pay tribute to the medical services who cope with the consequences of injury and often, sadly, death on and off our roads.

I still believe that the last time that the road transport of explosives led to a fatality was in 1957. That is a good record over 30 years for an industry which has about 15,000 to 20,000 movements a year. That is the best estimate that I have had so far and it is subject to correction. There may be some incidents of which I am not yet aware.

The work to protect both the public and those who work with explosives, which are a necessary part of our industrial life, is maintained to a high standard. Clearly, when things go wrong, and yesterday things did go wrong —we do not know what, why or who, and I do not want to prejudge any of that—we must learn the lessons. We must learn how to make existing regulations work and how to ensure that regulations can be modified at least to maintain and if possible to enhance safety. I notice the presence of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who got that clause into the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act, which only allowed regulations to be made which would maintain or enhance safety. I am sorry: I mean the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). The House must forgive me for mixing the two up.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) said that we should look at the major hazards of transport of dangerous substances. Within the Health and Safety Executive, there is an advisory committee on dangerous substances which I believe for a number of years has been considering the updating of the regulations. The regulations came to the Department of Transport towards the end of January and within two months—after settling some of the questions—I approved them, a week and a half ago.

As far as I know, no other country is carrying out such good work on the issue of major hazards of transport than Britain. We look forward to the sub-committee looking at the major hazards of transport and presenting a report on all forms of dangerous goods and all modes of transport of them. It will be looking at loading and unloading, in movement and when resting up, whether on trains, in lorries or any other way. Therefore, all the information that the hon. Member for Deptford requested will be provided.

I apologise, however, if at 4 o'clock it was not possible to give a clear definition of responsibility. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Employment for being on the Front Bench. From my time at the Department of Employment, I know the necessary links of the Health and Safety Executive with many Government Departments. That does not mean that we can always define boundary problems straight away, but there is no ducking of responsibility.

I would ask those people who are ringing my office and jamming the switchboard over a potential option for a road scheme in north London, to please stop doing so immediately. It has been virtually impossible for anyone

[Mr. Bottomley]

else to ring in for the past two hours, which is one of the reasons for my coming rather late to the House with the statement.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appreciate the importance of this tragedy, but I must remind the House that this is a private Members' day, and I ask for brief questions.

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): This is indeed a great tragedy for the people of Peterborough and surrounding constituencies, such as mine in north-east Cambridgeshire. In the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) who was on duty in Northern Ireland when the tragedy occurred but who flew immediately this morning to be with his constituents, I wish to make a few comments with which he wishes to be associated.

First, there is no praise high enough for the emergency services of Cambridgeshire—the fire service, the police and the members of staff of the Peterborough district health authority. We would like to offer our condolences to the widow of John Humphries and our sympathy to all those who have been seriously injured. We wish them a speedy recovery.

Many jobs on the Fengate industrial estate are now at risk. About 40 small businesses are now devastated by the event and I ask the Government to make every move possible to ensure that the security of those jobs is not put at risk.

Mr. Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am aware that the impact of the accident will be felt not just in Peterborough but also in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdon.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): On behalf of my party, I would like to extend our sympathies to the family of John Humphries and also to all those who were injured in this terrible incident. I would like to extend our thanks for the brave work put in by the emergency services.

The Minister has not said whether he has any information about why the emergency services were not informed of the nature of the load. I would appreciate it if he could comment on that, although I realise that it is very early. Can he also say whether there are any rules regarding notification of such large loads of explosives as they travel around the country?

Mr. Bottomley: The view has been that that would not be appropriate. As I have said outside the House, a balance must be struck between security and such notification. I do not believe that any hon. Member needs reminding of what the effect of explosives in the wrong hands could be. Secondly, there is the issue of safety, which is labelling the outside so that the fire service or other emergency services can know what they are dealing with. After due consultation, the decision has been made to reverse the emphasis. Only time will show whether that is right or wrong. I say to all those involved in risk assessment in this and other areas that we are grateful for their work, because these issues are not easy.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I am sure that the whole House shares in the grief of yet another transport tragedy. Has my hon. Friend had any further thought about the possibility of a national emergency number being established? We have had the crises of Clapham, Lockerbie and others, and now a further one in Cambridgeshire. It causes great distress to the relatives involved, at a time when they are under much pressure, to remember a special telephone number. If there was a three-digit number appropriate for such accidents, I am sure that not only would British Telecom deal with that, but my hon. Friend's own staff would not have the difficulties to which he has alluded.

Secondly, as I am sure that the House will wish to have those regulations at the earliest opportunity, would my hon. Friend invite those companies which are involved in the transport of explosives to advise between now and then their movements to the services concerned, so that they can learn from the lessons and we will not have a repeat of this incident in future?

Mr. Bottomley: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's interest. One of the reasons why we have the safest roads in relation to population within Europe—possibly within the motoring world—is that we do not use the ministerial voice as a microphone to give an instant response to every suggestion, however well intended. The reason that we kill so many fewer than in other comparable countries, such as France and Germany, is that we rely on the collaborative work within, for example, the network of the Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Commission, which is a tripartite body. We try to rely on the assessment of risk by those involved, together with the health and safety inspectorate. I pay tribute to its work, too.

I know that an emergency number is under consideration. Can I separate the point that I was making earlier about my own office? I may not be important, but the work of my office is on a day like this. If people could avoid using the private office number as a way of registering protests which they could make in other ways, it would be easier to obtain the information that I want to give to the House.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The Minister will be aware that in a series of answers since the M6 crash, about the carriage of dangerous goods, he has told me that he believes that the existing legislation is adequate, but that there are increasing numbers of accidents in which heavy goods vehicles are involved. By definition, a percentage of those will carry dangerous, if not explosive, substances. Will he undertake that the regulations will not only be laid before the House the minute it resumes, but that they will contain checks and balances? If the men driving lorries, and the emergency services, are always informed of the nature of the goods being carried, they will be able to take appropriate action when an emergency arises.

Mr. Bottomley: Significant changes in the new regulations are better training, marking and information on the nature of the cargo being carried and what to do with it.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): The Minister will be aware that, in the chemical-producing areas such as my own, there is widespread concern about the packaging of dangerous substances which are carried on the roads. He will undoubtedly remember that I wrote to him on 28 January about a specific incident in which marking had been removed from a lorry on the instructions of the

police. Subsequently, my hon. Friend will remember that he wrote to me on 9 March saying that the Government were reviewing the whole question of hazardous and explosive packaging. He then gave me the welcome news that the Government intend to act on that very soon.

That letter was also warmly received in the chemical-producing area of Teesside and my hon. Friend's statement will also receive a wide welcome. I urge him to bring forward the proposals as soon as possible to ensure that those hazard markings are improved.

Mr. Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Certainly the expertise of the police and other emergency services on Teesside and around Cleveland is immense and much relied on.

As has been said outside the House, there will be a European dimension, and we have asked the secretariat of the ADR system to review the decision that it wants to take, which is that there should not be marking.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I welcome the tentative tone of what the Minister has said—he is always reasonable—in the hope that we will see the shock of yesterday as a great warning. There are many circumstances in which, if the incident was repeated, the devastation would have been far more severe—for example, if a lorry had been fully loaded, if it had been in a confined space and in a built-up area. Does the Minister recall the more than 50 questions I tabled more than a year ago following the conviction on a breathalyser offence of an ammunition lorry driver who was to pick up a load in my constituency. As a result of those inquiries it is known that there have been three fires on ammunition lorries in Britain and numerous collisions and other incidents over the years.

With all the possibilities of accidents not just from explosives but from chemicals and gases carried under pressure on lorries and the possibility of a cocktail accident, are we saying today that we see yesterday as a warning and a lesson? Will our best memorial to the brave fireman who died yesterday be our realisation that our long-accepted practice of allowing tons of explosives, plus loads of inflammable fuel, plus a combustion engine to pass unguarded, unmarked and unprotected along our roads at great speed within a few yards of our homes represents a combination of risks that we can no longer tolerate?

Mr. Bottomley: If the hon. Gentleman really meant that last sentence it means an end to a fair amount of industry and contribution to national employment and prosperity.

In terms of risk management, I agree that we need to ensure that we have the best possible reduction of risk and that we put our efforts into the areas that will bring the greatest return. The record of the transport of explosives in this country is good. I have suggested what I believe the figures are for the past 30 years, they may be wrong, but they are certainly in the right order. It is also important to consider this matter in a both/and sense rather than an either/or sense. If yesterday was an average day, 14 people died on our roads and 5,000 will die this year—and many of them are likely to go up in fires caused by the petrol in their cars, let alone as a result of a collision with other vehicles.

I pay a general tribute to the drivers in the heavy goods vehicle industry, whose involvement in casualty accidents has been coming down at twice the rate of car drivers.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): My hon. Friend will be aware of the concern felt not only by my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), who has already been mentioned and who has visited the scene, but by my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) who we are glad to see in his place today.

Could my hon. Friend have discussions with those companies that convey explosives and other dangerous substances to see whether, in advance of the implementation of the new regulations, it might be possible for them to improve their procedures particularly relating to the marking of the substances? That would ensure that, even before the regulations come into effect, a repetition of yesterday's accident will be made much more unlikely.

Mr. Bottomley: I know that the House will acknowledge what my hon. Friend has said about my right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major). The Nobel division of ICI has, over the years, had one of the best records in terms of the consideration of health and safety. I am not saying that it or anyone else is perfect, but I am sure that it is already making the investigations and inquiries to which my hon. Friend has referred.

I have taken advice and, without being able to confirm that it is absolutely right, I believe that it would not be unlawful for any company to put markings on vehicles now. They do not have to wait for the regulations to be laid and regulations to be passed.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the hon. Gentleman make the regulations a little more comprehensive? Together with his hon. Friends in other Departments, will he ensure that those regulations cover the transport of nuclear weapons, radioactive and other forms of nuclear material?

Mr. Bottomley: I think the House would prefer me to take the regulations that come from the Health and Safety Commission after the work of the Health and Safety Executive and lay them before the House as they are.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Many hon. Members who have quarries in their constituencies will be aware that those of their constituents who live close to them will have been particularly shocked and distressed at yesterday's accident. Explosives are a vital part of the quarrying and mining industry. When my hon. Friend considers this matter, will he assure us that he will bring in the mines and quarries inspectorate to consider the safety of the materials as they are conveyed to quarries, and the route that some of those materials take? I am sure that many people will be reassured by the figures that my hon. Friend has given about accidents, which should allay some people's fears. I should be grateful if he would involve the mines and quarries inspectorate in this work.

Mr. Bottomley: I know from my previous service at the Department of Employment that the Health and Safety Executive brings the relevant inspectorates together. I believe it is better for either myself or other Ministers to be answerable in this House, but to maintain the Health and Safety Executive and the Commission as the bodies that primarily bring the industries and the experts together from all sides of industry. It is the practitioners who have the responsibility to ensure that their work is as safe as reasonably practicable and, in this respect, I believe that

[Mr. Bottomley]

the record shows that they generally have. What happened yesterday was things going wrong rather than things going according to the book.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Minister accept that there seems to be a leisurely course in dealing with health and safety at work regulations? A study of the current statutory instruments list shows that many of them are intended to raise charges for optical and dental examinations and a whole host of other things. Last night the House approved many instruments that will cut legal aid without any proper scrutiny. That happens when the Government want to increase charges.

Why have health and safety regulations taken so long? Will the hon. Gentleman give the House an assurance that those regulations will make absolute provisions for training and marking and that we are not about to go down the road to qualifying the requirements with the words "so far as reasonably practicable", which the Health and Safety Executive and the commission are rather fond of using? The Minister knows that those words place a cost on carrying out that requirement and such words can be used in a defence in court. We want an absolute provision so that employers are required to ensure training and proper and adequate marking.

Mr. Bottomley: Having transferred a partial tribute to the hon. Gentleman from his hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I now believe that he does not deserve it. To introduce other extraneous matters when we are dealing with the serious issues of what happened yesterday and the new regulations that have come through the Health and Safety Executive machinery is to end this statement on a low note.

The hon. Gentleman should remember—assuming that he knew in the first place—that the words "so far as reasonably practicable" lift up the level of provision rather than providing a ceiling to it.

Mr. Skinner: That is just not true.

Mr. Bottomley: If a firm can do something that is reasonably practicable, it has a duty to do it. The obligations go beyond what is just written down if it is reasonable to do that. As somebody who is not a lawyer, I do not think that I shall take legal advice from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my hon. Friend confirm that detonators and explosives must have been carried in the same load for the explosion to take place? Will he take steps to ensure that in future, such materials are never carried in the same load? Further, will he ensure that all explosive material is immobilised in any transit journeys of the type undertaken on this occasion?

Mr. Bottomley: I think that my hon. Friend is asking me if such loads can be rendered inert, rather than immobilised. I cannot give an answer to his first point, but I am sure that the Health and Safety Executive's inspector's report, which will be published, will cover that issue.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Where was the vehicle destined to make its delivery? Is the Minister suggesting that the existing regulations do not require those transporting explosives to show warning signs? I am sure that many people will be astonished if that is the current practice. Will the Minister answer two questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) which I do not believe he answered? When did the consultation on the new regulations begin, and when did that consultation end?

Mr. Bottomley: I imagine that consideration—I am not sure whether it involved consultation—started in 1979, when the last amendment to the previous regulation was made. There is a continuous process of review. I suspect that the passing of the new regulations will be the start of a new process of considering what more can be introduced.

The key point is that the majority of countries in Europe still believe that our previous, and up to now present, practice is right: the security of not advertising the fact that explosive material is being carried is better than the secondary safety which will be introduced as a result of our consultations and changes of view. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that there is a clear-cut answer, he is wrong. It would need only one more example of illicit explosives being used to cause the death of a number of people for others to turn round and say that the "obvious" point recognised by the hon. Gentleman is wrong rather than right. I have been open with the House about the change of view as to what will provide the greater protection.

Mr. Speaker: In view of the time taken by the statement, the debate in the name of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) will now conclude at 5 minutes to 12, and the debate on the legal profession will start at that time.

Gwynedd Health Authority

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

11.29 am

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Before the statement I was asking who would be paying the price for the health authority's inability to develop a coherent strategy in financial and planning terms. I am convinced that in this case the patients in Gwynedd will pay the price: what a heavy price it is. Is it right that the patient pays a penalty when he or she has committed no wrong? Why should we be punishing innocent victims?

As the Minister will know, the people of Llandudno lose a children's ward, and Groesynyd hospital will close. The Druid hospital closes, with the proviso that a new ward is to be built on the Cefni site at Llangefni. The Madog hospital is to close. Caernarfon cottage hospital may have had a temporary reprieve but still faces the axe. St. David's hospital is to close and services are to be transferred to ysbyty Gwynedd.

Let me assure the Minister that neither I nor my colleagues are saying that every hospital should be kept open for all time. Hospitals need to close when the buildings are old, difficult to maintain and heat and when they become costly. However, they should not be closed at the expense of decent, comprehensive community provision.

I was astonished at some of the statements in the Secretary of State's letter of 3 March to the authority approving the plans. It said:

"The Secretary of State accepts that implementation of your Authority's proposals will in fact mean some reduction of services, including loss of beds, notwithstanding that overall implementation will maintain services and indeed improve some."

To be charitable, the Secretary of State is saying that there will be virtually no change, but, at worse, there will be a significant reduction in the provision for many people. I have no hesitation in saying that the old will suffer as a result of the plans.

On the position in Llangefni, if the health authority had introduced plans for a fully resourced, fully funded community hospital, I would not have objected, and neither would the staff and patients, to the closure of Druid.

What should be done? One does not criticise others lightly and I accept that I have been highly critical of the health authority today. I have done so only after careful consideration of the matter and in the knowledge that my views are likely to be reported. However, there are occasions when one feels that there is a duty to speak out and I do so today on behalf of my constituency and the people of Gwynedd. In my view, the authority has failed in its statutory duty to provide a comprehensive health service for Gwynedd. I call upon the Secretary of State to set up an inquiry into the affairs of the authority, as he has powers to do under the National Health Service Act 1977. If he finds that the authority is in breach of its statutory duty, he should issue a direction to ensure that it complies with that duty.

In the meantime, I call upon the members of the health authority who voted for the rationalisation plan to consider their position and ask themselves whether they can, in all conscience, remain members of an authority that has failed the people of Gwynedd.

11.33 am

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) on securing this debate. It is a timely debate in view of the major threat to the vital hospital facilities in Gwynedd. Two hospitals in my constituency are under threat. The first, the ysbyty Madog in Porthmadog, has regrettably had its closure confirmed by the Welsh Office and the second is the Caernarfon cottage hospital, which is subject to further consultation on the dental facility, but which we fear will be subject to the same rubber-stamping exercise thereafter, as has happened to the four hospital facilities that are being closed.

I need not stress to the Minister the outrage that is felt in Gwynedd about the proposals. He should know that from his constituency. The outrage was manifested in Llandudno on Monday this week when 400 people unanimously passed a vote of no confidence. He should remember the experience of his predecessor but one, now Lord Thomas of Hendon, who, because of the strong local feelings on the issue of leasehold reform, lost his seat. The Minister should take note of that lesson.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn has put the general arguments about the failure of performance by Gwynedd health authority over a number of years. I touched on those arguments in our debate on 14 June 1988 and they were not answered by the Under-Secretary of State. They are even more persuasive now. The guts of the argument is this question: why on earth should the ordinary people of Gwynedd who depend on these hospitals be chastised and lose their services because of the health authority's ineffectiveness—an ineffectiveness which the Welsh Office has acknowledged?

Our impression is that, because the Welsh Office was not able to get from the health authority the performance that it wanted, it sent in consultants. So as not to be criticised by the Welsh Office, the health authority slavishly adhered to the consultants' report, without differentiating between or looking to the merits of individual proposals. We suspect that the health authority has called the Welsh Office's bluff. The Welsh Office is afraid not to rubber-stamp the closures in order to ensure that the health authority does not blame any future predicaments on the Welsh Office. This yo-yo game is not good enough. There is a need for greater statesmanship and vision and a need to ensure that any rationalisation is part of a coherent, long-term strategic and investment plan that ensures that there are services worthy of the 21st century.

In Porthmadog we should be moving towards a new community hospital to serve the ysbyty and north Meirionnydd area. That proposal has been put forward on numerous occasions by the health authority but is not part of any strategic plan. The closure is taking place in a vacuum. It is ridiculous that a town of the size of Porthmadog should face the prospect of having no hospital.

The number of objections to the proposed closure is so large that the Secretary of State has failed to take proper note of them. In annexes E and F of the decision the Secretary of State said that no objection had been received from any of the community health councils in Gwynedd. That was said as a justification of the closure decision.

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

On 13 March, a letter from the secretary of the Arfon-Dwyfor community health council to the Welsh Office said:

"The members of my Council at their recent meeting were astounded at the statement in Annex E and F that 'no objection had been received from any community health council'. A letter was sent to the Gwynedd Health Authority on 7th March, 1988, setting out this Council's detailed objections to the proposals affecting the 3 hospitals in the Arfon-Dwyfor area, namely, St. David's Hospital, Bangor; Cottage Hospital, Caernarfon; and Madog Memorial Hospital, Porthmadog. On the same date, a copy of the letter was sent to your Department".

The Welsh Office is playing with words. On 20 March, the Welsh Office said in a parliamentary answer to me that it was firmly aware of the objection of the community health council dated 7 March but, because it was it was dated March and not April, it had referred to the fact that no objection had been received from any community health council. The Minister cannot get away with that. It is not good enough. Why does the Welsh Office not just admit that it made a mistake?

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Wigley: That would be much more honourable. I see that the Minister nods. If he is going to admit that a mistake was made, that is fair enough. However, if a mistake has been made, the whole issue should be reconsidered. The Minister should go back to the drawing board because the decision on Porthmadog was reached after an 8:7 vote at the Gwynedd health authority meeting. It was a knife-edge vote. Given the enormous number of objections, the Minister should think again.

The Porthmadog hospital was set up as a trust, as a memorial to those people from the Porthmadog area who lost their lives in the first world war. Does the Secretary of State have the right to close the hospital and reduce the service in the area? Does he have the right to sell off the building? Surely it should revert to the trustees as a war memorial building. This matter may well be taken up in a legal case by people from the Porthmadog area, who feel strongly about it. If the closure goes ahead, the Welsh Office should be warned that there will be an enormous campaign to have a new, much-needed community hospital for the area.

I should like to refer to the cottage hospital in Caernarfon. There is still a glimmer of hope because the Welsh Office has asked for further consultation to be undertaken on the dental side. The Minister knows that I and my family have a strong personal commitment to this hospital. My goodness, that hospital is not going to close if there is anything that I can do to stop it. I say that in all seriousness.

Many objections have been put forward by people in the Caernarfon area and it seems that, again, evidence has been lost. I have a full list of the names and addresses of the people whom the Welsh Office recognises as having submitted objections. It was sent to the area health authority and it has come into my possession. It does not include the names of numerous people who, I know, have sent objections. I have a letter from Selwyn Griffith, clerk of the Llanddeiniolen community health council dated 15 March, confirming that objections were sent formally opposing the closure proposals. Yet his name does not appear on the Welsh Office list or the area health authority list. That is only one example. I could quote dozens of examples of people who have written in and have had their letters acknowledged, but who have not received a copy of the consultation document or any other acknowledgement of their objection. This serious matter needs to be looked into because it appears that consultation procedures have not been carried out as they should have been.

Circumstances at the cottage hospital have changed dramatically over the past 15 months, since the closure proposals were put forward. Utilisation at the hospital in 1988 was 80 per cent. of a 14-bed facility, compared to only 67 per cent. of the 10-bed facility in the original proposal. That is a massive difference in utilisation. The staffing level is now down from 21·5 full-time equivalents in 1987—the figure given in the consultation document —to 17·5 full-time equivalents. Those two factors taken together mean that the cost at the Caernarfon cottage hospital for patients is equivalent to £10 per patient per day cheaper than in ysbyty Gwynedd, one of the alternatives being put forward. It would be ridiculous for the health authority and the Welsh Office to go ahead with the closure when circumstances have changed so dramatically since the proposals were drawn up.

There has also been an increase in the demand for geriatric provision at ysbyty Gwynedd and the specialists there have used the cottage hospital increasingly for people to recuperate in the community. Further consideration is to be given to dental provision. I ask the Minister for assurances that there will be a further public meeting in Caernarfon to consider the new proposals that he has asked the health authority to bring forward. Will he also clarify whether objections should be sent to the health authority or the Welsh Office, as the Welsh Office does not appear to take much notice of objections sent to the health authority? Will he also confirm that the whole proposal to close the cottage hospital at Caernarfon will be looked at again, rather than just the dental aspect? One aspect affects the others and logically the whole matter must be considered afresh, in its entirety. Finally, can the Minister confirm that, as circumstances have changed since 1987, those changes will be considered by the Welsh Office before a decision is taken? I support the plea made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn. Members of the health authority should consider their position and the Welsh Office should consider seriously the future of the health authority itself as a result of this sad saga.

11.43 am

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): This debate is being held in the light of the decision letter issued by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the hospital rationalisation proposals of Gwynedd health authority and I fully understand the concerns expressed by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) and for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). Their constituents are affected, and so are mine because I too am a Gwynedd Member.

I believe that my right hon. Friend's decisions on the Gwynedd health authority's proposals were right in the context in which they were taken and that they lay the foundations for a potentially better health service in Gwynedd. Of course, my right hon. Friend and I appreciate that the process of transition to a new pattern of services is not easy, but the long tradition of service by those hospitals scheduled for closure should not blind us

to the strenuous efforts of the health authority to provide a full and effective service elsewhere. The proposals that have been approved by my right hon. Friend include a number of features which will improve the service available to Gwynedd as a whole, such as the reprovision of psychiatric facilities in purpose-built accommodation at ysbyty Gwynedd and the integration of maternity services on the district general hospital site. They also include proposals of local benefit such as the centralisation of care for the elderly in refurbished premises at Llangefni in the constituency of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn. The approved proposals provide an opportunity for the health authority to build for the future, and the Welsh Office will be watching with interest to see whether the lessons that have been learned can be applied elsewhere.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn has spoken at some length about his assessment of the management of Gwynedd health authority. It may help, therefore, if I dwell for a moment on the relationship between the health authority and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

My right hon. Friend is of course ultimately responsible for the National Health Service in Wales, but the day-to-day running of hospital services is delegated to the district health authorities. Health authorities are responsible for providing effective and efficient services to people in their districts from within the revenue resources allocated to them. They are also responsible for planning the future pattern of services, using the most appropriate combination of buildings and equipment, within the capital funding provided to them and on the basis of capital allocation assumptions for future years published for planning purposes by the Department. Authorities' shares of both capital and revenue resources are determined each year using formulae agreed by the joint NHS/Welsh Office resource allocation working group. Health authorities are under a statutory duty to keep their finances within balance.

The hospital rationalisation plans to which my right hon. Friend has given his approval form part of a package drawn up by the health authority to bring its finances into balance. The health authority first drew the attention of the Welsh Office to its financial problems at the beginning of 1987. After discussion with the authority's chairman and senior officers it was decided to bring in management consultants, at the Welsh Office's expense, to investigate the authority's financial position. The consultants concluded that the authority's problems had their roots in 1984-85, with a developing trend of overspending on budgets in following years. The authority had managed to contain its overspending by taking advantage of non-recurrent savings—including slippage on capital schemes—and in 1986-87 by substantially increasing its creditor balances. But by 1987-88, the position had become untenable.

The consultants attributed the authority's position to the cumulative underfunding of pay awards, an increase in activity levels, particularly in high-cost specialties at ysbyty Gwynedd, the failure to make recurrent savings to finance the 0·5 per cent. transfer of funds to priority groups and the effects of incremental drift on pay.

The consultants also concluded that insufficient management action had been taken to control activity and spending levels. Later in their report they were critical of the authority's systems of planning, budgeting and financial control. It is vital that, as part of its programme to restore financial balance, the authority takes vigorous action to improve its arrangements for planning, budgeting and financial control, and I am pleased that action has been set in hand to achieve that.

The authority remained within its cash limit in 1987-88 mainly as a result of advances from the Welsh Office and the effect of emergency measures adopted by the authority when its financial crisis first became apparent. A similar combination of advances, together with the effects of the emergency measures, has contained the position in 1988-89.

The problems are the more serious when set against the background of an authority that has been shown—by both the capital and revenue formulae used to assess the relative funding position of Welsh heath authorities—to be one of the best resourced in Wales. The growth in recurrent revenue resources which will have been made available to the authority in the period 1978-79 to 1989-90 is some £21·5 million, or more than 51 per cent. after adjusting for actual and expected inflation. That is the second highest rate of growth of any authority in Wales, and it compares favourably with the Welsh average of 44 per cent.

In the light of these figures, I cannot say that I am satisfied with the level of financial management which has been shown by the authority in the past. However, I am encouraged by the steps that the authority is now taking to improve its performance in that respect.

There have been several references to the consultation procedures which led to my right hon. Friend's decision letter. It may be helpful if I outline the details of the procedures under which Gwynedd health authority consulted upon its hospital rationalisation proposals. Before I do so, one or two points have been raised by the hon. Member for Caernarfon about objections by two community health councils. I openly admit that there has been an error, for which officials have already apologised to the community health councils in question, in that the letter of 3 March conveying my right hon. Friend's decision did not record the fact that objections were submitted to him by Aberconwy and Meirionnydd community health councils following the health authority's meeting on 25 April. Although the decision letter in the case of Meirionnydd CHC was inaccurate in not correctly attributing the objection by Meirionnydd CHC, the council's two objections were discussed in paragraphs 19 to 21 and 34 of annex F of the decision letter.

In view of the council's statutory duty with regard to representing the interests in the Health Service of the public in Gwynedd, my right hon. Friend has looked again at its objections, but he is satisfied that his original view of them is correct and that the authority's proposal to close the Madog memorial hospital is still to be supported.

The bulk of the objections submitted by Aberconwy CHC was a copy of its representations to Gwynedd health authority during local consultation. They were considered by my right hon. Friend before the issue of the decision letter. A letter is being sent today to all those who received the original decision letter notifying them of the additional consideration that has been given in each case.

I am aware also that the hon. Member for Caernarfon has written to my right hon. Friend raising several points about the additional consultation to be carried out on the proposals for the cottage hospital at Caernarfon. My right hon. Friend will send a separate detailed reply to him. I should like to confirm that my right hon. Friend will be

[Mr. Wyn Roberts]

prepared to take into account all objections received about the cottage hospital as part of his additional consultation, whether or not they relate specifically to the dental service.

I have already referred to the responsibility of district health authorities in Wales for the detailed planning of health service provision. Responsibility for local consultation on the plans produced also rests in the first instance with district health authorities. In formulating plans, authorities are required to have in mind the need to make the most efficient use of their available resources which is consistent with the changing needs of patients. Ultimate ownership of all health authority buildings is normally vested in my right hon. Friend. In view of the fact that proposals for permanent closure or change of use can have a significant effect on the community, special arrangements have been designed to ensure that the public and all local interests are fully consulted. The procedures provide a right of appeal to my right hon. Friend, who decides on the proposals in the full knowledge of the contending considerations. Guidance is contained in the procedures for consultation on the closure and change of use of health buildings set out in planning paper No. 5. I stress that the role of my right hon. Friend is essentially to consider whether to approve the health authority's proposals, in the light of objections made to him. Under the consultation procedures, it is not the role of the Welsh Office or my right hon. Friend to draw up proposals of their own.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: He has a duty.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman says that my right hon. Friend has a duty, but his duty is exactly as I have spelled it out. Of course he has a responsibility for the National Health Service in Wales, but when these sort of proposals are put before him his role is to decide whether to approve them. It is not up to him to make his own proposals.

Legal Profession (Green Papers)

11.56 am

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I am delighted to have this opportunity to be the Member of Parliament who initiates our first debate on the Lord Chancellor's Green Paper on reform of the legal profession.

As, sadly, this debate has been personalised in some quarters, let me state my credentials. I am a barrister, although I make no claim to being a distinguished or senior one; I have devoted too much time to politics since the age of 20 to aspire to that. But I have a good working knowledge of criminal courts. I venture to suggest that MPs are rather more in touch with public opinion than most barristers. That is not the fault of barristers: it is simply that it is our job and not theirs.

The Green Papers have been widely reported and, it must be said, criticised by interested parties—or perhaps I should call them vested interests. There is nothing pejorative about that phrase. In a democracy, vested interests have as much right to comment as independent observers who, while they may be more objective, may be less knowledgeable.

I thought that it was time for an hon. Member to congratulate the Lord Chancellor on bringing forward the Green Papers. They are an excellent working brief for our debate. Above all, they deserve sober comment rather than hysterical outbursts in newspaper advertisements.

In my conversations with fellow barristers, it has been put to me that the Green Papers begin with dogma. My colleagues say that there is no sustained proof of the shortcomings of the Bar or of how reforms could benefit the public. The "dogma"—the alpha and omega of the papers—is a belief that restricting rights of audience and the promotion of solicitors is a restrictive practice that should be swept away. I do not view that as dogma. It is a sensible assumption.

My barrister colleagues, however, would say that such a restraint on the rights of solicitors is an historic and well-tested tradition and also protects the rights of small country solicitors, enabling them to brief the best in the land. It provides an independent cadre that is dedicated to the pursuit of justice, rather than profit or success in courts.

It has been put to me by my colleagues that, were the reforms to proceed, there would be no incentive for able young men and women to join the Bar, which would wither away as an independent force. I hope that I have been fair to the comments of my colleagues.

In my conversations with the public, I am afraid, I have found not a shred of sympathy for the barristers' case. That does not deter me from my opinions. Lawyers were unpopular long before politicans. The public seem to take the discomfiture of barristers with a large pinch of salt. I attach considerably more respect to the informed lay arguments, that barristers must take their turn to be reformed, like everybody else.

I now come to my views. I hope that they represent a reasonably informed and objective view of these matters. I hold the Bar and its traditions in deep affection. I respect its senior men and women for their learning and their commitment to justice. As a nation, we should be proud of

our incorruptible and dedicated judiciary. It would be a tragedy if the independent Bar was swept away or even withered away.

The traditions of integrity, the skills and the low overheads of an independent Bar compose what is probably the most efficient economic mechanism known to man. The independent contractor freely offering his services in the open market will—this is the crux of my argument—survive and prosper if the reforms are brought in.

The experience of the Commonwealth shows that an independent Bar survives such reforms. The Australian experience in New South Wales proves that an independent Bar can survive and be prosperous, vigorous and independent despite giving rights of audience to solicitors in all courts; nor have large in-house firms of advocates in New South Wales taken work from the independent Bar.

However, we need not look to Australia to confirm that analysis. Our own experience as practising barristers is cogent enough. When solicitors were granted rights of audience in county courts, many of the same arguments were used, such as: "They cannot be trusted as instruments of justice." Not only have those arguments been proved groundless, but the independent Bar flourishes in the county courts. When one walks into any magistrates court in London—I fear that I have walked into too many in my life—one sees that the benches are filled with young barristers, notwithstanding open competition from the solicitors. Why? The barristers are cheaper. They are not paid for those interminable hours of waiting around for their case to be called.

In my experience, few solicitors running busy criminal practices with large overheads and enormous out-of-court work pressures, such as meeting clients, organising bail late at night and much else, would dream of taking on lengthy, relatively poorly paid Crown court trials. Why should they, when most solicitors have known to them a group of experienced advocates who devote their whole life exclusively to court work and to the paperwork that is directly connected with it?

Again, experience in New South Wales shows that little High Court work—only about 10 per cent.—has been taken from the independent Bar by solicitors. However, equally, I have come across solicitors who can present an excellent case in long old-style committals—men with a lifetime of experience in the law and in the lower courts. Is it seriously contended that those men of mature years, of sound legal training and practical experience, are not capable of representing a client just as ably as a 22-year-old barrister with six months' desultory pupillage under his belt? Of course not.

My barrister colleagues have said that if somebody wants to become an advocate, "Why not become a barrister?" They say, "Why should we labour for years in the vineyard for little reward as a barrister, while the prodigal son—a solicitor—walks in at the last moment and helps himself to the plums?" What sort of argument is that? The enemies of the Bar would claim that it merely shows an attitude based on exclusivity—even snobbery—that has no basis in logic.

We all know how difficult it is to start at the Bar, especially for women and for minority groups, but in reality it is difficult for all of us. We have all had that experience. If a young man or woman has been forced by economic necessity to become a solicitor and if increasing family commitments make it impossible to transfer, should that young man or woman, assuming that he or she develops into an outstanding lawyer, be denied the ability to practise his or her trade at the highest level? Of course not.

At one end of the scale there is an unanswerable case in justice for the solicitors; at the other, we have well-attested evidence that the Bar will survive and prosper, even in the face of open competition. Put like that, the case for the Lord Chancellor's reforms is unanswerable.

However, all that is beside the political point: how can we, members of the Conservative party, justify dealing with restrictive practices, closed shops and vested interests for working-class people—for dockers and print workers—but not for our own people? What would the country think of us, especially as there is widespread belief that legal costs are too high?

The public remains to be convinced that more competition will not lower costs. Indeed, members of the public consider that, if they are not fortunate enough to be wealthy or able to obtain legal aid, the legal system—certainly as regards civil proceedings—is closed to them, and that is a disgrace.

Time does not permit me in this short debate to deal with conveyancing, except to address the central issue of advocacy rights. My advice to the Lord Chancellor is to listen and ponder, and perhaps to compromise on some issues, but to proceed on the main issues of the rights of audience.

I have a few suggestions, for what they are worth. Worries about multidisciplinary practices and their effect on an independent Bar should be taken seriously, and if a compromise must be made, perhaps this is an area for so doing. However, it can be asked, if barristers are to lose their right of exclusive audience in the higher courts, why should they not be compensated by free access to partnerships and direct relationships with clients?

We are giving our opponents a handle by setting up a structure of legal advisory committees and advocacy certificates. The constitutional arguments from certain judges are, frankly, bogus. The Lord Chancellor already appoints judges, and the committees will only set down standards of practice. Perhaps we should consider simplifying matters by extending rights of audience and leave the rest to self-regulation.

In any event, I call on the judges to lower the temperature. The remark by the Lord Chief Justice was, frankly, way over the top. The judges must take the lead in suggesting consensus and refrain from using inflammatory language that does their case with the public no good.

The Bar will have to do a deal with the Law Society. The Law Society pressed the Lord Chancellor to act, and his proposals are the result. The Bar cannot will them away with a Saatchi and Saatchi advertising campaign. Indeed, it will have to do a lot better than the "Wrong, wrong, wrong" advertisment. What nonsense to suggest in that advertisement that, if the reforms were to proceed, high street solicitors would wither away. This week the Law Society published a temperate and sensible response. Its views cannot be ignored by the Bar, any more than by the Lord Chancellor.

As a Government, we believe in self-regulation. Clearly, the Bar Council and the Law Society must sort out standards of advocacy, and it is better that they, rather than we, do it. The Lord Chancellor must also do some

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

more work on the effect on the consumer. Will this reform lower costs? As I have said, for too many people it is just not an option to go to court. Can we have more information on foreign experience?

The Crown prosecution service question must be examined in more detail. That service has not been a success. Nor, in my view, will it ever be able to attract sufficient first-class entrants, if employed barristers cannot practise in Crown courts. It would clearly be absurd if employed barristers could prosecute but employed solicitors, often working in the same office, could not. The "Wrong, wrong, wrong" advertisement from the Bar Council was also deeply insulting to the integrity of Crown prosecution service personnel.

We need more information on the nature of the Bar. I doubt that it is the small elite known to judges that it was. To what extent, however, does the esprit de corps feeling facilitate justice, and how much has that esprit de corps broken down in recent years?

Those are a few suggestions and questions. I congratulate the Lord Chancellor on having the courage and determination to take these issues on in a positive and understanding way. He has conducted himself in an exemplary fashion in this debate. He deserves the thanks and the praise of the whole House.

12.8 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): We live in stirring times. After 700 years, a determined Government of outsiders has dared to question the automatic rights and the closed shop of the Bar. The Bar's response has been surprising. Here is a profession which is supposedly good at thinking on its feet and which can always see the tactical advantage and the way forward, yet from this profession I see an outraged and hysterical response—hardly the cool and dispassionate dissection of an argument that I was taught as a young pupil.

I have yet to attend a meeting as a barrister where the word "consumers" is used—certainly not with approval. Now the Bar has moved to lower forms of attack. We have already heard arguments ranging from exaggeration to obvious misrepresentation and they have done no good.

The Bar has accused the Government of a sinister attack on its independence. What of news given to me last night by a colleague at the Bar, that the Bar Council has a file on me and other hon. Members which it intends to use for future attacks? It has already criticised my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor. It said that the Lord Chancellor is a Scot and does not understand the English system, that he had not thought out his proposal carefully, that he prepared it on a Sunday afternoon when he did not have a great deal of time, and that he had been pushed into it by the Prime Minister, another barrister. It says that the Prime Minister had only a short time at the Bar and does not understand how it works, and that she is simply seeking revenge for some petty pique that she acquired during her brief period at the Bar.

That is a total disgrace and does nothing to enhance the standing of an ancient profession worthy of the highest respect. The Bar argues tha the client is entitled to Rolls-Royce treatment and therefore has to pay Rolls-Royce prices, but that rests on a number of assumptions held by senior members of the profession who seem not to know or care about the junior end of the profession.

There are great variations in the ability of individual barristers and it is not necessarily the best who get into chambers or who take silk. When this year's new Queen's counsel are announced, it might be interesting to see exactly who they are. I have not had time to scan their qualifications, but I did go through last year's list.

In 1988, the proportion of QCs who had been to state schools was 28 per cent., while 72 per cent. had been to fee-paying public schools. Oxbridge provided 63 per cent., other universities provided 24 per cent. and those who had been to no university—horror of horrors—accounted for only 8 per cent. Women accounted for a mere 5 per cent. and a number of articles published two days after the silks were announced pointed out that three out of four of the 57 silks appointed that year had had the greatest difficulty in getting into chambers in the first place.

Let us examine the fate of those who do not get into chambers. They go to the City or they retrain as solicitors, but why should they not be able to become solicitors automatically? Those people are not necessarily less able: more often than not they do not come from a legal family or their faces do not fit. I suspect that part of the Bar's anxiety about rights of audience is that many of those people, who may be more talented, will be able to remain in the profession and compete as solicitor-advocates. That shows a monumental lack of self-confidence. If the Bar is the cream, the cream will rise to the top.

I know from my experience as a barrister that some of the most successful barristers have already been solicitors. The Bar must exist by its excellence alone and not be buttressed by legal restrictions.

I believe that there will continue to be a demand for the services of the Bar. Many solicitors' firms regard junior counsel as cheap overflow labour. Most clients do not care a fig for the independence of the Bar and are sick of seeing barristers fumble through cases as they learn them on their feet. The whole business of independence is a myth, certainly at the junior end of the Bar. Many firms of solicitors have a semi-permanent or permanent relationship with particular chambers and often send along junior counsel who deal with clients direct.

The system is charging for two tiers but only providing one. There are no complaints. Those of us who have had to go to Worksop on the Wednesday and have been given a file with a piece of pink string around it containing a piece of paper with a chap's name on it and a note saying, "Please do the necessary," do not complain, because that is our bread and butter, our £50 in the bank to make the bank manager a bit happier. *[Interruption.]* Yes I will speed up and get on.

It is worth pointing out that there is already competition between solicitors and barristers in the county court. We have had all these arguments before. We are now watching London firms and provincial firms of solicitors merging, but that is not cutting down work for the junior Bar. We should go in for purse-sharing. That is a sensible new reform.

At the top end of the spectrum the solicitor-advocate will be able to free himself of overheads and take work from several firms, not just his own. The crucial question is not the future of the Bar or of solicitors, but how consumers get a cheaper, quicker service with a more predictable outcome. The law has become a lottery in

which only the rich and very determined will take part. The Government must step in once again to crush a vested interest in the interests of the overall good of the nation. Competition is a wind which generally blows the consumer much good. Solicitors have shown that they can withstand it, when they lost their conveyancing monopoly. If barristers are the cream of the profession, as many of them seem to believe, they, too, can adapt to a changing world.

12.15 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): This is a short debate and no substitute for fuller consultation with Members of Parliament. It is not possible to give any comprehensive critique of the three Green Papers.

We in the Opposition readily agree that the aims and objects of the Green Papers are beyond dispute. Legal services should be cheaper, without loss of quality. They should be readily accessible, and the services of those with expertise should be more readily known and affordable. I want to deal with the principles which should govern the approach to the Green Papers.

I shall not become involved in any inter-professional row. There is no case for restrictions which exist for the benefit of the professions, not for consumers. That goes for all the professions: judges, solicitors and the Bar. They must make themselves more readily accessible and user-friendly, and they should have the ability to advertise and inform about their specialities. I hope that the idea of advertising and making specialities known can be developed.

The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) touched on the principle of what is described as the independence of the professions. One must be careful. The independence of the professions is an important element. By "independence" I do not mean detachment from responsibility or accountability to the general public. I do not mean that the professions should be immune from change, because that would be an arrogation of privilege. The independence of the professions means that collectively they should not be subservient to the state or amenable to any detailed political control.

I take the hon. Gentleman's point that the Lord Chancellor may wish to loosen the arrangements of access to higher courts for solicitors and to have a system of advocacy certificates. He is absolutely right that, having had that broad-brush approach from the Lord Chancellor, the detailed control of such matters should be left to the professions. That is not a vested interest argument. It is simply a point which has been made powerfully by the National Consumer Council. It stated:

> "We welcome greater lay participation in the regulation of the legal profession. We are concerned, however, that the Lord Chancellor proposes to make final decisions on whether a particular area of expertise should be recognised and the standards of education and training appropriate in each case. In our view, such decisions should be made by a statutory Legal Council . . . employing its own secretariat."

The NCC then recommends that the detailed control of these matters should be for the professions, not the Lord Chancellor. That is absolutely right. We have had far too detailed a degree of political control exercised by the Lord Chancellor.

The next principle concerns the individual independence of lawyers. Lawyers are officers of the court and have an ethical duty to act properly, but their main and central duty must be the client they represent. They should be able to do that without fear or favour, or any conflict. When the Lord Chancellor is studying the conveyancing proposals, he should consider the way in which the property market has become concentrated in the hands of a few people. For example, the influential Prudential Assurance Company may well now be selling property as an agent, providing the mortgage to the vendor, providing an insurance policy for the vendor, providing—subject to the current proposals—legal service to the vendor, providing a mortgage to the purchaser, an insurance policy to the purchaser and so on. As the Lord Chancellor pointed out in the Green Paper, in those circumstances, the legal adviser will owe a duty to two people.

The Lord Chancellor must study carefully what is already becoming a complex monopoly of property services in the market. It would be strange if, at the time that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is loosening up the tied arrangements of brewers, a new kind of monopoly and ties were created in relation to other services.

It is important to ensure access to all legal services and freedom of choice for the consumer. There is no difference of opinion between my party and the Lord Chancellor about the need to provide safeguards for consumers. The Lord Chancellor must consider carefully, however, the independence of employed lawyers in relation to property transactions.

Any discussion of adequate provision of legal aid is absent from the Green Paper. We do not want the contingency fee arrangement to be some kind of smokescreen for not extending legal aid and accessibility to legal services.

This is not the time to have a detailed and thoughtful discussion of the Green Paper, but I ask the Solicitor-General to make a request to the Lord Chancellor to extend the period of consultation. There is a lot of interest in the proposals.

The Royal Commission on Legal Services took a long time to consider many representations. In view of the comments that have been made, the Lord Chancellor should extend the time for consultation beyond the May deadline, particularly since his proposals did not come from any kind of multidisciplinary inquiry, but from within his Department.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Before I call the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), I must remind the House that this debate must conclude at 12.30 pm.

12.21 pm

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I shall be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Bar, as part of the legal profession, must accept that the Conservative party, which is dedicated to free and open competition, will naturally push forward its reforming ideas into the professions having dealt with many other aspects of our society.

I am concerned that the quality of the profession, its expertise in advocacy, its high standards of discipline and honesty are maintained. The independence of the Bar is not under threat from the Green Papers. Many of my colleagues at the Bar have gone over the top in their criticisms of them.

There are three important considerations. First, commercial solicitors are not coming forward in droves to

[Mr. Kenneth Hind]

seek to recruit barristers—they cannot afford them. Some 80 per cent. of solicitors' practices in this country are four-man practices or smaller. They will need an independent Bar to provide expertise on the cab-rank basis and, accordingly, it will continue. The third important consideration is that the market will rule on costs because the Bar provides a much cheaper service than solicitors, who will be unable to compete in certain areas of litigation, such as crime. For the foreseeable future, therefore, the independent Bar will survive and it is essential that it does.

There are three things that the Lord Chancellor must consider carefully in his deliberations. The first is recruitment. Earlier certificates should be granted to young barristers who go to the Bar with the intention of becoming specialists in advocacy. That must be borne in mind when considering the generalist who becomes an articled clerk to a solicitor. Barristers should be allowed to form partnerships to help them recruit and to pay new young barristers. The Lord Chancellor must give great consideration to the salaries of Crown prosecutors who will appear in the Crown court. Those prosecutors must be paid a great deal more; otherwise, the necessary quality of advocate will not be attracted.

Those are important matters, and I hope that the House will seriously consider them.

12.25 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): This inevitably has been a short debate and it has rightly attracted a great deal of interest. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) first on initiating the debate, and I thank him on behalf of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor for his kind remarks, which will be much appreciated.

It will be understood that in just over five minutes I cannot cover the whole of the broad and profound issues that are dealt with by these Green Papers. Three main issues appear to have been concentrated upon in the public debates and in the debates by my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser). They are, first, the future structure of the legal profession—I emphasise the word "structure"—in relation to the rights of audience; secondly, conveyancing by financial institutions, on which the hon. Member for Norwood has made some comments; and, thirdly, very briefly, although more widely in the public, the issue of contingency fees. My hon. Friends have concentrated principally on the first issue, which is the question of rights of audience and advocacy and the questions that flow from that concerning the structure of the legal profession.

The first point that I want to emphasise, is one that my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor has been at pains to emphasise in two recent conferences—one more expensive than the other; costs may have had something to do with attendance—that these are Green Papers and that the Government are listening. They are consultation papers, on which the Government welcome comments from as broad a range of opinion as possible. I think, as lawyers, that we understand better than anybody else that it is difficult for any individual—that includes a lawyer—to put his own case. That is why the Lord Chancellor looks for comments beyond the range of lawyers and beyond barristers and solicitors arguing for themselves, and wishes to draw in the consumer and the wider public.

The second point that my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor stressed is that the measures deserve to be studied with care. They start to examine from first principles a question that has been discussed for as long as I have been at the Bar. That has inevitably been disturbing, because those who begin an argument from first principles do not feel that they can control where that argument may end up.

In the context of this short debate, I would like to draw the House's attention to a few passages in the Green Paper that show that the Government are aware of different arguments and are especially aware of arguments that may bear upon the structure of the professions.

Chapters 5 and 8 of the Green Paper concentrate on those arguments. My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) asked what help we could draw from Commonwealth and other common law experience. The Green Paper—after reviewing some of the competitive arguments in paragraphs 8.7, 8.8 and 8.9—especially asks for comments on that at the end of chapter 8. I invite the public and the House to concentrate on the issues highlighted in those paragraphs.

The Green Paper starts with principles that I believe are very difficult to gainsay. Basically—I shorthand them—those objectives are set out in the first chapter. They are to ensure that the public has the best possible access to legal services and that those services are of the right quality for the particular need of the client.

Everybody who has spoken in this debate has said that they wish to see a continuance of a strong independent Bar. I hope that I have paraphrased correctly. They make the point that barristers should not be afraid that they cannot compete against solicitors and that barristers should have the courage to welcome competition from solicitors. I believe that that is right as far as it goes.

The legal profession has, over the years, divided itself into two portions, one specialising in advocacy and the other in general legal services, if that is not a contradiction in terms. We should concentrate our minds on how in future, on the basis of the principles proposed in the Green Papers, the profession will structure itself. There have been valuable contributions from within the House and from outside on that important question, together with important contributions from the Law Society on the question of financial services in the context of conveyancing and wider contributions on contigency fees. The Government will be paying close attention to those arguments during the further six weeks of the consultation period and before forming their conclusions on these highly important issues.

Housing Benefit (Retired People)

12.30 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of thousands of retired people, for giving me an opportunity in this Adjournment debate to raise the problems facing them in retirement flats with unresponsive managers. Over 20,000 new flats and houses for retired people have been built in this decade, yet their residents have minimal rights. Elderly people have been lured in their thousands into purchasing retirement homes only to find that they have no control over the accounts or the managers. Many of them are having to suffer incompetent management and soaring costs. There is ample evidence of firms profiteering at the expense of the frail and elderly.

I am grateful to the Minister for meeting me last Tuesday and for the courtesy and sympathy he has shown on this matter. I do not believe that changes in housing benefit regulations offer a solution, and changes in management practices will not suffice. We need a change in management and a choice for residents. Many residents are satisfied with the current arrangements but many are not, and with good cause.

People responded in their thousands to advertisements such as that from McCarthy and Stone which said:

"You are free of future worries of running a large property ... Our friendly management support team, Peveril Management Services ... now offers you the perfect retirement home in Homeroyal House."

Once residents move into such homes they often find that the management prices soar. The developers are either luring people in with artificial prices or imposing large increases to swell their profits. At present, it appears that management agencies of retirement properties allow developers to write themselves blank cheques at the expense of tenants and residents. Complaints are dismissed out of hand. I shall read some of the letters I have received.

At Fleetwood farm in Southport, the managers, Northern County Homes, took exception to a committee being formed. An elderly resident writes:

"Now they have sent their bully boy with a stick. We all fought in the last war and won—but not for this kind of treatment."

McCarthy and Stone wrote to residents in Scotland's largest retirement complex in Edinburgh saying:

"We do not recognise any committee or other group as representing the views or interests of residents as a whole."

Yet Mr. McCarthy, with an eye on public relations, claims publicly to encourage residents' associations.

At High Wycombe, the Warden housing association has not produced properly audited accounts after 22 months. In Crowborough, a resident of Martlet's court wrote to me saying:

"The elderly are being conned and it is time the Government should bring in laws to protect us."

In Upminster, retired people who are not satisfied with management are forced to sell at two thirds of the market price. In Homeabbey house in Cheltenham, one resident writes of McCarthy and Stone:

"their replies have been totally unsatisfactory and often unrelated to the issues I raised. I have been disgusted with their attitude towards elderly people."

It is a scandal that retired people who have reached the pinnacle of their professions in the services during and after the war, in Churches, public administration, commerce, business and industry should be treated as if they are doddery old fools. If I were ever to hold the Minister's position, I could wish for no better or more competent advisers than the residents who have briefed me in Homecross house in Edinburgh or the retired people who have written so lucidly from Torquay to Tunbridge Wells, from Harrow to Hove and from many other parts of the United Kingdom. It is an insult to those retired people who have served this country so well that developers like McCarthy and Stone often refuse even to acknowledge their letters.

Many older people in retirement flats face spiralling costs of management charges, which are far above the rate of inflation and the rate of increase in the retirement pension. Assurances from developers such as McCarthy and Stone that costs will be kept down have proved worthless. Often the new residents have looked to move from large, draughty family homes which are hard to heat and a constant drain on their resources to a smaller, comfortable retirement home. This was to be their dream home where they could expect many years of happy retirement. Sadly, for many people throughout the country, that dream has turned into a nightmare.

In Homeroyal house in Edinburgh, residents were issued in 1987 with a brochure from McCarthy and Stone which said:

"management charges rise at a rate either slightly below or at the level of inflation."

The sales staff repeated that assurance, yet in the 18 months since one of my constituent's purchased a flat there, the management charge has risen by over 16 per cent., twice the then rate of inflation.

McCarthy and Stone has done nothing to honour its promise to keep charges down. The charge for the son of one of my constituents staying overnight in the guest room rose by 60 per cent. in the five months between April and September, although each resident had already contributed £250 to furnish the guest room—a total of well over £8,000. I wonder how much of that went to equip one bedroom and how much went to McCarthy and Stone's profits. As one resident said to me,

"The strategy is to lure retired people in. They become trapped in the vice with no escape."

In many cases, the management agency is a subsidiary of the developer. Peveril Management Services serves McCarthy and Stone, not the residents. Their interests are all too often neglected.

In Homeroyal house in Edinburgh, one of my constituents has told me that if management costs continue to rise at their present levels, he will not be able to afford to remain in his flat. We are facing the prospects of thousands of older people bankrupting themselves to feed the profits of unscrupulous developers. These people have almost no rights.

In Homeroyal house there was a burglary over a year ago. McCarthy and Stone's surrogate, Peveril Management Services, holds the insurance policy. Between January and June, none of the communal equipment in the lounge or kitchen had been replaced. Then a Minister visited the property in June in a blaze of publicity. The lounge fire was replaced for that visit, but the stolen pictures were not replaced until November; nor was the fridge, while the vases and the clock were not replaced until this January and other equipment has not been replaced over a year later. There is only one

[Mr. Nigel Griffiths]

expression for such management—uncaring and incompetent. Residents were charged for maintaining a garden which does not exist.

McCarthy and Stone and other management agencies say that cost rises are inevitable, but when the accounts are examined we see that the largest rises are not in service provision of the warden or in the rises in rates, gas or electricity but result from what is euphemistically labelled "management charges". Those charges for the mismanagement of Homeross house in my constituency have risen by 18 per cent. in the past year. They are set to rise by more than 40 per cent. in the next three years in return for no improvement in service.

When I first wrote to McCarthy and Stone about these rocketing costs, John McCarthy wrote back saying that that was a ludicrous claim. I gave him the figures, and he wrote back saying that his present costs were unrealistically low. The McCarthy and Stone residents do not believe that those costs are unrealistically low. In Homeross house about £20,000 is spent on staffing, £20,000 on service provision and a further £20,000—one third of the total—goes on management charges for which only minimal management services are given.

From Homedrive house in Hove, the residents committee has written to me saying:

"We do not wish to line the pockets of Peveril Management Services."

Such letters are all too familiar to Ian Cowie and *The Daily Telegraph*. I pay tribute to them, to Allison Clements of *The Scotsman* and to the Edinburgh *Evening News* for alerting Parliament and the public to the pitfalls of retirement homes. My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) has also been pressing for retired people to be given justice by McCarthy and Stone.

Colonel Scott, the residents association convener at McCarthy and Stone's Homeross house, wrote to me:

"Our main difficulty is that we cannot get replies to our letters."

People have written to me from Bournemouth to Blackpool saying the same. At Homeabbey house, a resident wrote complaining to McCarthy and Stone and enclosed a cheque to settle an account. McCarthy and Stone replied saying that the original letter had got lost. Surprisingly, the cheque in the same envelope had been cashed.

Years go by, yet McCarthy and Stone still fails to produce proper accounts. The pattern is the same in Edinburgh, Bournemouth, Torbay and Torquay. Residents are promised the accounts next week, then next month, then next year and then they are told that the accounts are in the post. At Homeroyal house, only one set of accounts has been finalised in two years. At a meeting minuted in April last year, the McCarthy and Stone manager agreed to produce audited accounts in October; that was not done. In November, he told the residents that the accounts were ready; none appeared. In February this year, he informed residents that the accounts would be produced the following week. A month later, they still have not been produced.

Throughout the country, millions of pounds are unaccounted for. The money has not vanished; it sits in the bank accounts of McCarthy and Stone and Peveril Management. When the residents write to John McCarthy about that, they receive no answer. Arthur Young, the accountants for McCarthy and Stone, present accounts for charges that have not been incurred. It sends bills to residents such as one for £3,000 that was sent to one of my constituents and it then issues a correction saying that McCarthy and Stone owes the residents £2,000.

Until proper legislation is enforceable, retired people move to such properties at their peril. They face rising bills, not for rates, services or wardens, but for a bureaucracy. Experience shows that that bureaucracy has forced up costs by almost 70 per cent. Since it was announced that I was introducing a Bill to give choice, rights and protection to retired people, I have received letters of support from all over the country. I have been swamped by complaints, ranging from discourtesy to dishonesty against some of the major retirement property developers.

Mr. McCarthy spoke out in an article called:

"The truth behind the gossip."

It was so full of inaccuracies that it was really the gossip behind the truth. It was a half-fictional account of the workings of McCarthy and Stone that many of the residents found hard to credit.

People should think carefully before purchasing retirement homes. I would not urge anybody to buy from McCarthy and Stone. Indeed, I would urge them to boycott McCarthy and Stone until another piece of valuable work has been carried out in this House. The hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) has done invaluable work on a voluntary code of practice for the retirement homes industry. I very much welcome that. But the House has heard me detail the problems facing retired people.

Mr. McCarthy wrote to me on 20 February:

"We are already implementing the code of practice."

Does a 69 per cent. increase in management bureaucracy charges comply with that code of practice? Is it part of his code not to carry out repairs, not to reply to letters, to charge people £100 for parking their cars, to charge them for selling their own houses or to dictate to them who their managers and accountants will be? He has brought the code of practice into disrepute even before the ink has dried.

That is why I shall introduce a Bill on 7 April which will give people rights in these matters, such as the right to choose a competent management agency and not to have an incompetent one foisted on them. There will also be the right to have the accounts presented properly and timeously and the right to appoint an auditor who serves the residents, so that they will not have to foot the bill for the manager's accounts. The consumer is not king in the domain of so many of those managers. My Bill will give legislative teeth to the code of practice, and I hope that it will command support on all sides.

12.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I should like to thank the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) for raising this interesting and important subject, which I know is causing many elderly people concern. Although the hon. Gentleman and I may differ somewhat in our approach to finding a solution to the problem, I share his worries and I am as anxious as he is that this cause of anxiety for a number of elderly people should be removed.

There is no doubt that the concept of sheltered housing for the elderly is an excellent one. In most cases, those

elderly people who opt to move into sheltered accommodation are happy, both with the standard of the accommodation and with the way in which their homes are managed.

The amount of sheltered housing has increased significantly over the past decade and there are now more than 20,000 homes nationwide. The industry is to be congratulated on its efforts to meet a real and growing demand. Typically, sheltered housing consists of a cluster of purpose-built flats, with some communal faciltities and a resident warden. The vast bulk of such properties are owner-occupied, usually bought outright on a long lease with the proceeds from the sale of a previous home. I understand that in Scotland the homes are likely to be freehold rather than leasehold, due to differences in property law. This has some implications for the legal protection afforded to the owners, which I shall come to later. In all cases, however, the residents will pay rates—or the community charge from 1 April in Scotland—plus a service charge to cover the costs of items such as the warden service, cleaning, heating and lighting any communal areas, and management and administration. This service charge may run into several hundred pounds a year.

The attraction of such housing for the relatively fit elderly is obvious when the home in which they have lived, perhaps for many years, becomes too large and difficult to maintain. Sheltered housing combines the dignity and independence of a home of one's own with the convenience of modern purpose-built housing, the security of knowing that a warden is at hand should help be needed, the congenial company of like-minded neighbours and freedom from the need to worry about organising and paying for maintaining and repairing one's home.

It is that last consideration—the freedom from worry about the possibility of large unbudgeted bills for unexpected repairs or improvements, that concerned the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South in his detailed and copiously documented speech. As I said, most residents of sheltered housing are very happy with their decision. But some are undoubtedly finding their retirement years fraught with unexpected anxieties caused by large bills for service charges of which, they say, the glossy brochures published by the builder or management company completely failed to warn them. In some other cases their invoices have been incorrect or misleading.

Naturally, the effect on residents facing such a situation is worrying. Most elderly people are on fixed incomes. Their capital is tied up in their home. they have budgeted prudently on the basis of the service charges that they were led to expect when they bought their property. They now see their careful calculations upset by steep increases or additional charges for "improvements" that they may not have requested and do not want.

I know that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South is not alone in his concern about this problem. As he rightly said, my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack) has been addressing this very subject through a joint working party with some of the organisations most concerned, and I am grateful for his generous recognition of my hon. Friend's efforts. Those represented on the joint working party include Age Concern, the National Consumer Council, the National Federation of Housing Associations and the National Housebuilders Federation. The aim of the working party was to draw up a voluntary code of practice with the builders and managers of sheltered accommodation, which will ensure that the good management practices of the best-run sheltered housing are adopted by them all.

The code will focus on four main principles: first, how to develop a soundly planned housing scheme; secondly, deciding what estate management services to provide; thirdly, calculating the service charges to pay for those services; and fourthly, customer information, complaints procedures and arbitration to deal with some of the problems that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South rightly highlights.

The code will stress the need for adequate pre-purchase information and include model guidance—for example, a model leaflet on consumers' legal rights. It will ensure that developers do not hand schemes over, once sold, to inexperienced management agencies. The latter must be reputable and developers will have to sign a standard agreement with them to ensure they inherit the original obligations that the developer entered into with his buyers. The draft code has gone out for consultation and the final version should be published later in the year.

In England and Wales, where most sheltered housing is leasehold, owners already have a measure of legal protection. A long leaseholder's primary safeguard should be the terms of the lease, which should set out the basis for any service charges, including management fees, and make clear the respective rights and duties of the parties to it, including the level of ground rent, the provision of services, the level of warden cover, and so on. As the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South said, those matters should be taken into account when the original lease is drawn up or assigned.

Tenants paying management fees and for services that are recoverable as a variable service charge have statutory protection under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. That includes a right to be consulted about major works, a right to information about costs, an opportunity to inspect the supporting documents on which the service charges were based, and a right to challenge unreasonable demands. Those protections were originally for tenants of flats, but they were strengthened and extended to other dwellings by the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987.

That act gives further protection to tenants. For example, when the landlord or his agent is failing in his duties to the tenants, they now have a right to apply to the county court for the appointment of a manager to take over the running of the block; when leases do not provide for the satisfactory management of a block, any party to the lease can apply to the court to vary the terms of the lease; and recognised tenants associations are now entitled to ask landlords to consult them on the appointment of managing agents. Also, from 1 April 1989, under section 42 of the Act, all service charge contributions, including contributions to sinking funds, will have to be held in trust for the benefit of the tenants. The same applies to any income accruing from the investment of such money. That change will be very welcome for some residents particularly those in some of the categories to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's argument for further legislative action, but I do not feel that there is a case for additional coercive action at this stage. I would like first to have an opportunity to test the effect of the voluntary approach. I hope that the code of conduct which I have outlined will be adopted and that it will substantially strengthen the position of residents of

[Mr. Peter Lloyd]

sheltered housing. At the end of the day, it is in the interests of those who build and run sheltered accommodation to see that their management policies benefit the residents. Their business interests are not served by widespread dissatisfaction among their customers and potential customers. We must work to ensure that all management companies meet the high standards which are already maintained by the very best.

That will benefit all residents of sheltered accommodation, not merely those who are able and willing to spend their retirement monitoring the performance of their landlords and going through some complex prescribed procedure when they wish to sack or replace an unsatisfactory management company. I do not think that it would be justifiable to treat the owners of sheltered housing differently from the owners of ordinary service flats. However, I and my colleagues in the Department of the Environment will watch this issue with close attention. We shall expect to see a reduction in the complaints received from residents of sheltered housing as the voluntary code of conduct is adopted. If that does not occur, no doubt my colleagues at the Department of the Environment will wish to look at this matter again to see what might be done.

The hon. Gentleman may find it helpful if I finish by considering what help may be available to residents of sheltered housing who are now facing hardship because of unexpectedly high service charge bills. That help may be available through income support or housing benefit. The two principles underlying the way in which help is given are, firstly, that housing benefit cannot be paid to help owner-occupiers with the cost of acquiring or maintaining their own home. Secondly, when it is payable, housing benefit can meet costs related only to the accommodation itself. It does not pay for items such as care, fuel, or meals when they are provided with the accommodation.

In most cases, sheltered housing is owned outright by the occupants. Housing benefit would not be payable except to meet up to 80 per cent. of the occupant's rates or community charge if his financial circumstances justified it. If the owner is entitled to income support, some help may be available with that part of the service charge that relates just to the accommodation. This would include the cost of heating, lighting and cleaning the communal area of the accommodation. If the owner is buying the sheltered accommodation on a mortgage, income support would be available to help with the cost of the mortgage interest payments, but not with the capital element.

There may be a few examples of sheltered accommodation that is rented rather than owned by its occupant. In these cases, housing benefit could be paid to meet the full amount of the eligible rent if the tenant's other income justifies this. The eligible rent would include such items as the cost of heating, cleaning the communal areas, and the cost of providing an alarm system in property that is specially adapted for the use of elderly or disabled people. Eligible rent does not, however, include items such as personal nursing care, heating of the rented accommodation and any meals. The cost of these items is expected to be met through income support and its premiums and other social security benefits for the elderly or disabled, or help may be provided by local social service departments. Thus, a range of help is available to elderly people in sheltered housing who are on low incomes and unable to meet the costs of their accommodation.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will realise from what I have said that the Government share his concern for the predicament of elderly people who find that the cost of their retirement homes is greater than they anticipated. Although we may differ about the best solution at this stage, I am grateful for his views. I hope that he will continue to monitor the position, in his constituency and more widely. I know that my colleagues in the Department of the Environment will be ready to consider any further representations that he wishes to make. Finally, I congratulate him on securing the time to raise this important issue today.

Hearing Aids

12.56 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I was born deaf and I have been liberated. Most of my hearing comes from the best of modern technology. As a result, I am 95 per cent. as good as any normal hearing person in terms of what I can hear. Sometimes in this place, I am very grateful to be able to miss the last 5 per cent., especially with the insulting things that Opposition Members shrill across at the Prime Minister during Prime Minister's Question Time. But if I look at a speaker, I can understand what is being said, because, alas I retain the facility to lip-read.

I thought that I knew the extent of the problem of deafness. After all, if one is born severely deaf and does not obtain the sort of technology that one needs until the age of 40, one has had personal experience of deafness. But I did not realise the extent of this huge problem until I received a mammoth postbag in the weeks since an excellent article was published in *The Daily Telegraph* by Emma Burstall. She is a young journalist who knew me from the west country, and she has just come from *The Western Morning News*. She asked me to explore the topic with her when she heard that I was launching a campaign. Since then, my postbag has been crammed with letters whose poignancy I cannot repeat here.

There are hundreds of people who are deaf in some way or another. There are many different scales of deafness. They have become isolated, and the quality of their lives has been greatly diminished. They have become withdrawn and do not go out. They are still looked upon as freaks or mentally handicapped by the public and even by friends and family. There is still a stigma attached to deafness.

Some hon. Members are old enough to remember a time when children who wore glasses at school were laughed at by other children who called them "four eyes". That is a thing of the past. Because of the provision of spectacles on the high street, it is now normal to have several different pairs of spectacles with different coloured frames, perhaps to match one's dress if one is a woman or one's tie if one is a fashion-conscious man, and to go in and out of opticians' shops freely, without any fear, shame or embarrassment, to purchase the correction that one needs and that modern technology provides for sight that in some way is imperfect.

However, it is a different matter with hearing. What happens when one discovers that one is deaf? The first thing to say is that it takes a little time for one to realise that one is deaf. Most people go deaf in old age. One in three people above the age of 70 has a significant enough hearing loss to need a hearing aid, but that is not all. Many young people go deaf. There is what one might call "self-induced" deafness from going to too many discotheques, from getting too close to the speakers and not turning the sound down. There is also work-induced deafness if one gets too close to a piece of loud machinery. The human ear is sensitive—much more so than the human eye. Hearing loss is easy to acquire.

Mercifully, people who become deaf through my condition—or through the reason that I became deaf—are now very rare. My mother had rubella and luckily we now have vaccinations against it, so that cause of deafness is no longer common. None the less, there are still some things for which we do not adequately test in the United Kingdom. For example, toxoplasmosis is a blood disorder for which we do not test in pregnancy as I believe we should; it can cause physical defects, including hearing loss.

As one in 10 of the population of the United Kingdom has a significant hearing loss, which could be corrected, it can be seen that this is a large problem.

If one discovers that one is deaf, one goes first to one's doctor. National Health Service practitioners often know little about hearing because the medical profession knows that it cannot do much to correct hearing loss. Very little can be done surgically except in rare instances. Nonetheless, the filter that has been set up to enable one to achieve one's goal, which is to have one's hearing corrected, is a series of fine screens, which are so effective that few people emerge at the far end having achieved their goal.

I shall take my area—the south-west—as an example. I represent a constituency with 92 villages, 35 hamlets and five market towns. It is the most glorious part of the United Kingdom and is spread over 1,000 square miles. Because it is so beautiful, many elderly people retire to our area, and because it is so lovely, mercifully, people live for a long time. Therefore, we have a well above average age profile in our population and a low pay-out of child benefit.

The hospitals to which such people must go to get their first appointment with an ear, nose and throat surgeon —that is the second hurdle that one must face—are far away geographically. It could take somebody living in the village where I live two and a half hours to get to Barnstaple. My constituents are unlikely to have transport —we are not a rich area—so they will use the hospital car service. Marvellous though it is, it is mainly a volunteer service and sometimes it forgets to come or it may be late.

The hospital car service was late in calling for the lady who lives with me. As I was up in Westminster I could not take her and she cannot walk. She was going for hydrotherapy. When, eventually, after two and a half hours, they reached Barnstaple, the appointment had evaporated. Other people in different villages may be nearer Plymouth, which can be just as difficult to get to, or Exeter, which is the third referral point for ENT surgeons and consultants.

ENT consultants are busy professionals with lengthy waiting lists. In Plymouth, for example, the waiting time —this is no fault of the ENT consultant—is over 18 months. I have two constituents aged 83 and 85 respectively who have waited for well over 18 months to get on that step of this Jacob's ladder to heaven. They still have not seen him, and the consultant can offer them no date. I hope they will not be dead by the time they get an appointment.

Once they have an appointment, it is 99·9 per cent. certain that the consultant will not be able to do anything for them, because virtually all hearing defects are inoperable. Few people qualify for Cochlear ear implants, which are new and difficult and can cause problems. So, generally speaking, the consultant refers one to the clinic in the hospital which deals with hearing aids.

As a hearing aid user, I am aware of how many fittings one may need to make the aid work for oneself. The first one selected may not be the most suitable. If that happens, it will not be the fault of the dispenser, and I pay tribute

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

to the excellence of the audiology departments in hospitals. Their staff are superb but, alas, they are gravely handicapped in what they can offer the patient.

The NHS hearing aid provision comprises only one type of aid. I sometimes wonder whether the NHS has noticed that God has given us two ears. Balance is best achieved by both ears hearing equally, and the provision of hearing aids is designed to correct imbalances in hearing. Often when one goes deaf the two ears do not age, in hearing terms, at the same rate. Nevertheless, in the NHS it is one only, so if one is lucky enough to get an aid, one emerges unbalanced.

Being unbalanced, one canot tell where the noise is coming from. One is fussed and bothered and must turn round trying to puzzle out whether the noise is coming from behind, from left or right or ahead. We have two ears to act as funnels for the input of noise. Hearing aids are not like spectacles in terms of technical excellence. They will be one day. After all, if we can put men on the moon, why cannot we correct the hearing of those left on earth?

Instead of having spectacles ground to one's prescription so that they exactly match—or as near as science can manage—one's defects, hearing aid provision is similar to buying a dress or a shirt. There are a number of sizes. One chooses the article closest to one's size and has it altered. The hearing aid is altered by the dispenser.

The NHS thinks that we are all fat, medium or thin. On the other hand, Marks and Spencer knows in its wisdom that we range from size 8 to size 24. The NHS thinks that all human beings are one of three stock variations. I have news for the NHS. That is not the case. If one goes to a private hearing aid dispenser one can choose from perhaps 250 variations of aid.

One is given an aid under the NHS and it does not fit one's hearing. Worse still, it may hurt. Hearing loss occurs at different levels. One may have lost hearing at the lower level, affecting the lower range of hearing. The tone control on the NHS hearing aid can be adjusted to help that lower tone. It cannot be adjusted to help the top range, and one may have perfect hearing at the top. That means that the hearing aid will amplify until perhaps it hurts at the higher level of noise.

That does not happen when one goes to a private dispenser, where one has a choice of 250 variations, the chosen one then being modified to suit one's needs. The modification of hearing aids is the key mechanism in creating the perfect answer. I have the perfect answer, and I know how fortunate I am that, although I was born with this boring handicap, which I did not regard as a handicap, I am perfectly all right. But most elderly people I meet are not perfectly all right because they have to go back to the hospital time and again for fittings to adjust a wretched device which ultimately does not help them. That is why at least one in three hearing aids lives in the top right hand drawer of somebody's dressing table and the drawer is never opened.

What is the answer? I offer several solutions. The aim must be to make it as easy, simple and socially acceptable to get a hearing aid as it is to buy a pair of glasses or a tin of baked beans. A hearing aid should be a normal commodity which is bought and sold so that no one is ashamed or embarrassed, and people would put all their energies not into deflecting public criticism or family ostracism, but into the effort needed between the patient and the dispenser to achieve the best result. Not all people with hearing loss are as lucky as I am in terms of near-full correction being available practically anywhere. Most people have to seek the best possible correction while the technologists create ever better hearing aids.

I seek the provision of hearing aids on the high street with a voucher system because it is important that patients are referred by a doctor. It is crucial to see the doctor, because people go to hearing aid dispensers with conditions that have nothing to do with deafness. For example, if tinnitus—a horrible buzzing in the ears—is a new condition, it is conceivable that it is nothing to do with hearing but is an acoustic neuroma, a tumour on the auditory nerve. To leave that alone would lead to real trouble. The onset of deafness definitely needs a medical examination. If one's ears are infected, one needs antibiotics, not a hearing aid; vertigo could be the onset of Meniere's disease, so a private dispenser must have a code of practice by which he refers a patient to the doctor before he starts his work.

Hearing aids should be available on the high street, and once a doctor has referred someone to a hearing aid dispenser he should give him a voucher to buy the best possible aid available throughout the full gamut of hearing aids.

The production cost of a National Health Service hearing aid is approximately £21·50, or £23 for the better variant. But private aids are horrifically expensive. Mine is not, as I go to someone of integrity, but people have written to me that they have spent £2,000 on useless aids, nearly always because they have been sold them on the doorstep. I would outlaw doorstep selling, with no further ado. It is a dreadful way of providing a health care product. Elderly people are vulnerable at home. I have had people knocking on my door trying to sell me hearing aids. It is a disgraceful state of affairs and it is sad that companies indulge in such practices, but they do so because the number of their clients is so small. Yet the volume of people needing hearing aids is vast.

If there were hearing aid shops on the high streets as there are opticians' shops, and people had vouchers, they could spend that money as they wished on the variant that suited them best, with the doctor's chit, to prove that they needed an aid in the first place. Children under 16 should go to hospital. We must continue that facility. Perhaps the disabled need home visits, but otherwise the High street is the place.

Furthermore, I would abolish the Hearing Aid Council which reports to the Department of Trade and Industry on a matter of health. It is a most peculiar body and is oddly constructed. That is not its fault. It was set up by a Government. Manufacturers and those who are meant to represent users sit on it. It is a hybrid, a mule, and can produce no fertile offspring. There should be a council, but for quality control, reporting to the Minister for Health. The hearing aid industry which produces aids should have its trade association. When a farmer buys a tractor, he does not expect there to be a tractor council comprising all those who build tractors and farmers who drive them, working out whether they have the best mechanism for ploughing the land. Other reforms could also be introduced. That is the substance of my plea to the Minister today.

Much marvellous work is done for the blind—so much so that Guide Dogs for the Blind has £80 million per

annum in income. Hearing Dogs for the Deaf does not have a fraction of that income, yet the need is as great. There is a huge submerged audience. I am proud to have been able to articulate their deprivation in the House. I call on the Minister to comit himself to investigating with his usual penetrating thoroughness and vision this social scandal. Perhaps he should set up a working party, but let it be time-limited. The problem has been invisible on the agendas of Governments for too long.

1.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on an impressive and persuasive speech. She and I have been able to hear each other during the debate, which is not always the case—certainly at certain times of the proceedings in this honourable House.

Perhaps it is not untimely or inappropriate to pay tribute to those who work in the House operating our effective system of microphones and loudspeakers. Many who listen to our proceedings do not know that the microphone is switched on immediately above the hon. Member who is speaking. Hon. Members like me, who do not have as brilliant a range of hearing as our colleagues, find the loudspeakers immensely helpful. Frequently I have been saved from embarrassment when being asked an oral question which I cannot hear by catching the last phrases of the question fron the loudpseaker on the back of the Bench.

My hon. Friend and I met recently at the Department of Health to discuss this matter. Today she made six major points. I followed her speech with great care and I agree with her analysis. She talked about the social stigma and misunderstanding about deafness. She said that it was a widespread disability. She has that disability and other hon. Members and I have members of our family with that disability.

My hon. Friend spoke about the National Health Service procedures which involve waiting lists and distances to travel. She taked about the importance of having a range of different appliances available and the greater choice in the private sector. She outlined a solution, which is liberation and transferring the service largely to the high street through reference by general practitioners. She talked about bad selling practice.

To a certain extent, my hon. Friend is pushing at an open door. We have unlocked it and our hand is on the handle. I am sure that my hon. Friend will find that the Government—obviously, I speak particularly for the Department of Health—are sympathetic to her analysis. In the coming months we must work on a sensible set of reforms, which commend themselves to all those who work in the Health Service and, above all, meet patient needs.

My hon. Friend spoke without notes, with conviction and clarity. I am not so fortunate. The disciplines of office, my lack of eloquence and my comparative lack of experience in this matter dictate that, for the remaining minutes of this debate, I shall refer to my notes more copiously than my hon. Friend.

I shall commence by explaining how the NHS service operates. When people realise that there is something wrong with their hearing, their first step should be to consult their general practitioner. If, in the opinion of the GP, further advice or treatment is necessary the patient will usually be referred to a hospital. It is normal practice for a hospital doctor to examine the patient and, where this is appropriate, to refer the patient to a hearing aid centre, to be fitted with the correct hearing aid. In a significant number of cases the person referred for a hearing aid will also require specialist medical attention.

Hearing aids in the NHS are issued free on loan. Mersey regional health authority, as a national centre of responsibility, procures the aids, stores them at Runcorn and distributes them to hearing aid centres throughout the country on demand. I understand that around 470,000 hearing aids are issued each year to NHS patients in England and Wales.

A wide range of hearing aids are available under NHS arrangements and they are mainly worn behind the ear. Some are high-powered models. Most patients' needs can be met from the NHS range. I accept, however, that inevitably, the range of hearing aids is not as extensive as can be obtained in the private sector. Hon. Members will recall that that was the case when spectacles were manufactured by the NHS.

When new users are issued with hearing aids, audiology technicians usually provide advice and information on how to use and maintain them. They also provide all new users with a copy of the Department's booklet which explains how to use a hearing aid. Efficient follow-up after issue of a hearing aid is essential and that usually takes place at a hearing aid centre or involves a hearing therapist, where one is in post. The rehabilitation of people with hearing loss is not just a matter of providing a hearing aid. It can require time and special skills.

I am aware that there are long waiting times and lists to see consultants and to have hearing aids fitted in some districts, although not in all. I appreciate that there are significant waiting times in my hon. Friend's constituency. In many districts efforts are made to prioritise patients and in several general practitioners can refer patients direct to hearing aid centres. Despite those practices, I know that many people are dissatisfied with the present arrangements and would welcome improvements.

The main thrust of the Fair Hearing Campaign launched by the Royal National Institute of the Deaf in November was that adult hearing aid services should be transferred from hospitals to health centres or group practices. Children would still be referred to a hospital ear, nose and throat department, but only those adults requiring specialist treatment would be referred there. The dispensing of hearing aids would be done by a "community dispenser", who might be employed by the district health authority, general practitioners or a private company contracted by general practitioners.

Since November, those ideas have been discussed with the RNID and others involved. I must say that not all are content with what the RNID has proposed. For example, the British Association of the Hard of Hearing and the British Association of Audiology Technicians have different views. My hon. Friend has a more radical view than the RNID.

The British Association of the Hard of Hearing welcomed the fact that the whole question of hearing aid provision had been brought into the arena for discussion. It agreed, in principle, that a community-based audiology service would be a good step forward, but it is unhappy

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

about the detail of the RNID proposals and feels that the existing NHS hearing aid service as a whole should be reshaped, rather than creating a completely new service.

The British Association of Audiology Technicians has submitted alternative proposals to my Department. It proposes a total review of the audiology services within the existing NHS system. Such a review would cover a number of issues, including staffing levels, salaries, career prospects, working conditions and funding. The BAAT also wants to retain existing audiology departments within district general hospitals, improve audiology technicians' pay and conditions of service, accelerate referral procedures and expand the NHS range of hearing aids. There are clearly a lot of important issues for consideration in each of those packages of proposals.

I stress at this point that I am talking about the provision of hearing aids for adults. I agree with my hon. Friend that the present procedures for referring children to consultants in hospitals must be right. Most people—including the Royal National Institute for the Deaf—agree that there should be no change in the procedures for the referral of children. I have explained that the NHS range of hearing aids should meet most people's needs and that special arrangements can be made for the others. Perhaps I should add that the NHS range of hearing aids is kept under constant review by a commodity advisory group advising Mersey regional health authority. The Department of Health is represented on that group. However, of course, within the constraints of the present system of procurement and distribution, my hon. Friend's criticism of the range of choice of products is accepted and understood.

I know that a number of organisations, including the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, have expressed concern about dispensers calling at the homes of potential purchasers. The Hearing Aid Council's own code of conduct rules out an unsolicited call and the Doorstep Selling Regulations which came into force on 1 July 1988 provide for a seven-day cooling-off period during which consumers have the right to cancel a contract entered into during an unsolicited visit by a trader to their home or place of work.

The Hearing Aid Council's code requires the consumer to send back a card declining a visit rather than seeking one. I am aware that this system has been the subject of particular criticism by the RNID, and no doubt the Hearing Aid Council will be considering the matter.

The private sector sells about 80,000 hearing aids a year. The Hearing Aid Council receives about 70 complaints a year, and I understand that the RNID has received 260 in the past four months. It is important that concerns of customers should be communicated to the Hearing Aid Council, so that the extent of any problems can be objectively assessed. The Government believe that home visits do have a part to play. They provide a service to some of the hearing-impaired, particularly the elderly and infirmed. Such visits should be conducted to the highest ethical standards. The House will have noted my hon. Friend's comments about practices in that area.

There is some disagreement among those who wish to see radical changes about how closely the fitting of hearing aids can be compared to the supply of spectacles. I am aware that my hon. Friend, for example, sees a direct comparison between the supply of spectacles and hearing aids, while the organisation behind the current Fair Hearing Campaign, the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, has emphasised some of the differences. Corrective lenses can return sight to near-normal, but a scientific evaluation of hearing is not sufficient to indicate the likely benefit to be gained from a hearing aid. With spectacles one immediately sees more clearly; with a hearing aid sounds are louder but, especially for speech, not necessarily easier to understand.

Subject to cosmetic considerations, people can take immediately to glasses, but it takes time and help to get used to a hearing aid. There are also differences in costs—private hearing aids can cost upwards of £400—and in the typical user, as most hearing-impaired people are elderly.

We are grateful to my hon. Friend, to the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, and to all the other hon. Members and interested organisations for bringing these important issues to public attention. We are also grateful to all the organisations who have approached the Department about this for the concerned and constructive way in which they have taken part in discussions, and retained an open mind. We take their concerns about the present service—and those of my hon. Friend—very seriously.

This short debate has not been able to do justice to the complex issues involved, both for the private sector and for the National Health Service. I must emphasise to hon. Members that it will take time to consider them all, in the context of the important reforms which have recently been announced for the NHS.

I can tell the House, however, that I shall be visiting the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority, Sir Donald Wilson, on 3 April—as my hon. Friend knows, that authority is the centre of responsibility for the procurement and distribution of hearing aids—and I shall be raising those important issues with him. Before I meet him, I shall send him a copy of the *Official Report* of this debate. I am grateful to his authority for its considerable contribution to forward thinking about greater effectiveness in meeting the needs of all patients who require a hearing aid. I will also convey the feelings of the House on this matter to my right hon. and hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Health, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Minister for the Disabled.

My hon. Friend has asked for a working party. We have not one but several working parties already addressing some of the issues to which she has referred. This is an extremely important matter and, as I have said, we have sympathy with some of the arguments put by my hon. Friend and other hon. Members. I shall consult my colleagues and write to my hon. Friend concerning any issues that arise from my meeting with Sir Donald Wilson. I can assure my hon. Friend that our consideration of the case for reform will continue in earnest.

Housing (Newham)

1.30 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): No Member of Parliament could represent a constituency in the London borough of Newham without living every day in the knowledge of the appalling housing of so many of its people, the gross overcrowding of 6,750 households, the chronic shortage of affordable rented accommodation, the thousands of desperate people on the council's waiting list —currently 9,511—the 4,541 people on the transfer list and the 600 homeless families living in squalid bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

The crisis hangs like a pall of misery over the borough. It is with us constantly, with every telephone call, every postbag and every weekend surgery. Sometimes I think that hon. Members should swap surgeries and, on occasion, I should take the surgery of a Conservative Member, perhaps in a leafy suburb, while he or she takes one of mine in the inner city. In that way, they would meet the frustrated people who come to see me. They would meet the families sleeping in one room, people with fungus growing on their walls, people with leaking roofs and without adequate heating, bathrooms or inside lavatories. They would meet people without hot water and with dangerous wiring and people who cannot find anywhere to live and whose lives are being destroyed, and families who are breaking up under the strain. They would meet the genuine people who have been on the waiting list for years and are losing hope of ever being rehoused.

I would like Conservative Members to meet those people because that is Britain in 1989 after 10 years of their Government. They are our fellow citizens. Conservative Members would come out of those surgeries, as I do, emotionally drained and, I hope, shocked, bewildered and ashamed that we permit such things in our country today.

The housing crisis is a scandal and disgrace. It has been intensified every year the Government have been in office. We sometimes talk of the freedoms our citizens should enjoy in our society such as the right to free speech, and the right to vote. I would add to that list the right to a job and, after GCHQ, the right to join a trade union. But perhaps the most basic right of all is the right to a home and a roof over one's head. That is recognised even in primitive societies where, when a couple marry, the tribe rallies round to build them a hut. However, in modern Thatcherite Britain that is thought to be beyond us.

The Government's policy has been to encourage home ownership. There is nothing wrong with home ownership. Aneurin Bevan said that there is nothing in Socialism against owning one's own home, but that what we were against was someone owning several thousand other people's houses and exploiting them à la Rachman. Perversely, the effect of the Government's policy has been to push up house prices to unprecedented levels, thereby preventing access to home ownership. Some people talk of a rising market or a boom in house prices as if it were a good thing. However, when the price of anything else rises, it is known as inflation. The Government are supposed to be against inflation but they have engineered the biggest house price inflation in history, making it impossible for first-time buyers to buy. Is it any wonder that we cannot find train crews for the Northern line or bus drivers, nurses and teachers? They cannot find anywhere affordable to live.

On top of that, those who mortgage themselves to the hilt to obtain somewhere to live, find themselves clobbered by the Chancellor's interest rate rises. The increases in August and October mean that the average home loan rate of 9·5 per cent. has rocketed to 13 per cent. That means that on a £30,000 mortgage over 25 years borrowers have to pay an extra £52·80 a month. On an endowment mortgage, they have to pay an additional £65·62 a month and it will be double that for a £60,000 mortgage. Is it any wonder that people are putting "For Sale" signs on their dream homes and many are becoming homeless as building societies foreclose? All that is under a Government who pretend to support home ownership.

We need affordable houses to rent. We have 1 million fewer homes for rent in the private sector now than in 1979. The Government's efforts to reverse that will fail because it is more profitable to sell with vacant possession than to rent. The people who come to see me want local authority housing. That is the popular demand. That is precisely what the Government are destroying as a deliberate policy. They want to get the councils out of housing, and have said so.

In 1977-78, the last full year of the Labour Government, 78,606 homes were started by local authorities in England and Wales, but by last year that figure had been cut by 79 per cent. to 16,193. There has been a relentless decline. New building is grinding to a halt. In Newham there were 1,079 new build starts in 1978-79, but in 1986-87, only 83, in 1987-88 only 31 and in 1988-89 only 66. At the same time, up until September 1988, 4,120 homes were sold under the right to buy. A further 3,287 applications to buy are outstanding. This represents a quarter of the total council stock, and the best three-bedroom houses at that.

The receipts from those sales cannot be used for new building because much of it goes to the Treasury. If the stock is sold, building is stopped, private renting diminishes and people are priced out of access to owner-occupation, what happens? There is an epidemic of homelessness. Newham has had a 12·5 per cent. increase in applications from homeless people each year since 1981. The cost of temporary accommodation to the council has increased from £52,000 in 1983-84 to £5·5 million in 1987-88. In the 1960s only 3 per cent. of lettings were to homeless people. In each of the past five years the majority of lettings has been to the homeless.

The council's 1989-90 housing investment programme bid—this is my main purpose in having the debate—was £100·65 million but the Government's allocation was only £14·432 million. That allocation was a cut in real terms of 24·3 per cent. over the previous year's provision and a cut of 69 per cent. over 1978-79. In other words, this year we shall get only 31 per cent. of what the borough got in the last year of the Labour Government. Housing has borne the largest cuts of all under the Government and it is destined to get even worse. Public expenditure plans show at national level a further reduction of local authority capital spending from £3·153 billion to £2·8 billion in 1990-91, an 11 per cent. cut and £2·65 billion in 1991-92, a further 5 per cent. cut.

It should be emphasised that the HIP allocation is not a Government grant but permission to spend and borrow. Virtually all housing, private and public, is financed by borrowing. Most of that expenditure is planned to be funded by capital receipts, much of it from the sale of council houses. Perversely, the new Housing Act 1988 will

[Mr. Ron Leighton]

restrict Newham, along with other authorities, to only 25 per cent. of its capital receipts. That is astonishing. The council is prohibited from spending its own money. It cannot spend receipts from selling council houses or new buildings.

The council is asking not for Government money, but for freedom to spend its own, but that permission is refused because of crazy ideological dogma, because the Government want to push councils out of housing provision. The Government have said that they do not want councils to build any more houses and they want their existing estates sold off. In fact, at the launching of the Housing Bill, the Secretary of State for the Environment the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) said:

"We'd like to see council house building at a low level with local authorities composed of providing housing in certain categories such as hostels or sheltered housing."

If the councils cannot help the desperate people who come to my surgeries, who will? This basic need cannot be left soley to market forces. Millions of people cannot afford to buy or rent on the open market. What will happen to them? If the Government are not interested or do not care about them, why should they deliberately obstruct local councils in spending their own money to help people in acute need? That policy is not only evil, but economically illiterate, because councils are giving priority to void reinstatement, rehabilitating empty homes and new build. It costs twice as much to keep families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation as to build new homes.

The reduced housing investment programme allocation means that Newham cannot give much help to housing associations, although the original bid included £18·4 million for such projects, nor can it give discretionary grants to occupants of private housing. The reduction significantly restricts the programme of improving existing council stock. There is a huge backlog of repairs. The total expenditure necessary to improve existing stock is an enormous £120 million. The 1989-90 HIP bid asked for £6·5 million for security work, lift renewals and refurbishment for 20 tower blocks. The cut in allocation means that that has had to be reduced to £2·5 million. That means that work can only proceed on eight blocks. One of the results of that is that the residents of 12 blocks will continue to live in abysmal conditions. Only this week, an environmental inspector said that in his opinion, one block was unfit for human habitation. Pointing to the dangers, he said that the balconies were a "stepladder to oblivion". Six months ago, a 20-month-old toddler fell to his death from the balcony of his home in that block.

The borough is having to restrict the number of repairs it is able to carry out on council properties, laying up bigger and more expensive problems for the future. The inevitable and only conclusion is that the Government's decision will mean that the condition of housing in both the public and private sectors in Newham will continue to decline and homelessness will become worse. It is an appalling and evil policy. I meet the human consequences at every surgery I hold. Homeless applications are currently running at about 200 per month. The Audit Commission's recent report said that homelessness has been increasing

"over a long period of time, across all types of authority, in different regions, under all types of political control and widely varying housing policies."

Newham has more than 500 families in often squalid bed-and-breakfast accommodation. They sometimes live in ill-lit, overcrowded rooms without tables or chairs for meals, with no privacy for parents or children, with no place for the children to play or do their homework and no readily available doctor, social worker or health visitor. Newham has another 500 families in other forms of temporary accommodation. The lunacy is that it costs more to keep families in such accommodation than to build new homes, but the Government will not allow the council to do that.

The Minister may mention Estate Action. Let me tell him that the council has had 11 Estate Action bids rejected. Furthermore, now that the Government are insisting that 50 per cent. of the capital cost of Estate Action programmes count against existing HIP allocation, the council is wondering whether the scheme is worth the paperwork. The £200,000 received under the area renewal initiative is too little to be significant.

The council has no ideological hang-ups about working with the private sector and housing associations. It has concluded a partnership agreement with Laing to demolish the eight remaining TWA tower blocks of the Ronan Point type and to develop the site. It has already sold, or is completing the sale of, a number of sites in its ownership to housing associations. All the council's sites are being reviewed with the option of disposal being considered. The problem is that the level of housing association grant for housing association schemes, coupled with the high price of land and construction costs, will put the level of rents of many of those schemes beyond the reach of most of the people in the most acute housing need in Newham. The truth is that, even with the fullest possible co-operation with the council, those high costs, the recent decontrol of rent, the limitation of security and the inadequate level of subsidy mean that housing association and private sector housing cannot be an adequate substitute for local authority housing in Newham.

The Government's policy of stopping council house building and pushing councils out of housing has caused and is exacerbating the housing crisis in the borough and even more human misery and family breakdown. The council's housing investment programme for 1989-90 was a carefully worked out, realistic and necessary programme, decided upon by those on the spot. By rejecting it, the Government have sacrificed the interests of the local community to ideological dogma and condemned thousands to more heartache.

I shall allow the Minister as much time as I have given myself. I hope that he will respond seriously and not take refuge in knockabout attacks on local government as he has on previous occasions—by pretending, for example, that the borough has a large number of voids. That is certainly not true of Newham, where only 1·5 per cent. of council stock is empty; indeed, a previous Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State congratulated the borough on its policy on voids.

Nor does Newham have large rent arrears compared with those in other boroughs. Rent arrears are being reduced in Newham. The figures tend to be misleading because Newham does not write off bad debt, as some boroughs do. It has a twin track policy on rent arrears: it

actively counsels tenants whose rent is in arrears and it operates an active collection policy, including recovery through the courts. Its decentralised housing offices all have targets for the recovery of rent arrears. I hope that the Minister will not try to shelter behind that argument. He will know that the Government's housing benefit changes have caused problems in this regard. In my constituency some people are now spending 40 per cent. of their income on rent.

I hope that the Minister will address the housing crisis in Newham seriously. The Government now have a £14·5 billion budget surplus—a great opportunity to tackle the infrastructure and the housing backlog. I shall continue to raise this matter in the House and to keep it to the fore, and if I can get the Government to take it seriously, I shall have worked in the interests of my constituents.

1.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak about housing in Newham. In fact, I am pleased to be allowed to speak at all, Mr. Deputy Speaker—in complete contrast to your experience and mine in the early hours of Tuesday morning.

In Newham, as in many other areas—but in Newham in particular—we are entering a new period of promise, despite what the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) felt obliged to say. That promise has been built up over the past 10 years during which the tide has turned against years of neglect of a supposedly unfashionable part of London that has had to shoulder the legacy of a past that has sometimes been colourful but which has generally been weighed down by the burdens of industrial decline. Many housing difficulties remain to be overcome in Newham but they are now being confronted through Government policies which will transform housing in the area.

Let me respond directly to some of the questions that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East asked in his speech. There has been a significant decline in the private rented sector—from 50 per cent. of the total housing stock immediately after the war to 8 per cent. now. That is totally unacceptable. The amount of private rented sector housing has fallen for two reasons—first, because the Rent Acts have inhibited those who would be private landlords or potential investors in private rented stock, and secondly, because of the expansion of municipalisation. The problem that we face with large housing stocks—and no one denies that Newham has a large housing stock—is that it is impossible for local authorities to control and manage it effectively. I shall return to that later.

There will not be much political knockabout in my speech, and I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall address myself to the questions that he raised. I must say, though, that I find it fascinating that, despite the Labour party's love of municipal housing, the last Labour Government reduced public expenditure in public housing in each of the three years before they were kicked out of office in 1979. Labour Members have never given me a suitable explanation of that—either because they cannot or because they know what Conservative Members suspect —that the Labour Government were forced to take such action through the IMF intervening. We are all familiar with that period in the Labour Government's chequered history.

I will concentrate on two main ways in which the Government are acting to improve the homes and lives of Newham residents. First, we are acting through the opportunities provided by the Government's policies for the regeneration of east London—docklands and the areas beyond. All will benefit from the increased wealth that those policies are bringing. Housing has a major part in that regeneration. Secondly, we are acting through the Government's housing policies which offer choice, effective targeting of resources, and the attraction of private resources along with public money, in place of the hopelessly monolithic and unimaginative solutions which have previously been tried with good intentions but with poor results.

Let me begin with the first, by explaining the benefits of the exciting programme of the London Docklands development corporation for the royal docks. Although the hon. Gentleman tried to convince the House that there is no ideological difficulty with the local authority of Newham working with the private sector, I have not seen much evidence of Newham council working with the London Docklands development corporation.

Mr. Leighton: I am surprised that the Minister should say that. Does he know of the memorandum of agreement between the borough and the LDDC? The LDDC has promised to provide 1,500 houses for rent in the royal docks. The LDDC is falling behind and not delivering on the promise. The borough is working. It has regular monthly meetings with the LDDC. It is anxious to work with it.

Mr. Trippier: The last part of the hon. Gentleman's intervention tends to devalue the currency of what he is saying. He and I know how many questions he puts down in the House, which he is fully entitled to do, on the LDDC. He loses no opportunity to have a swipe at it in any debate on the Floor of the House.

I welcome the fact that Newham is working with the LDDC better than it has done in the past, but I have pointed out to the hon. Gentleman—if not to him directly, certainly to other hon. Members who represent Newham —that I should like to see an opportunity being taken to fill the vacancy on the board of the LDDC. Other local authorities are prepared to have borough councillors sitting on the boards. The hon. Gentleman knows that, if they were to respond positively, I would welcome it and also respond positively.

The programme to which I was referring and which the LDDC has promoted has meant a huge transformation in an area which was a sterile part of the borough of Newham. The LDDC has already spent or contracted to spend about £200 million in that area on land reclamation and new roads and transport links and other infrastructure. A whole new community will soon begin to emerge from the previous dereliction, providing major new shopping and leisure facilities, thousands of jobs—they are important to the hon. Gentleman and to myself—and, importantly, thousands of new homes.

It is planned that 7,600 new homes will be built in the royal docks. They will include a substantial number of subsidised homes let at rents affordable to lower-paid families. The Winsor park scheme will, I hope, provide about 500 of them. I welcome the co-operation between the public and private sectors, including the local council, which should make that scheme possible.

[Mr. Trippier]

It is not only the homes directly within the new docklands community that will benefit from this massive new investment. I am confident that the benefits will spread far and wide throughout the borough and beyond. I remind the House that the Government's plans for the regeneration of east London include but do not end with the docklands programmes, massive though they are.

In February, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, announced new proposals which were welcomed by the hon. Gentleman for major new transport links between central London and east Thameside. Earlier this month, my right hon. Friend informed the House of the consultants' findings on the possibilities for providing up to 20,000 new housing units on five sites in east Thameside. Those sites would be able to benefit from improved transport links, and the Government have said that they hope that they can be developed. Three of these sites—at Stratford, the Beckton gasworks and the lower Lea valley—involve land in Newham, and another is immediately adjacent to the borough, at Barking reach. All of them have potential to breathe new life into the housing of east London.

All these exciting new opportunities for housing extension were taken into account when my Department published the draft strategic planning guidance for London on 6 March, which showed that the projected extra dwelling provision for Newham in the years 1987 to 2001 would amount to 14,000 units, the highest for any London borough. I am delighted that Newham is taking a lead in London housing in that way.

The hon. Gentleman has trailed a lot of figures purporting to show that many people in Newham could not afford to buy new homes in the area. I know that many people in Newham are not well off and that housing must be affordable to them, but the hon. Gentleman should not under-estimate the capacity of people to buy their homes. Look at the success of the right-to-buy policy on which many Opposition Members have poured scorn. Many Labour authorities are still trying to frustrate the policy. When hon. Gentlemen refer to the housing investment programme, they often fail to mention the amount of money that is drawn down in capital receipts. Of course, that makes a substantial difference to the money that is available for improved housing within borough boundaries.

The Government's policies will provide new wealth for the people of Newham and new capacity for them to buy their own homes, if they wish to do so. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall always be on the look-out for sensible and realistic ways to assist people in that endeavour.

I shall deal with the resources that are being invested in Newham's public housing and how those are being targeted to achieve most effect. Public housing forms about 36 per cent. of the stock in Newham. That stock needs resources to be drawn from all available sources, and used and managed effectively. Local authorities set their own priorities for housing within the total resources available to them. On 1 November, my right hon. Friend announced that the gross provision for capital expenditure by local authorities on housing in 1989-90 will be 13·5 per cent. higher than had been previously planned. This is the fourth successive year in which it has been possible to increase provisions, thanks to the continuing success of the right-to-buy policy. Through the receipts that that provides, local authorities have the growing resource of spending power to supplement capital borrowing.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned Estate Action. I announced on 14 December that allocations to local authorities through the Department's Estate Action programme would again be increased in 1989-90, by 36 per cent. to £190 million. Estate Action targets resources at rundown council estates.

We cannot accept all of the bids that are made by local authorities, but in view of the substantial increase in real terms, that we have given to the Estate Action programme, it is clear that we shall be able to accept those programmes more than ever before. We are only too delighted to work with local authorities, especially in London, using this means of delivering taxpayers' money to turn round those estates in the worst condition. The contribution of the local authority to which the hon. Gentleman directly referred, should match ours. In that way this would be a true partnership. I have heard of many successes in Newham's Estate Action programme.

Mr. Leighton: I am listening to the Minister with great interest and close attention. Because only two minutes are left for the debate, I hope the Minister will agree that this discussion must continue. Would he accept my invitation to sit down with us on the spot, in Newham, and continue this discussion?

Mr. Trippier: Yes, I am only too happy to go to local authorities to discuss things in that way, and I certainly accept the hon. Gentleman's invitation. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. A visit might help us to clear up some of the points that I was making earlier. Perhaps it might even lead to further improvements in the relationship between Newham and the London Docklands development corporation, which possibly both of us might welcome. Because of the time it is impossible for me now to cover all the points that were raised by the hon. Gentleman and in view of his kind invitation I shall be only too happy to continue the conversation as he suggests.

My difficulty—perhaps I can get this quickly on the record—is that despite what the hon. Gentleman says, Newham has the highest percentage of vacant dwellings in the whole of London. That must be looked at, and although he has tried to explain it to the House—*[Interruption.]* It is not a matter of conjecture; it is a statement of fact. I understand that there are special reasons relating to the empty TWA system blocks which push up—*[Interruption.]* Yes, this is part of it—which push up Newham's total, as do the dwellings on the Woodlands estate, where the council is in partnership with Laing in refurbishing vacant properties. Nevertheless, given the general problems of homelessness, local authorities could make far better use of their stock—this applies to all local authorities—and I look to Newham to make every effort to bring its vacant properties back into use wherever feasible.

2 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I apologise for delaying colleagues for a few seconds, but today on ITN,

we witnessed again a clear breach of air security at Heathrow. Three lads have taken film of themselves boarding a British Airways jumbo jet and getting into the cockpit. In view of those circumstances——

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Where is the Minister?

Mr. Prescott: In view of those circumstances and of the warning received from the Federal Aviation Administration about the possible hi-jacking of a plane, have you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, received any notification from the Secretary of State for Transport to the effect that he can tell us anything about the latest breach of security, especially in the light of his assurance to us in the House less than 70 hours ago that security at Heathrow is okay? It is not, and the travelling public are concerned about it. It is outrageous. The Secretary of State should appear before the House to explain his position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I have not received a request from the Secretary of State about a statement. The hon. Gentleman has put his point on the record.

Magistrates Courts (Clerks)

2.1 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Just over 16 years ago, on 12 December 1973, standing in the place where I now stand, I raised in an Adjournment debate the status and salaries of clerks in the magistrates courts. I said:

"It is . . . quite clear that until proper recruitment and training schemes are available in the longer term the courts will be compelled to cope with an increasing amount of work with an inadequate complement of court clerks.

That situation is quite unacceptable. Urgent remedial action in the short term is therefore essential. The central problem is that the supply of court clerks has dried up because of the poor salary structure. In addition, the magisterial service does not offer career prospects which are attractive to the type of young man or woman it is hoped to recruit."

I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will agree that I do not often quote my own speeches, but having made that speech 16 years ago, I must point out that it is still highly relevant because I now have to raise these matters once again.

Replying to that debate, the then Minister of State, Home Office, Mr. Mark Carlisle, who is now my noble friend Lord Carlisle and sits in the other place, said:

"I am aware of the overall problem, and particularly the problem of vacancies among positions for court clerks in the magistrates' court at Uxbridge, which has heavy lists and which has had to change and curtail sittings because of this shortage."

He then said that he appreciated that salary scales were important but that

"The Home Office is not represented on the committee"—

that is, the Joint Negotiating Committee for Justices' Clerks' Assistants—

"and cannot take any initiative in questions relating to salaries."

Despite the fact that that debate took place 16 years ago and that I highlighted then the real problems of recruitment, training and salaries, it appears that nothing much has been done by the Home Office in that time and, as a result, today we are facing a crisis in the magistrates courts.

The recruitment crisis is now both real and immediate. In December 1988, there were at least 167 vacancies for court clerks. At least 294 court sittings were cancelled in England and Wales and much public money is having to be spent on agency fees—£120 to £150 a day for agency lawyers who have to be brought in to act as court clerks.

According to a massive telephone poll of justices' offices throughout the country carried out this month—nothing could be more up-to-date—magistrates courts in England and Wales, apart from inner London, have a total of 278 court clerk vacancies and 35 trainee vacancies. That resulted in 473 cancelled half-day sittings in February, giving a national average of five cases per sitting. That means that about 2,500 cases are unheard. In short, in the words of the famous statesman William Ewart Gladstone:

"Justice delayed is justice denied".

Of the 278 vacancies, 117 trainees are in some of those slots in temporary appointments. As a result, magistrates are not getting experienced advice, and that is serious.

In outer London, there are 16 court clerk vacancies. In other parts of the country the situation is giving rise to concern. Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire have 13 vacancies; in Lancashire there are 19 vacancies; there are three in Slough, not far from my constituency;

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

five in Luton; nine in Yorkshire; nine in Wessex; and in Manchester there are three vacancies, which are currently filled by trainees.

The shortage is acute because of continuing poor pay and the divisive award following the recent arbitration. Mr. David Simpson, clerk to the justices of Uxbridge magistrates court, tells me:

"The situation has become so serious now that unless action is taken urgently, the crisis will become even worse and the magistrates' courts will not be able to function properly in many parts of the country."

The Justices' Clerks Society is convinced that the separation of the functions of legal adviser and administrator would not be in the best interests of magistrates courts, or in the public interest. I therefore welcome the magistrates courts review of procedure which was announced in answer to a parliamentary question tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess). Can the Minister say when that review will be completed? Is it on schedule, and will it report to the Home Secretary in June, as was envisaged when the review was announced? Will the review of the management and control of resources in magistrates courts include the salaries, training, recruitment and status of court clerks?

Morale among those admirable men and women who clerk the magistrates courts has never been lower. The reason, simply, is that the magistrates courts service is losing out to the Crown prosecution service and to solicitors in private practice, who of course receive higher salaries.

There is today a crisis in law because of a shortage of lawyers. Is that because too few lawyers are being trained? An explanation given to me recently by an hon. Friend who is a barrister is that a number of women who qualify as solicitors do not subsequently practise for long or that their careers undergo long breaks for understandable family reasons.

I come now to the determination of salaries by the joint negotiating committee. My noble Friend Lord Carlisle said in 1973:

"The Home Office is not represented on the Committee and consequently does not and cannot take any initiatives in questions relating to salaries."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1973; Vol. 866, c. 576.]

My hon. Friend the Minister made a similar point in answer to a parliamentary question from the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on 13 March. That appears to be a very effective screen behind which Home Office Ministers can protect themselves from being held accountable for salary awards. I hope that my hon. Friend will not consider that a particularly unkind remark, but he will understand the frustration I feel after raising this matter in the House for 16 years and continually being told that the Home Office cannot intervene is not responsible and is not represented on the committee.

Is it not the case that every agreement negotiated by the joint negotiating committee or any award made on arbitration is subject to Home Office and Treasury approval? We all know that the Treasury has to provide the money, so why does the Home Office allow an apparently arms-length negotiating procedure to persist and deprive itself of the political initiative that is necessary if the long-running saga of underpaid, under-trained and under-motivated clerks is to be concluded satisfactorily?

The publication of the Andrews report on salaries for Government lawyers highlights the need for salaries to be pitched at a level which will attract and retain lawyers of the appropriate calibre. Some court clerks with whom I have spoken recently feel that the Government have wilfully engaged in depriving the magistrates courts of some of their principal assets—their clerks—to staff the Crown prosecution service. I cannot emphasise too much how bitter the magistrates courts clerks feel about the siphoning off of their best personnel to the Crown prosecution service.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has managed to persuade the Treasury to buy the Crown prosecution service out of its recruitment crisis, but that has been done mainly at the expense of the magistrates courts, and the arbitrators have now suggested that in future the backbone of the courts service must be the unqualified diploma holders. In other words there will be a second-class service. Does my hon. Friend believe that that will be satisfactory for the magistrates courts? Does the House consider that that is good enough for a very important part of the legal system? It will take at least three years from next autumn before the service receives any benefit from the influx of newlyqualified diploma holders.

Finally, may I draw to my hon. Friend's attention the report of the outer London working party on the recruitment, training, remuneration and retention of court takers in the outer London area? It concludes that there is concern about

"the dilution in the quality of staff now available to advise lay justices. This, coupled with the incompetence of barrister agents employed by the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute cases adequately before our Courts leads to the inevitable conclusion that unless the Government fully commits itself to supporting our service then the quality of decision making will eventually be the subject of adverse comment in the High Courts."

That is a very serious conclusion from such an expert working party and I look forward to my hon. Friend's comments when he replies to the debate.

J. Edgar Hoover said:

"Justice is incidental to law and order."

Not many hon. Members will disagree with that observation even if they disagree with the policies adopted by J. Edgar Hoover. It is vital for my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to realise that lay magistrates, not just in my constituency of Uxbridge but throughout the country, are becoming deeply concerned that they cannot do their job effectively or discharge justice properly unless they have at their disposal properly qualified and properly paid court clerks who have a status in society which is respected and admired as it was in years gone by.

I do not believe that it is beyond the power of the Home Secretary or, indeed, my hon. Friend the Minister to persuade my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer before next year's Budget that additional resources should be made available to pay these people properly. Pay is at the centre of the problem. From a decently paid court clerks' profession would flow better justice, more satisfied magistrates and a more efficient organisation of the whole magisterial system.

2.14 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. John Patten): I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I never stop talking to our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer about these and other issues. Perhaps it has been the success of three Home Secretaries since 1979—Lord Whitelaw, Sir Leon Brittan who is now a Commissioner in Europe and my right hon. Friend the present Home Secretary—that those discussions have secured the most substantial growth of any Government expenditure programme, by some 52 per cent. on law and order services.

I am the first to recognise that certain parts of the law and order and criminal justice system feel that they have not benefited from the biggest increase in public expenditure in nearly a decade of Conservative Government, but the increase shows the great importance which the Government give to the workings of the criminal justice system. I want to reassure my hon. Friend that we talk regularly to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his brother Ministers about these issues.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for ventilating a tricky subject which it is not easy to discuss. I am pleased to see my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) in the Chamber. He has a long-standing interest in these issues. I am not sure whether it is as long-standing as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge, whose interest goes back 16 years, but my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst is a magistrate.

I was reflecting that 16 years ago I was pounding the streets of Oxford trying to become a city councillor—which I did, much to my surprise, by one vote. At that stage my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge was here, making the same point, which is why he is so angry at having to make it again this afternoon.

I share the concern expressed about the shortage of court clerks who support justices' clerks in taking courts. As I said, it is not an easy issue for me to brush under the carpet. The latest figures provided by the Justices' Clerks Society show a picture which is even more difficult for the service than that which my hon. Friend painted. On 28 February 1989, there were 278 vacancies—that is, about 23 per cent. of the complement—compared with 66 vacancies on 1 April 1988. The figures demonstrate the serious deterioration.

By no means all magistrates courts are experiencing the same problems. It is a particular problem in inner London, to which my hon. Friend did not address himself, and a substantial problem in the outer-London service, which is of considerable interest to both my hon. Friends. Where vacancies occur, damage is caused because delays in justice are caused. That is bad for justice and defendants, and bad in terms of value for money for courts. It is particularly disturbing when my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and I are trying to encourage courts to reduce waiting lists of people to be brought to trial. In no sense would I attempt to under-estimate the seriousness of the problem; I hope that my hon. Friend recognises that.

The magistrates courts service is at the heart of the criminal justice system. A shortage of court clerks means not only that the delivery of justice is delayed but that knock-on problems are created through the whole criminal justice system. There has always been some movement in and out of the court service by those who are legally qualified.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge referred to the fact that it appears that a good number of people may have left recently to go into the Crown prosecution service. That is undoubtedly the fact, although we have no clear statistics.

However, it is clear that the level of loss from the magistrates court service into other professions—be they to the Crown prosecution service or another career opportunity—is at present unacceptable. With some hindsight, it is clear that the inception of the Crown prosecution service—with its need for barristers and solicitors in quite large numbers fairly quickly and the levels of remuneration that they have recently been offered—has had a significant effect on the magistrates court service.

Of course, there have been more losses than ever before to private practice. It is interesting to reflect on why that should be. I am sure that some of those losses have been due to pay levels, linked to high housing costs in outer London areas, such as Uxbridge and Chislehurst. I believe too that there are some problems on the supply side. We are not getting enough legal graduates coming out of our universities and polytechnics who are prepared thereafter to follow the legal profession rather than, for example, going into business.

That is of course dependent on pay, which in turn relates closely to status. However, we can never leave it entirely to pay, and I shall now consider that aspect in some detail. We must ensure that the court service—here the Home Office must play its part—is marketing the profession as adequately as it can, possibly in a new way. I believe that that is a task for us all.

Mr. Shersby: It is a valid point that marketing that profession is important. Will my hon. Friend consider the proposition that it might be useful for the Home Office to have some discussions with the Law Society—possibly with the universities—about the training of suitably qualified lawyers, so that we can perhaps move in a direction that will ensure that more of those people who train as lawyers do actually practise law?

Mr. Patten: I welcome my hon. Friend's comments. There is considerable interest at present in the future of both legal professions, as brought forward in the three Green Papers of my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor. There are other issues that must be addressed besides possible reforms in the legal profession, and one of them is exactly that which my hon. Friend has mentioned. That was an extremely constructive suggestion.

Pay is obviously a critical factor. Court clerks are employees of magistrates courts committees and their salaries and conditions of service are negotiated alongside those for other court staff in the joint negotiating committee for magistrates courts staff. However, settlements reached within the joint negotiating committee, in order to rank for grant, must be approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who will have due regard to the operational needs of the service and, of course, to affordability.

Alas, in the 1988 pay round it was not possible for the two sides to reach agreement, and the matter was referred to arbitration. The decision of the arbitrators, taking into

[Mr. Patten]

account the level of vacancies at 1 April 1988, was that court clerks should receive a 7 per cent. pay increase, and that, in addition, the minimum scale point for professionally qualified staff should be point 10 on the 22-point scale on which court clerks and senior administrative staff are paid. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has recently approved the award for grant purposes. There is now no further delay in the payment of backdated sums to those in the courts service, who give such excellent help to that service. It is being put into effect now and thus puts an end to what has been a most undesirably long and protracted pay round.

The next pay round is soon to start and the settlement date is 1 July 1989. Once again, it will be for the joint negotiating committee to give full and careful consideration to the way in which the shortage of clerks has increased over the past year. I cannot believe that the joint negotiating committee will not take that into very close account. The Central Council of Magistrates Court Committees has sought a meeting with Ministers to discuss the present difficulties which my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge has raised. My right hon. Friend and I will be glad to participate in that meeting in the not too distant future.

Earlier, I referred to the fact that not all magistrates court committees are experiencing the same problems. There is some flexibility in the pay structure and I wonder whether all employers are using that flexibility to the maximum. Court clerks can be paid by committees which wish to match that pay to the needs of recruitment and retention. Court clerks are paid within five point bands on a 22-point scale. In some areas, that is sufficient, although I accept that, in some instances, committees will be constrained in their use of the upper points on the scale by the salaries paid to justices' clerks and their deputies at the top of the profession locally.

A number of committees have decided, with the agreement of the local authorities—they meet 20 per cent. of the cost and the Home Office meets the remaining 80 per cent.—to offer local pay supplements in excess of nationally agreed salary scales to retain legally qualified staff and to attract others. It is for the committees, as the employers, to take that decision. Those of us who value the magistrates court service as part of the intrinsic locally based system of justice will want, as much as possible, those decisions to be taken locally rather than by the Home Office. We shall seek to continue with such local decision-making as far as possible. It is for local committees to decide what arrangements best meet local circumstances.

We have also approved more trainee clerks and have created an additional 25 posts. We are actively encouraging committees to apply for more. We need such posts to encourage more people to come into the profession. They represent a medium-term investment for us as they will provide some relief while post holders are under training. Eventually, they will give us a pool of qualified staff who can join the main stream of the service.

A particular problem, however, is that the magistrates court service does not have a particularly high profile and it is not brought to the attention of many who seek to follow a legal career or who are coming to the end of their training in our universities and polytechnics. Such people may consider whether to go into the City, whether to become a solicitor or join the Crown prosecution service. I wonder how often they think, "Shall I go into the magistrates court service?" Perhaps the Home Office should do more in conjunction with the legal professions' representative bodies, such as the Law Society and the Justices' Clerks Society and others, to promote the magistrates court service as a profession.

I have had a look at our recruitment literature recently and it does leave a little to be desired. Perhaps we should take a leaf out of the Ministry of Defence's book, which always produces excellent recruitment literature. We intend to produce literature that has a wider appeal than some of the bureaucratic stuff that we have put out thus far. We intend to target that literature better at schools so that the magistrates courts service is considered as a possible career before people leave school. It is important that that career is considered by those going on to higher education.

We shall launch the booklet at the *Sunday Times* careers fair at Olympia from 8 to 10 June. We shall give it as much of a push as possible at that fair and at subsequent ones. We also intend to produce a second booklet aimed at those in higher education who are studying law.

We are conscious of the fact that the 1990s will see an increasing amount of competition to attract those entering the job market. We shall have to fight along with others to ensure that an adequate number enter the magistrates courts profession.

Interesting initiatives have been undertaken around the country. The Leicestershire magistrates committee is pooling its resources to set up a consortium of committees to recruit clerks from a considerable area instead of a number of court areas competing with each other locally. They are beginning to try to build up links with local schools, colleges, universities and polytechnics. We need to do a lot more of such positive recruiting.

To a certain extent, the future of the magistrates courts service is under discussion. It will be coming under even closer scrutiny in the next few months as the Home Office's scrutiny of the organisation and resources of the magistrates court service is completed. We will want to look carefully at the recommendations. They will be reported to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and me in June this year. The scrutiny will cover matters which relate broadly to the use and allocation of resources—a fairly large topic. It will not look at the pay structure since that is a matter for the joint negotiating committee.

However, the deliberations of the scrutineers will inevitably include salary and pay structure matters, and they will have to be taken into account as we look to the future of the magistrates courts service in this country. That service is suffering from problems that I hope that the pay negotiations which have just finished and the negotiations which are about to start will do a certain amount to alleviate, especially when linked to improved recruiting. We all wish to attract more people into the service.

British Aerospace

2.30 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Last week *The Observer* led with the story, "Tornado Rip-Off", the article purported to investigate Britain's biggest ever arms deal and the middlemen who fixed it. I have to admit that the article was well written and I tender no criticism of the journalist who wrote it, except to say that I am sure that he will find that the elusive Mr. Charles Langley resides at Lonrho headquarters.

The article alleged that the British armaments industry, backed by the Government, is fuelling the middle east arms race. In referring to arms orders potentially worth as much as £150 billion and while attacking the basis for the deals, the newspaper stated:

"behind the cheers for this most profitable defence deal in our history lie moral and financial problems."

The newspaper questioned what it called huge commission payments, the morality of selling vast quantities of sophisticated weapons to middle east and Third-world countries, the role of the Export Credits Guarantee Department in providing finance for the purchases and the risk to the taxpayer of default in the payment in the event of a change in regime. The bulk of the orders go to British Aerospace. It stands accused in *The Observer*—I shall repeat a comment in the French newspaper *L'Express*—

"of being willing to pay exceptional commercial expenses."

The Observer failed to spell out clearly the origin of the story it published and the reason why it was published. Unfortunately, the newspaper is owned by Mr. Tiny Rowland and the article was a Rowland plant. Mr. Rowland is not only a newspaper proprietor but an arms dealer. He has a direct interest in the fortunes of the Dassault company in France, the country's principal military aircraft manufacturer. It was Tiny Rowland who negotiated, directly and through a labyrinth of middlemen, a series of deals primarily in Africa but also in the middle east, involving the sale of luxury jets, jet trainers, fighter bombers including Mirage 2000 and F1 aircraft.

Tiny Rowland regards British Aerospace as a keen competitor. On a number of occasions he has set out to frustrate attempts by British Aerospace to sell aircraft. The most recent example of that involved the £150 million deal to sell Hawk ground attack aircraft to Kenya. In this case, he was pushing the rival Dassault Mirage aircraft.

Dassault was also a direct competitor with British Aerospace over the deals outlined in *The Observer* last week. According to the newspaper's report, when the company heard of British Aerospace's success in landing the Saudi deal, a Dassault spokesman said:

"What has happened is unexpected, incomprehensible and catastrophic. The decision to acquire Mirage 2000 had already been taken on technical grounds. This brutal change is of a political nature."

Of course, there is a great deal more at stake for Mr. Rowland than mere profit. He is a man obsessed. He loathes the chairman of British Aerospace, Professor Roland Smith, because he forced him off the board of the House of Fraser during Rowland's argument with the Al-Fayeds. He equally loathes the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) for acting as an unpaid adviser to the professor and because of his failure to intervene during the Harrods takeover. The problem is that his obsessions are increasingly spilling over into the columns of *The Observer*, doing immense damage to a great national newspaper. For some years, he has used the newspaper to run his personal vendetta against the Al-Fayeds and he is now, with last weekend's article, launching a new campaign to undermine British Aerospace's sales efforts in various parts of the world by using the columns of his newspaper to foster his commercial interests.

In doing so, this man is undoubtedly compromising journalists. He has, in effect, become a gladiatorial, proprietorial tyrant who is manipulating his newspaper in a way that puts him on a par with the worst aspects of Murdoch control of Fleet street journals. This must stop, and he must be stopped. He is destroying *The Observer*. Its circulation has fallen dramatically from 900,000 in June 1989, when he took it over, to just over 700,000 last month. Meanwhile, its rival, the *Sunday Times*, has held its readership steady at 1,350,000 with marginal movement.

This man is undermining British industry, and in particular British Aerospace, with accusations that equally apply to himself with relation to his arms dealings. The time has surely come for him to divest himself of control of this newspaper. An excellent team of journalists at *The Observer* are increasingly the subject of criticism inside and outside the House of Commons, and surely see themselves as professionally undermined as they are forced to act on occasions as Lonrho hacks, furthering the dirty work of an obsessive Fleet street mogul and international arms dealer.

I wish to turn to a different aspect of British Aerospace's activities in balancing my contribution to the debate—its acquisition of Royal Ordnance and the Rover Group from the Government, a huge rip-off at the taxpayers' cost and, in my view, the rip-off of the century. In April 1987, as hon. Members have good cause to remember, British Aerospace paid the Government £190,000,000 for Royal Ordnance. Ironically, in pursuit of market ideology, the Government acting totally unlike any sensible private vendor; desperate to get rid of a public asset at any cost, they placed a ludicrous time limit on the date by which a sale had to be achieved.

The Government failed to consider the development value of land holdings by relying on an out-of-date, totally inadequate valuation which put the price of 380 acres of prime development land in Greater London at only £3·5 million. Subsequently, Warburg Securities valued the same land at £517 million, identifying a £500 million gift to British Aerospace's private shareholders at a direct cost to the taxpayer.

Understandably, the Public Accounts Committee, a Committee of which I am a member, concluded in October last year:

"We are concerned that BAe, owners of RO, could make a substantial gain on the sale or redevelopment of these sites without benefits accruing to the taxpayer."

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defence insisted,

"We got a pretty good price for Royal Ordnance."

That was only half the story. We then found out that this asset, picked up on the cheap, managed miraculously to turn in a profit of £56 million last year. What had originally been acquired for reasons of speculative asset development had somehow and mysteriously been transformed into a honey pot of new trading profitability —a nice slab of trading profit to bolster British Aerospace's uninspiring trading performance.

Not content with one back-door subsidy to British Aerospace, the Government repeated the exercise with the Rover Group sale, producing an even more spectacular

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

"success". Lord Young was certainly not exaggerating when at the time he called it the deal of the century. Having failed in the summer of 1986 to split up and sell off Britain's last volume car manufacturer to multinational competition, the Government became desperate for a purchaser—preferably, given the recent public outcry, a British one. Of course, there was no suitable purchaser on the horizon, so to whom could the Government turn? Who owed them a favour? Why, of course, British Aerospace.

In keeping with his eccentric understanding of market discipline, Lord Young announced an auction with a difference: there was to be one bidder; the auctioneer would pay the commission; and the bidder would be paid to take the goods away. He asked £150 million for the job lot, approximately the value of the cars the Rover Group held in stock, but to sweeten the pill—just in case the removal truck broke down on its way from the auction—the Government would write off the company's debts and provide a gift of £800 million. Fortunately, the European Community, the only sane body of people around these days, moved in and forced the Government to reduce the handout to £547 million. Thank the Lord for the blessed bureaucrats from Brussels. Even so, British Aerospace was effectively given £379 million to take the Rover Group away.

Days after British Aerospace had agreed to the purchase, despite the assurances from Mr. Graham Day that the takeover would not lead to redundancies, it was announced that the Cowley, south and Llanelli plants were to close and that 3,400 people would have to lose their jobs. Promptly tackled on that squalid about-turn, Mr. Day cheekily responded that those redundancies were not the result of the merger, but of other trading considerations, including over-capacity. Only a fool could possibly swallow that explanation.

A few days ago, we all read with great interest reports that Rover made £65·7 million last year—£10 million per month, as the headlines said. The question is whether it was known that Rover Group would make such profits when it was taken over. Was that taken into account in the sale price? Was it known that, with projected profits of £100 million for Rover in the coming year, British Aerospace would recover the whole acquisition cost of their interest in Rover in little more than 18 months? That does not even take into account the asset value of the group.

Under cover of the Rover profits and the Saudi deal, British Aerospace announced that the Rover group had somehow been revalued at £829 million. That did not take into account the redevelopment land in the south. The empty site at Cowley alone had been valued by Warburg at £40 million. As was to be expected, we now hear rumours of a sale. What of its 40 per cent. share in Leyland-Daf, picked up at about the same time as the Rover group takeover? It is estimated that, when it is floated in the summer, it will net £160 million—more than British Aerospace paid for the whole of the Rover group.

In reality, Rover's performance since the takeover has been disappointing. With United Kingdom car sales at record levels, Rover has a reduced market share and looks as if it is about to lose more as its competitors bring out new models ahead of it this year. The jury is still out on whether Rover will remain in the volume car market. We now have to see whether those profits will go back into research and development or into the pockets of private shareholders.

How has the parent company, British Aerospace, been performing? As *The Times* put it:

"Without these two purchases, BAe would not be looking too clever."

The world's aircraft producers are working flat out, but the commercial aircraft division of British Aerospace made a loss of £49 million last year—£41 million on Airbus alone. What the real figure will be, must be anybody's guess. The weapons and electronics division is having difficulties despite every effort within the work force. Yet on paper, as a result of Government handouts, British Aerospace looks in good condition.

Shareholders' funds have doubled to £2·1 billion and net assets have doubled. Property holdings are up from £91 million to £234 million before any Royal Ordnance or Rover Group land development potential has been realised. Most importantly for some, no doubt, dividends are up 10 per cent. The private shareholders will make a killing at the taxpayers' expense as, inevitably, British Aerospace further diversifies into speculative property development on the back of land gifted from the taxpayer in complex dealings over privatisation.

It seems that Professor Roland Smith, the chairman of British Aerospace, has found, not unnaturally, easier ways of making money than making aeroplanes—land development and acquisitions. Since last January alone, British Aerospace has bought Ballast Nedham Groep NV, a Dutch construction company, for £48 million. It founded BAe Simulation Ltd., bought an option on Reflectone Inc., a United States simulator company, was rumoured to be in the market for GEC Avionics and, as recently as February this year, acquired De Moer, a Dutch civil engineering company, for an undisclosed sum. I am sure that Professor Smith is grateful to the taxpayer.

By next year, Royal Ordnance and Rover Group may have paid for themselves out of profits alone. British Aerospace's shareholders can then continue to enjoy the benefits of at least £1·3 billion—£1,300 million—of gifted capital, even before the full development potential is calculated. The cash cow has not even begun to be milked. The question is whether the profits will be generated by manufacturing activity or property speculation. I do not for one minute suppose that the shareholders of British Aerospace are concerned about where the profits come from, as long as they are there. One can only presume that they are rubbing their hands with glee, as the beneficiaries of the biggest rip-off of taxpayers' assets this century.

2.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has covered a wide area in a characteristically robust speech. I think I detect four or five main themes. We started with some extremely interesting observations about an article in *The Observer*. The hon. Gentleman linked that article to British Aerospace's export achievements, for which I was glad to hear him express his support.

Later in his speech, the hon. Gentleman returned to some other aspects of British Aerospace's activities, including some of its civilian work. In the hon. Gentleman's consideration of the profits achieved by companies under British Aerospace management, it would

not be unreasonable for him to have regard to the quality of the management that is brought to bear on those companies and their performance, and to consider whether better management, which must be in the interests of everyone concerned, including the work force, is not something to be applauded, especially as it can be identified through higher profits. The hon. Gentleman talked also about the purchase by British Aerospace of Royal Ordnance plc and Rover Group.

I suspect that the hon. Gentleman will not be altogether surprised if I draw his attention to the fact that the subject of the debate is the relationship of the Ministry of Defence with British Aerospace. Tempted as I might be to say quite a lot about *The Observer* and its proprietor——

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Go on; have a go.

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) tempts me further, but I must resist the temptation to discuss a matter that is not the responsibility of my Department.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Minister should let himself go for a minute; it is the last day, after all.

Mr. Sainsbury: We come back, I hope.

I am afraid that the same goes for some aspects of the civilian work of British Aerospace to which the hon. Member for Workington referred—for instance, the dealings with the Airbus consortium and the curious fact that it seems that the more Airbuses are sold the larger are the losses made by the participating companies. One hopes that the company will improve its performance under the restructured management of which we have read. The hon. Member for Workington will not be surprised if I do not say too much on that front.

Again, much to my disappointment, matters relating to Rover Group and its acquisition by British Aerospace are matters not for me but for my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman addressed his remarks to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster he would be given a robust response.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the acquisition of Royal Ordnance plc. He made some fairly forceful remarks on the subject, as we have come to expect of him. In his approach, the hon. Gentleman seems to be liable to give as much credence to speculative reports and matters which are not valuations but views expressed by unqualified non-surveyors as he does to professional surveyors on aspects that have been thoroughly researched.

If I understand him correctly, he is saying that the purchase of Royal Ordnance plc. by British Aerospace was some sort of monstrous rip-off. In his view, the property value of the assets of that company was astonishingly high. He quoted a figure of £400 million, and said that it was based on a Warburg valuation. I do not know how familiar he is with the origin of that figure. It was not a valuation at all. It was a bit of pure speculation by some desk operator in a merchant bank, who may have been doing an in-house analysis of the value of British Aerospace, and, lacking any expert knowledge of the situation, looked at a large number of acres of land and put against them a large valuation per acre, assuming that all that land was capable of redevelopment.

The first weakness of that approach is that the land was in the metropolitan green belt, which immediately raises a presupposition against development. Secondly, it is not irrelevant that planning applications in respect of that land had not been approved and have since been refused. Thirdly, that speculative figure assumed that, even if planning permission were to be obtained, the whole area would be redeveloped and that, therefore, all those acres could have the high figure put on them.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister assuring the House that, when, the matters go before the Secretary of State for the Environment on appeal, he will uphold any decision to refuse planning permission? Has the hon. Gentleman been told that?

Mr. Sainsbury: No. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that that is not what I am saying. I am commenting on the source of the £400 million. Equally, I will not be tempted to speculate upon the outcome of any planning application. It would be quire improper to do so.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, even if planning approval were eventually to be forthcoming, the likelihood of it being for all the acres is nil. It just does not happen. Obviously, a certain amount of the area is required for access and amenity. It is my understanding that the planning applications that had already been put in envisaged substantial parts of the site being made available for public amenity and other uses. Clearly, immediately a far lower number of acres are capable of redevelopment than appears to have been assumed by the person who originated that valuation.

The next point that the hon. Gentleman seems to overlook is that, in obtaining that sort of figure per acre for developable land, great expense would be incurred. The land is low-lying, and there are canals and locks adjoining it. One matter that would have to be attended to before any redevelopment could take place would be new access roads. There may even have to be a new lock on one of the canals. Clearly, there would have to be a great deal of drainage and, in some cases, decontamination works. They are all costly. Much time will go by and much money will be spent before any return is obtained. That would tend also to reduce the net return.

If the hon. Gentleman is basing his supposition on the fact that it was some monstrous rip-off—to use his phraseology—and on the figure in what he called the Warburg valuation, it is not well-founded.

The other main point that the hon. Gentleman overlooks is that, in any case, the sale of Royal Ordnance plc was a highly competitive procedure. Several companies expressed interest. There was a lengthy bidding process. The Government were advised by merchant bankers throughout it, and, at the end of it, two bidders were left. The best price that could be obtained was obtained. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Comptroller and Auditor General's report acknowledged that the sale to British Aerospace was achieved in a competitive situation. The evidence suggested that the competition was sufficiently widely based to secure the highest price likely in the prevailing commercial climate. I hope that I have reassured the hon. Gentleman somewhat on that aspect of the sale of RO plc.

With regard to *The Observer* article, I shall confine my remarks to aspects affecting British Aerospace.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): I do not think that I can fully appreciate why my hon. Friend is unable to deal with many of the matters that affect the Department of Trade and Industry. Would the Minister not take this opportunity to express his understanding of the positive case for diversification? Does it not present opportunities for greater job security and a future in defence, as, indeed British Aerospace now has wider interests?

Mr. Sainsbury: It is clearly in the interests of the work force, shareholders and customers, of which the Ministry of Defence is one, that British Aerospace is a strong and efficient company. Presumably the company sees advantages in the interaction between its various activities. In due course those might benefit the Ministry of Defence as a customer.

I very much agree with the hon. Member for Workington in his criticism of the article in *The Observer* as being based purely on speculation. As the hon. Gentleman says, some of the article had been printed before in French and American and indeed middle eastern publications. It is human nature, I suppose, that those losing a contract might seek to discredit the arrangements of the winners by spreading rumours based on speculation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Would the Minister confirm that Tiny Rowland is involved in selling military equipment to Governments in Africa and parts of the middle east?

Mr. Sainsbury: I cannot help the hon. Gentleman there. Mr. Rowland is associated with companies, not the Ministry of Defence. I cannot comment on their activities. Like the hon. Gentleman, I read the press. One has to judge what one reads for speculation or accuracy. But I suspect that we would agree that it is not surprising that the losers of a contract might seek to discredit the arrangements of the winners. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern that this sort of speculation could damage a very important project that means much to British industry.

The figure of £150 billion that was recently quoted as the value of Al Yamamah is fanciful speculation. However, this major project could extend into the next century and bring income and employment to a wide range of companies in this country.

The management and work force of United Kingdom companies have won these orders against intense overseas competition, through improving design and increasing productivity, with impressive labour relations and, perhaps most important of all, competitive pricing. It would be most unfortunate if all their efforts were damaged by ill-informed criticism.

UN Peacekeeping Operations

2.58 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I wish to draw to the attention of the House, as I last did in an Adjournment debate in March 1979, the considerable expansion and general success of the United Nations peacekeeping operations, to put forward some ideas on future developments and to probe the Government to find out what they are doing to match fine words with deeds.

I do so in the knowledge that an advance party of British troops is deployed today in Namibia, formerly South-West Africa, as part of the UN transitional advisory group, which is known as UNTAG for short. It is remiss of the House and the Government that we have not yet debated its participation in this important international operation.

I warmly welcome my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the debate. What a far beach has lost, the Front Bench has gained. His contribution will be listened to and read afterwards most carefully.

The renewed interest in this form of intervention and its part in the peaceful settlement of disputes, following the award in 1988 of the Nobel peace prize to United Nations peacekeeping forces, is to be welcomed and encouraged. As a former professional soldier I believe that peacekeeping by United Nations forces has become an essential part of the work done by the United Nations for international harmony and security. We must not under-estimate the problems, but here surely is one crucial area of United Nations activity in which major advances can and must be made. So far, well over 100,000 soldiers from a third of the world's armies have worn the pale blue beret or helmet—a remarkable fact.

Peacekeeping is the use of an international force, by invitation, to reduce violence. It has nothing to do with the use of force to impose order or suppress an opponent. It is an invention of the United Nations and nothing like it existed in history before 1945. For the past 30 years, at least one United Nations force has been on duty at any given time in some part of the world. United Nations forces watched over the two truces of 1948 between Israel and its Arab neighbours. In 1949 they watched over the ceasefire in Kashmir and demonstrated how a relatively small number of observers can successfully maintain a ceasefire. Then came Korea in 1950 and Suez in 1956, when they supervised the withdrawal of Israeli, British and French forces. In 1960 the Congo tied up 20,000 United Nations soldiers for four years at a cost of 126 lives and about £200 million. It has been argued that the intervention of the United Nations force in Sinai in 1973 may have prevented a world war.

Today in the Lebanon, on the Israeli border, UNIFIL faces the most complex and dangerous challenge since the Congo bloodbath. Since it was established in 1978, the force has suffered 170 fatalities. I should like its mandate to be strengthened. Israel is responsible for the South Lebanon army, which has been firing on UNIFIL soldiers —the SLA should be disbanded forthwith.

Since my last debate on peacekeeping, the most important change has been the resolve of the USSR at last to recognise the worth of United Nations peacekeeping

and to pay its outstanding dues as a further show of confidence in this aspect of the United Nations' international responsibilities.

I like to think that the Foreign Office is privately pressing the Bush Administration to renew the commitment of the United States of America to the United Nations and to make up the deficit in the payment of its dues. That is a shameful legacy from the Reagan Administration, and my hon. Friend will agree that that shortfall in the United Nations budget resulting from the abstention of the United States of America affects the very existence of the United Nations.

The United Nations peacekeeping methodology has been shown, by experience, to be more effective than unilateral or bilateral interventions from outside the United Nations. Britain took part in the ill-fated multilateral force in the Lebanon, which itself became a party in the dispute. When that force was withdrawn in disarray, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who had not previously shown much enthusiasm for the United Nations, offered the job to that world body.

British soldiers, I maintain, are good at peacekeeping. Years of using minimum force and giving aid to the civil power—from Borneo to Aden and Belize, culminating in Zimbabwe—have given them an enviable record. The 1988 Statement on the Defence Estimates reported:

"Our contribution to international peacekeeping forces has not changed: we provide contingents to the multinational force and observers in Sinai and the UN forces in Cyprus; and the Cyprus sovereign base areas give logistic support to the UN forces in Cyprus, Lebanon and on the Golan Heights."

A few years ago I spent a morning with 40 Royal Marine Commando who were on duty with the UN along the so-called green line in Nicosia, and most impressive they were. We play the main role in the UN force in Cyprus, with some 800 men attached to it, the largest single national element. I only wish that Britain's contribution to the UN was better known in this country and abroad.

Peacekeeping is also superb training for our defence forces, giving them overseas service outside Germany—all too rare—and vital experience of international co-operation. It has real value for the young NCO and the inexperienced but enthusiastic young soldier. It is excellent that we should be taking part in UNTAG and we look forward to Namibia becoming the UN's 160th member. The House has yet to be told of the exact composition of the British contingent, its likely tasks and responsibilities. We need to know what will be the rules for opening fire, how casualties will be evacuated, and to which hospitals, whether the bodies will be returned to the United Kingdom if there are any deaths, whether the Minister will be visiting our contingent in Namibia shortly, and if not, why not.

The size of the military component has been the subject of controversy. It is to comprise 4,650 persons initially, not the 7,500 originally authorised. Concern has been expressed on both sides of the House, at Question Time and in an early-day motion that I tabled, at the small size of this force in what is a large country. It seems that financial reasons, not unimportant in themselves, were the dominant reasons.

The Minister will have been told of the long list of individuals and organisations who have opposed the reduction of UNTAG, including, I am told, its commander, Lieutenant General Prem Chand. UNTAG's task is to monitor the disarming and dismantling of command structures of citizen forces, commando units and ethnic forces, South African counter-insurgency units, the confinement of SWAPO combatants to their Angolan and Zambian bases and the phased withdrawal of the South African defence forces. It is also responsible for border surveillance.

By definition, all those tasks—and there are many more—according to an internal UN document,

"require the military component of UNTAG to be very extensively deployed at strategic points along the length of the borders and to maintain a highly mobile reserve to react to any hostile acts."

There are good reasons to think that the size of the force is not sufficient to perform its assigned tasks. The discrepancy in numbers alone is enormous. The war zone in northern Namibia is one of the most concentrated areas of military personnel in the world, and about 50,000 Cuban troops will still be across the border in Angola.

Will my hon. Friend confirm that Britain will carefully watch the position and be prepared to press for the size of the force to be increased, should that become necessary? One wonders how difficult that might be in practice as new troops would need to acclimatise. Are British troops on standby for possible reinforcement of UNTAG in a few weeks' time?

The study of United Nations-style peacekeeping deserves greater attention by the British military. There appears to be very little training in peacekeeping for units or individual officers. The peacekeeping handbook should be the recognised training manual for that form of military duty.

The Nordic countries co-ordinate the training of staff and technical officers for specific duties within United Nations peacekeeping forces. Did our contingent in Namibia receive such training? Will the Minister tell us, either now or in a letter, how many hours are devoted to United Nations peacekeeping on British officer training courses and in cadet and staff colleges?

In 1979, the Government told the United Nations Secretary-General of their

"readiness to share training experience in respect of peacekeeping".

Was that followed up? Is not the time ripe to look anew at machinery and conduct of United Nations peacekeeping operations and improve them?

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my hon. Friend note that Monday is the centenary of the death of John Bright, one of the greatest peacekeepers in British history? In the context of peacekeeping in the United Nations, it would be highly suitable for us to recall the work of that great man and note that there is a strong relationship between what he said in his own time and what my hon. Friend is saying now?

Mr. Townsend: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his interesting comment.

It would be excellent if our Government were to take an active part in the United Nations in bringing about a necessary review. When the United Nations is acquiring a new and brighter image it should expect the whole-hearted support of its founder members. Does the Government support the call from the Soviet Union for the reactivation of the military staff committee, with a wider membership and better terms of reference? Why should the membership of that committee be confined to permanent member states

[Mr. Townsend]

of the Security Council when other countries such as Ghana, Nepal and Fiji can boast of considerable United Nations peacekeeping experience?

What thoughts do the Government have for improving the standard operating procedures for UN forces? Should there not be a study of UN peacebuilding as a third lane alongside UN peacemaking and peacekeeping? In the Congo a UN civilian operation was mounted beside the military peacekeeping operation to assist in the reconstruction of the fabric of the Congo's administrative structure. It achieved excellent results. A peacebuilding element might become part of each UN peacekeeping operation, with its tasks dictated by humanitarian considerations. The peacebuilding role would precede and outlast peacemaking and peacekeeping.

In 1978 President Jimmy Carter called for

"the creation of UN peacekeeping reserve composed of national contingents trained in peacekeeping functions?

Nobody wants a standing army, but a small reserve bringing together international experts might be a good idea. Such a reserve would have the very latest day and night surveillance equipment including infra-red aids and listening devices such as the Army uses in Northern Ireland, and drones. The application of highly sophisticated scientific techniques including the use of satellites could help the UN solve problems which have previously been insoluble, and thereby reduce tension. As an illustration, the electric monitoring of air traffic on a military base could help to reduce the possibility of a surprise attack in the region such as the Gulf, where the most uneasy peace prevails between Iran and Iraq.

That small reserve might include a United Nations disaster relief force which would be highly trained and mobile. It could tackle disasters, such as those following earthquakes, cyclones or a major chemical or nuclear radiation leak in a developing country. Why should the reserve not help carry supplies to the starving through hostile territory or physically protect refugees, such as those in the Lebanon, from mayhem and mutilation?

Recently the world had to sit back and watch while a Lebanese faction sought to starve the inhabitants of a refugee camp to death. In future it is possible that there will be more demands for UN forces than for resources. Will a force be required for Afghanistan or Kampuchea? If there should be a successful international conference on the Palestine-Israel issue in the next five years, it is likely that UN forces will be required as part of the security guarantees.

I hope that I have said enough in this brief debate to activate the Government to use Britain's privileged position as a member of the Security Council to strengthen the world body's peacekeeping role. Peacekeeping is no vague, woolly, over-idealistic notion. History suggests that a comparatively small UN force can reduce tension and aggression, thus facilitating a diplomatic settlement. UN peacekeeping is good news, offering hope to a violent world. It is a success and we should build on it. It would be wonderful to see the United Kingdom showing the way forward.

3.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Timothy Eggar): I know that the House recognises the long-standing and almost solo interest among hon. Members of my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) in this subject. He raised several interesting and somewhat detailed points which I cannot answer this afternoon, but I shall ensure that either I or my right hon. Friends in the Ministry of Defence will respond to them.

It is sad that it has taken 10 years since my hon. Friend's last debate on United Nations peacekeeping for UN peacekeeping to be accorded the international attention which both he and I think it deserves. Although inevitably the new demands on UN peacekeeping have thrown up several problems, not least that of managing the cost, I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that the current interest in peacekeeping is preferable to the general neglect of 10 years ago. Britain has long supported UN peacekeeping and I assure my hon. Friend that we shall continue to do so.

It is interesting for the House to recall the origins of peacekeeping. The United Nations charter envisaged using troops only to impose an international peace against aggressors. That concept soon proved unworkable. United Nations peacekeeping evolved in a variety of forms in relation to a variety of problems. Now United Nations forces patrol buffer zones, check troop withdrawals and will, in Namibia, supervise free and fair elections.

As my hon. Friend said, since 1974 the United Nations force in Cyprus has patrolled a buffer zone between the two communities. It is a prime example of Britain's commitment to peacekeeping. We contribute the largest contingency of troops, 741 men to be exact, at a cost last year of about £24 million. We believe that our participation in UNFICYP complements our continuing support for the United Nations Secretary-General's efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement of the problem. The force provides the background of stability against which he can pursue his initiative.

We also contribute a signals squadron to the United Nations transitional advisory group, the United Nations force in Namibia, for which the people of Namibia have waited too long. I shall ensure that more information about that force is made available to my hon. Friend.

Like my hon. Friend, the Government warmly welcome the award of last year's Nobel peace prize to United Nations peacekeeping forces. That was a fitting tribute to the courage of thousands of men and women who have worn blue helmets in the cause of international peace. Many of those men have died as a result. The House will wish to join me in extending our sympathy to the families of the three Irish soldiers who were killed earlier this week in the Lebanon.

My hon. Friend mentioned his concern about UNIFIL. In common with our European Community partners and others, we remain committed to UNIFIL as a force of stability in southern Lebanon. We deplore the recent increase in fighting and all attacks on UNIFIL. Shooting at UNIFIL is completely unjustified. We condemn punitive expulsion—despite UNIFIL protests—of old men, women and children from their houses in Israel's self-declared security zone.

The continued Israeli military presence in the Lebanon is provocative, destabilising and against Israel's own long-term interests. We have repeatedly urged the Israelis to complete their withdrawal from the Lebanon and to allow UNIFIL to deploy to the international border in accordance with UN security resolution No. 425. We share the concern expressed by the UN Secretary-General about

the recent deterioration in the situation, and that concern was reflected in the European Community's declaration on 20 March.

The essence of successful peacekeeping is flexibility and, of course, the co-operation of the parties directly involved. The current arrangements for peacekeeping enable the UN Secretary-General and the Security Council to respond rapidly to any demand. The UN has been fortunate in being especially well served by two British international civil servants dealing with and having primary responsibility for peacekeeping in the UN secretariat. First, there was the almost legendary Sir Brian Urquhart and now there is his successor Marrack Goulding. Their contribution to the efficient planning and implementation of UN peacekeeping operations has been and continues to be of enormous importance. In our view, and in the view of others, informal arrangements for peacekeeping have worked and will continue to work best.

I note my hon. Friend's call for a more active role for an enlarged military staff committee. The military staff committee is a body established under that section of the charter dealing with the enforcement of the peace. It is not immediately apparent that its involvement would improve the arrangements for UN peacekeeping as against enforcement. The composition of any peacekeeping force is often a delicate political matter. It is unlikely to prove possible to enlarge the military staff committee to take account of every possible circumstance.

It is a matter of regret that UN peacekeeping has not always enjoyed the whole-hearted support of the international community. Every member of the UN is called upon to contribute to the funding of UN peacekeeping. In the case of most major peacekeeping operations—of which UNTAG is a good example—all members of the UN pay according to a scale based on their nation's gross domestic product, but that scale is adjusted to require slightly more from the permanent members of the Security Council—including, of course, the United Kingdom—in order that the poorest members of the UN may pay rather less. We—and the other permanent members of the Security Council—have not objected to this scale of levy in recognition of the key role that peacekeeping plays in the maintenance of international peace and security, but the overall record of payment is not good. At the last count more than half the members of the UN were in arrears and the amount owed to the UN was staggeringly more than $372 million. That regrettable state of affairs risks undermining UN peacekeeping more than anything else.

In our view withholding peacekeeping dues for any reason is unacceptable. The fact that both super powers are among the long list of debtors is a cause of great concern. The Soviet Union—one of the more reluctant converts to UN peacekeeping—began withholding its dues in 1976. By 1987 it owed more than $197 million. Despite an assurance in October of that year that it would repay its arrears over the following five years, the amount currently outstanding is still $143 million. My hon. Friend rightly drew attention to the United States decision to withhold or delay its full due in respect of peacekeeping. Currently, United States' arrears amount to $103 million. We have made clear to the United States Administration our severe reservations about that policy. I am glad to say that, in January this year, the Americans announced that they hoped to resume full funding of all their UN-assessed contributions from October 1989.

The rather precarious financial position of UN peacekeeping must be seen against the background of rising demand. Last year three new peacekeeping forces were created and others are in the pipeline. Inevitably, members of the UN have been obliged to take more interest in the overall cost of the peacekeeping efforts. It would be short-sighted to do otherwise. The accent now —thanks in part to our efforts—is on both effective and cost-effective peacekeeping.

In that context we must consider the recent negotiations on the total size of UNTAG. My hon. Friend mentioned a number of countries that he said opposed the final decision of the Security Council, but I must remind him that all five permanent members of the Security Council were united in their approach. I must emphasise, however, as my hon. Friend implied, that the overall ceiling for the size of UNTAG remains as originally proposed. The Secretary-General has the power to request the Security Council to authorise reinforcement up to this limit at any time should the circumstances require it. We and other members of the Security Council have assured the Secretary-General that we shall respond promptly to any such request that he may make. UNTAG will, of course, have a medical unit supplied by the Swiss Government. I will ensure that my hon. Friend gets an answer to the other detailed points that he raised regarding UNTAG.

It would be wrong, however, to leave the House with the impression that our main concern with peacekeeping at the UN has been to reduce its cost. In company with members of the European Community, we recently submitted to the Secretary-General some practical proposals on how United Nations peacekeeping operations might be made more effective. This was in response to a resolution passed at last year's General Assembly inviting member states to submit their observations. In their reply, the 12 members of the Community made clear their full support for United Nations peacekeeping, as well as conveying suggestions for improvement.

One idea was that greater use might be made of smaller-scale observer-type operations to perform certain tasks such as those in Afghanistan, and possibly, soon, in central America. The Twelve also suggested that it would be useful for member states to notify the Secretary General of their willingness, in principle to participate in peacekeeping operations and to state in what particular area they would be prepared to help, for example, by contributing troops, observers, civilian personnel, equipment and so on. In other words, there would be a potential list—a reservoir—of potential areas of help on which the Secretary-General could draw at fairly short notice.

The European Community also made proposals on the training of peacekeeping personnel—my hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of that. New demands on soldiers result not only from the new concept of soldiers being involved in peacekeeping—that is a new concept for many armies—but because each situation that they are required to face tends to differ depending on the particular task that the United Nations has given to them.

As my hon. Friend has said, the Scandinavians already provide some training—they run courses for peacekeeping. I assure my hon. Friend that the EC suggestion on training will be discussed with the Secretary-General and we shall have to await the outcome of those discussions.

I shall try to deal with all the points that I have not covered today by letter to my hon. Friend.

[Mr. Timothy Eggar]

During the past year the improvements in East-West relations and the Soviet Union's decision to end some of her overseas adventures have led to major progress in the resolution of regional conflicts in many parts of the world —a process in which the UN has had an important role and from which its standing has gained. The presence of a UN peacekeeping force is often the first step for parties who wish to find their way from the battlefield to the negotiating table. The Government are proud of their support for UN peacekeeping and we urge all members of the UN to demonstrate their support too.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Before we adjourn, may I wish all hon. Members and our officials and staff a very happy Easter recess.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Three o'clock till Tuesday 4 April, pursuant to resolution [13 March].

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 13 March 1989

HOME DEPARTMENT

Court Service (Clerks)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the salary structure for justices' clerks, their deputies and court clerks.

Mr. John Patten: The salary structure and scales are as determined by the joint negotiating committees for justices' clerks and magistrates' courts staff, and are subject to review by these bodies.

D Notices

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to submit any new D notices to the defence, press and broadcasting committee.

Mr. Hurd: No.

Attitudes to Crime Survey

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department consulted women's organisations and others with expertise in rape, sexual assault and domestic violence before deciding to include questions on rape, sexual assault and domestic violence in his Department's survey on attitudes to crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The questionnaire for the survey was devised by a team of international experts on victimisation surveys. The survey in England and Wales was supervised by the Home Office research and planning unit the members of which have had considerable experience of victimisation surveys and research.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the interviewers who conducted his Department's survey on attitudes to crime and who telephoned women at random to ask questions about rape, and other sexual and domestic violence, were women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: About half of the interviewers used by Burke Marketing Research Ltd, who conducted the telephone survey of experience of crime for the Home Office, were women.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether women's organisations, or others with expertise in rape, sexual assault and domestic violence, were consulted or asked to contribute to the training programme for interviewers who conducted his Department's survey on attitudes to crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Interviewers underwent a full training programme for telephone interviewing and operated under the Market Research Society's code of conduct. There was also a full briefing for inerviewers by a female Home Office survey expert.

Information (Unauthorised Access)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the potential deleterious effects of information obtained by unauthorised means about current Home Department casework on *(a)* police matters, *(b)* passport/immigration, *(c)* deregulation and *(d)* criminal justice.

Mr. Hurd: The potential effects are indicated by the security classification or privacy marking given to the material.

Police (Leicestershire)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will name the police officers interviewed by the inspectorate on their visit to Leicestershire in February.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the course of its inspections of police forces under the Police Act 1964 Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary may interview such police officers as it considers necessary in connection with its duties. It would not be right to disclose the names of those interviewed.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the duration and date of the visit from the inspectorate to Leicestershire in February.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary carried out the formal annual inspection of the Leicestershire constabulary under the Police Act 1964 from 27 February to 2 March 1989.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations concerning the investigations which are currently being conducted by the assistant chief constable of Derbyshire into the activities of the Leicestershire constabulary.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the longest waiting time for any applicant to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to have waited for their case to be resolved and for an appeal to be decided.

Mr. John Patten: The board does not keep information about waiting times in cases now disposed of. The oldest application still outstanding was received on 22 March 1974, and was the subject of a hearing in 1978. The case concerns injury to a young child who is still a minor. It is kept under review and a number of interim payments have been made.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in the last five years were rejected because a battered wife did not inform the police of the assault;

(2) how many applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each of the last five years relate to domestic violence; and what proportion were successful.

Mr. John Patten: Collation by the board of information on applications arising from violence within the family was discontinued in 1985. The information given in the following table is taken from the board's annual reports for the years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85. In these years, 10, 32 and 22 cases were rejected on the basis that the circumstances of the injury had not been reported without delay. It is not known how many of these applications were from wives.

Year	Number of applications determined				Awards made	Applications rejected	Withdrawn/ abandoned
	Male	Female	Children	Total			
1984-85	39	188	12	239	151	87	1
1983-84	50	161	15	226	104	120	2
1982-83	46	114	5	165	95	67	3

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications have been made to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in each of the last five years; how many and what proportion of these were successful; how many of the unsuccessful ones appealed; and what proportion of appeals was successful.

Mr. John Patten: The following tables give the information which is kept by the board and published in its annual reports. Decisions made within the year concerned relate in many cases to applications made in previous years.

Table 1

	1983-84		1984-85		1985-86		1986-87		1987-88	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Applications received	31,939	—	34,890	—	39,697	—	42,301	—	43,054	—
Total decisions accepted	25,963	—	23,636	—	26,299	—	25,236	—	24,175	—
Breakdown of decisions accepted										
Full awards	18,618	61	17,089	61	19,906	64	19,147	64	18,186	63
Reduced awards	591	2	510	2	590	2	579	2	570	2
Nil awards	6,754	22	6,037	22	5,803	19	5,510	19	5,419	19
Requests for hearings	4,339	15	4,244	15	4,677	15	4,510	15	4,583	16
Total of decisions accepted and requests for hearings	30,302	100	27,880	100	30,976	100	29,746	100	28,758	100

Table 2

Decisions made at hearings	1983-84		1984-85		1985-86		1986-87		1987-88	
	Number	per cent.	Number	per cent.	Number	per cent.	Number	per cent.	Number	per cent.
Full awards	1,754	63	1,932	63	1,807	61	1,943	61	1,980	60
Reduced hearings	170	6	240	8	231	8	256	8	255	8
Nil awards	868	31	903	29	908	31	970	31	1,065	32
Total	2,792		3,075		2,946		3,169		3,300	

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the expenditure on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for each of the last five years, giving figures for the actual expenditure and in real terms.

Mr. John Patten: The following figures include Scotland.

£ thousand

Year	Compensation expenditure	Gross domestic product adjusted[1]	Administration expenditure	Gross domestic product adjusted[1]
1987-88	52,000	52,000	6,760	6,760
1986-87	47,500	50,006	5,400	5,685
1985-86	41,497	45,144	4,340	4,721
1984-85	35,600	40,819	4,200	4,816
1983-84	33,000	39,752	3,835	4,620

[1] Cash figures adjusted to 1987-88 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator at market prices.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the waiting time for an appeal to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and how many people are waiting.

Mr. John Patten: At the end of February, 7,783 cases were awaiting a hearing, the applicant being dissatisfied with the decision made by a single member after consideration of the papers. The following indication of the time taken by the board to reach a final decision in

3,878 cases resolved in 1987-88 in which a hearing had been requested is taken from the board's latest annaul report (Cm 536). Intervals shown are from when a hearing was requested.

1987-88

	Per cent.
Up to 3 months	2
3 to 6 months	5
6 to 9 months	11
9 to 12 months	18
Over 12 months	64

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of the Metropolitan police; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that 84 staff of all grades are currently employed in the directorate of public affairs of the Metropolitan police office. Of these 45 are in information officer grades and 39 are support staff. The complement is 89 posts. No major change in complement is proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of the Home Office; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are at present 19 press officers and four support staff employed in the Home Office press office. There are no vacancies. During 1989-90 these numbers are expected to increase to 20 press officers and five support staff.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The full cost of staff and other costs of the Home Office press office is estimated at £647,500 for 1988-89. The expected cost for 1989-90 is £731,000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by the Metropolitan police on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the latest estimate of staffing and accommodation cost and spending on press and public relations by the directorate of public affairs is £5,321,000 for 1988-89. Provision for 1989-90 is £5,470,000.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Home Office on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Hurd: The latest estimate of Home Office spending for 1988-89 is as follows:

	£ million
(a) Television advertising	1·8
(b) Radio advertising	0·1
(c) Press advertising	3·2
(d) Other promotional activity (including poster advertising; printing and distribution; film/video/TV filler production; displays/exhibitions and market research).	3·3

It is not yet possible to say how the publicity budget will be allocated in 1989-90, but total expenditure is likely to be about £9·7 million.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Metropolitan police on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the latest figures for 1988-89 are as follows:

	£
Television advertising	Nil
Radio advertising	6,000
Newspaper advertising	1,151,000
Other promotional material	1,469,000

Expenditure for 1989-90 has not yet been decided.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Metropolitan police; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At the end of February 1989, the complement and strength figures by grade for the statistics branch of the Metropolitan police office were:

	Complement	*Strength*
Grade 7	1	1
SEO	1	1
HEO	3	3
EO	8	8
AO	60	54
Support Grade Band 1	1	1
Support Grade Band 2	6	6
	80	74

Only the grade 7 post is filled by a statistician, the remaining posts being filled by executive, administrative

and support grades staff, who undertake a mixture of statistical and administrative duties. An additional grade 7 post filled by a statistician is located in the management support department. No change to the complement is proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Home Office; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is given in the table. During the course of the forthcoming year the responsibilities of statistical department are to expand and the staff complement is to change in consequence.

Staff of Home Office Statistical Department

	In post	*Complement*		
	1 March 1989	*1 March 1989*	*1 April 1989*	*1 April 1990*
Statistical posts				
Grade 5	3	[illegible]	3	3
Grade 7	18	[illegible]	19	19·5
Assistant/Senior Assistant Statistician	6·5	7	7	8·5
	27·5	28·0	29	31
Other posts				
Grade 7	1	1	1	1
Senior Executive Officer	1	1	1	1
Higher Executive Officer	11	11	15	15
Executive Officer	24	26	30	30
Administrative Officer	59·5	60·5	59·5	62·5
Administrative Assistant	34·5	40·5	38	37·5
Other Grades	9	10·5	10·5	10·5
	140	150·5	155	157·5
Total	167·5	179	184	188·5

Blackwall Tunnel (Closure)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to what notice was given to the Metropolitan police concerning the closure of the southbound bore of the Blackwall tunnel on Saturday and Sunday 4 and 5 March; what steps the commissioner took to minimise congestion to traffic in east London and as to how many additional police officers, vehicles, or motor cyclists were deployed in order to ameliorate predictable traffic problems.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am informed by the Commissioner that the two bores of the Blackwall tunnel are closed for essential maintenance, individually and on separate occasions, at certain times of the year agreed by the Department of Transport, the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Greenwich and tunnel management. The police are informed well in advance of the dates of closure, as are the local media and the motoring organisations, and the approach roads are signed in advance.

The congestion arising from the closure of the southbound bore on 4-5 March was exacerbated by a number of other incidents in the area which could not have been foreseen. The situation was handled by local officers and no additional manpower was deployed.

English Wine

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give consideration to granting a special licence for the English Vineyards Association to charge for samples of English wine at the Festival of Food and Farming to be held in Hyde park on 4 to 7 May.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is no provision in law under which the Home Secretary may grant a licence for the sale of intoxicating liquor.

Senior Police Officers (Press)

Mr. Vaz To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library details of any guidelines which he has issued concerning contact between senior police officers and the press.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Apart from guidance in December 1982 on the implications of the Contempt of Court Act 1981 my right hon. Friend has issued no guidelines on this subject to the police. It is an offence under the police discipline code for any police officer, without proper authority, to communicate to any person any information which he has in his possession as a member of a police force.

Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the immigration service at Hull received a request for information about Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed from an entry clearance officer at the British Embassy at Islamabad; whether the request was acknowledged; whether acknowledgement of such requests for information is standard immigration service procedure; when a reminder from Islamabad was received; and when the information is to be sent to Islamabad.

Mr. Renton: The immigration service at Leeds/Bradford Airport received the request for information about Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed on 23 December 1987. The request was not acknowledged. No reminder was received from Islamabad. Regrettably, after an initial inquiry on 2 January 1988 the matter was overlooked in the Leeds/Bradford immigration office. I understand that the entry clearance officer in Islamabad has now taken a decision in Mushtaq Ahmed's case which will be conveyed to him shortly. Steps will be taken to improve the monitoring of outstanding action in the Leeds/Bradford immigration office.

Latchmere House

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what consultation he has had with the legal, welfare and other organisations who are required to visit Latchmere house about the relocation of Latchmere house; what representations he has received about the relocation of Latchmere house; what facilities will be provided at the remand centre near Portsmouth for legal, welfare and other representatives; and whether staff from Latchmere house will be required to transfer to the relocated remand centre;

(2) to what purpose Latchmere house in London will be put when it is closed as an immigration remand centre; what consultation he has had with appropriate trade unions about the relocation of Latchmere house; what arrangements he is making for those held on remand near Portsmouth to be visited by relatives and friends; and by whom staff employed at the relocated Latchmere house will be employed;

(3) when Latchmere house, the London immigration remand centre is going to be closed and relocated near Portsmouth; how many people are currently held at Latchmere house; what is its capacity; what is the remand centre near Portsmouth to be called; what facilities will be provided; how many people it will hold on remand; and what is the total cost of relocating Latchmere house to Portsmouth and of any alterations or other necessary works.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Office is planning changes at two prison service establishments, Her Majesty's remand centre Latchmere house at Richmond, Surrey, and Her Majesty's young offenders institution Haslar at Gosport, Hampshire. The certified normal accommodation of Latchmere house is 127. Its total population on 10 March was 157, including 94 persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971. Her Majesty's young offenders institution Haslar provides accommodation for 100 sentenced young offenders.

The aim, for which detailed plans are being prepared, is that the young offenders should be removed from Her Majesty's young offenders institution Haslar so that the Immigration Act detainees may be transferred there from Latchmere house. This, in turn, would allow the prison service to use the accommodation at Latchmere house to hold remand prisoners from the London area, many of whom are now held in police cells owing to overcrowding in the London prisons. The establishment at Haslar would remain under the control of the prison service and would be manned by prison service staff.

We informed many interested parties of this plan, including the relevant trades unions and the local authorities. Representations in response have been received from my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and from Richmond borough council. Officials are to meet representatives of advisory agencies which specialise in immigration matters later this week.

It is not possible at this stage to answer all of the hon. Member's detailed questions, but I shall write to him when the answers are available.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to collect statistical data on the severity of various forms of animal experimentation along the lines of the scheme of monitoring under the Dutch Animal Experimentation Act 1977; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The "Statistics on Scientific Procedures on Living Animals", which are published annually (1987; Cm. 515) are the most factually detailed of those produced by any nation. There are currently no plans to incorporate in these annual statistics assessments of the severity of procedures which have been carried out, because of the inevitably subjective nature of such assessments.

Erythropoietin

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to ensure that abuse of the hormone erythropoietin, does not become widespread in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: If there were evidence that this substance was being misused in the United Kingdom in such a way as to have harmful effects sufficient to amount to a social problem, it would be possible to consider bringing it under the control of the Misuse of Drugs Act, but we have so far received no such evidence.

Broadcasting

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that the widening of the Broadcasting Standards Council remit to cover a code on anti-social behaviour does not result in overlap with that of other regulatory bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: When the Broadcasting Standards Council was set up, part of its remit was to draw up, in consultation with the broadcasting authorities and the other responsible bodies in broadcasting, cable and video, a code on the portrayal of sex and violence and standards on taste and decency. We see such a code as contributing to the work of the broadcasting authorities in this area, not overlapping or undermining their responsibilities for programme standards.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Murders

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many murders, classed as sectarian

and non-sectarian have *(a)* been committed and *(b)* resulted in prosecution and conviction between October 1969 and October 1988.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Information in the form requested is not readily available from existing records and could only be obtained at disproportionate costs. The relevant data which are available are given in the following table:—

Year	Number of murders[1]	Murders cleared	Persons proceeded against[2]	Found guilty[3]
1969	5	4	4	—
1970	14	5	1	—
1971	123	11	10	—
1972	376	32	5	—
1973	200	46	39	—
1974	205	49	42	—
1975	238	55	79	68
1976	280	87	71	58
1977	116	104	82	74
1978	82	67	48	46
1979	128	58	68	60
1980	85	59	24	23
1981	95	42	35	34
1982	99	45	23	21
1983	86	61	20	15
1984	63	50	18	10
1985	59	47	44	39
1986	85	39	31	25
1987	100	51	23	19
1988	111	79	24	17

[1] 'Number of murders'—includes all murders in Northern Ireland; it does not include cases classed as manslaughter nor infanticides.

[2] Only shows the number of people who were proceeded against for murder. Some cases initially dealt with as murder were dealt with in the High Court as manslaughter.

[3] Information for persons found guilty during the period 1969-1974 is not readily available. Conviction figures do not necessarily relate to incidents occurring that year.

Less Favoured Areas

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Northern Ireland farms have been classified as less favoured areas since the extension of the boundaries was agreed in 1983.

Mr. Viggers: The less favoured areas were last extended in Northern Ireland in 1984. Just over 13,000 farms in whole or in part were included in the area designated.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the tribunal established to consider appeals from farmers who felt that their land ought to have been included within the revised boundary after the extension of the Northern Ireland less favoured areas in 1983 completed its task; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The independent panel completed its work in August 1987. Since then, it has been necessary to extract and analyse detailed statistical data in order to apply the exacting economic and demographic tests, specified in EC legislation, before land may be designated less favoured.

Veterinary Students

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action is being taken to ensure the future availability of places for Northern Ireland students in veterinary schools in the United Kingdom generally and in Scotland in particular; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The University Grants Committee set up a working group under Sir Ralph Riley in 1987 "to consider the provision of veterinary education in the six veterinary schools in Great Britain and the scope for its rationalisation and to make recommendations". It reported in January 1989. Officials of the Department of Agriculture are considering the implications of the report for Northern Ireland's future needs on veterinary manpower and training.

Electoral Registers

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what provision he has made to make available the annual electoral registers to *(a)* Members of Parliament and *(b)* Members of the European Assembly.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Under regulation 53(1) of the Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1986, a Member of Parliament for a constituency in Northern Ireland is entitled, on request, to one copy of the register for that constituency free of charge from the Chief Electoral Officer. Similar provision exists in respect of Members of the European Parliament under the European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) Regulations 1986. In the latter case, the constituency is, of course, the whole of Northern Ireland.

RUC and Army Raids

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) in how many homes in Northern Ireland raided by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Army weapons have been discovered during the last 12 months;

(2) how many homes in Northern Ireland have been raided by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Army in search of weapons during the last 12 months.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answers 23 February 1989]:* I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) on 2 March 1989 at column 310-11.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Cambridge University Veterinary School

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what savings it is estimated will arise from the closure of the Cambridge university veterinary school.

Mr. Jackson: The rationalisation recommendations of the University Grants Committee's review of veterinary education, currently out for consultation, do not envisage net savings. The intention is to strengthen existing national provision by making yet more effective use of existing resources.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding the proposed closure of the Cambridge university veterinary school.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the Answer I gave the hon. Member for St. Helens South (Mr. Bermingham) on 6 March at column 397.

Veterinary Students

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many veterinary students from abroad came to *(a)* study and *(b)* work in the United Kingdom in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jackson: The total number of full-time and sandwich veterinary science students with overseas domicile in universities in Great Britain in each of the last five years, is:

	Undergraduate	*Postgraduate*
1983	41	112
1984	51	117
1985	61	126
1986	77	134
1987	92	142

While students "see practice" as part of their veterinary courses, they may actually practice only after qualification and subsequent registration with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest figures for estimated spending by the Department on advertising, publicity and publications for the current financial year (1988-89) are as follows:

	£
Television	nil
Radio	40,000
Newspapers (including magazines and directories)	475,000
Other expenditure (publications, videos, exhibitions etc.)	3,400,000

Figures for 1989-90 are not finalised.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mrs. Rumbold: In the privatisation of the National Seed Development Organisation and some of the assets of the Plant Breeding Institute, the fees and other sale expenses totalled about £0·6 million, as stated in the published appropriation account for class XII, vote 13 for 1987-88. This is the only privatisation conducted by this Department in the period referred to.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is as follows:

Year	£
1984-85	[1]40,000
1985-86	17,500
1986-87	23,200
1987-88	255,413
1988-89	[1]76,251

[1] Estimated.

Note:

Information for earlier years could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is as follows:

Grade	*Staff in post*	*Present complement*	*1989-90 complement*
Grade 5 (Assistant Secretary)	1	1	1
Grade 5 (Chief Information Officer)	—	1	1
Personal Secretary	1	2	2
Grade 7 (Principal Information Officer)	2	2	2
Senior Information Officer	5	6	6
Information Officer	12	12	12
Assistant Information Officer	—	1	1
Graphics Officer (Higher)	1	1	1
Graphics Officer (Lower)	5	5	5
Senior Executive Officer	1	—	—
Executive Officer	2	2	2
Administrative Officer	6	5	5
Administrative Assistant	3	3	3
Totals	39	41	41

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in his Department; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is as follows:

	Staff in post	*Present complement*	*1989-90 complement*
Statistical posts			
Grade 3 (Director of Statistics)	1	1	1
Grade 5 (Chief Statistician)	2	2	2
Grade 7 (Statistician)	9	10	10
Senior Assistant Statistician	2	2	4
Assistant Statistician	4	4	4
Administrative and technical posts			
Grade 6	1	1	1

	Staff in post	Present complement	1989-90 complement
Senior Executive Officer	1	1	1
Senior Executive Officer (Tech.)[1]	3	3	3
Higher Executive Officer	12	12	12
Higher Executive Officer (Tech.)[1]	8	8	8
Executive Officer	19	19	19
Executive Officer (Tech.)[1]	[2]20	17	17
Administrative Officer	22	23	22
Administrative Assistant	10	11	9
Personal Secretary	4	4	4
Totals	118	118	117

[1] Technical staff undertake data processing.
[2] Including three supernumerary staff.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89, and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest estimated expenditure for the current financial year on press, public relations and departmental publications, including staff costs, is £4·9 million. Figures for 1989-90 are not finalised.

Drama

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for drama as an educational tool in the national curriculum for children in *(a)* primary, *(b)* middle and *(c)* high/secondary schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: Drama has an important part to play both as an element contributing to various national curriculum subjects and as a non-foundation subject in its own right. It is included in the terms of reference of the national curriculum English working group in connection with dramatic works of literature and as a medium for the development of a range of oral skills. These aspects will be taken into account in the development of the relevant national curriculum statutory orders.

Health Education

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to amend the national curriculum to include health education; and if he will make a statement about the role of health education in all schools.

Mr. Butcher: Health education has been identified by the Government as an important cross-curricular theme to be covered within the national curriculum. When the order for national curriculum science is laid this will include explicit requirements for pupils to cover relevant aspects of health education. Other foundation subjects will cover different aspects of health education, as appropriate. My right hon. Friend has also asked the National Curriculum Council to advise him on the place and content of personal and social education, including health education, within the curriculum as a whole. The council has been asked to submit a progress report on its work by the end of March.

Down's Syndrome

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has concerning centres which are currently undertaking research into the therapeutic and remedial treatment of Down's syndrome.

Mr. Jackson: The Medical Research Council is currently funding five centres where research of relevance to the therapeutic and remedial treatment of Down's syndrome is being carried out. The details are as follows:

Centre and project title

MRC Human Genetics Unit, Edinburgh
- Consequences of chromosome abnormalities in the newborn: the Edinburgh Longitudinal Study.

MRC Cognitive Development Unit, London
- Development of cognitive abilities of the mentally retarded.

MRC Social Psychiatry Unit, London
- (1) Camberwell Mental Retardation Case Registers.
- (2) Evaluation of the rundown of a mental handicap hospital and of the alternative services provided.

Department of Psychology, University of Edinburgh
- (1) An investigation of differences in cognitive development in Down's syndrome and normal infants.
- (2) Early learning and development in infants with mental handicap.

Department of Psychology, Institute of Education, London
- Special abilities in gifted and handicapped children.

In addition, university departments and medical schools and regional health authorities support a range of basic research, from public funds, which may be relevant to the therapeutic and remedial treatment of Down's syndrome.

Mr. Paul Scruton

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his Department's letter to Mr. Paul Scruton, Secondary Examinations Council, 45 Notting Hill Gate, W11, of 9 February, designating him for transfer to the SEAC by parliamentary order effective from 7 March, in the light of the statement in the *Official Report*, 16 January, column *186*.

Mrs. Rumbold: Under section 15 of the Education Reform Act 1988, my right hon. Friend designated for transfer to the School Examinations and Assessment Council all SEC staff who did not by resignation indicate their unwillingness to serve in suitable posts. Mr. Paul Scruton was duly transferred to a post in SEAC to which he was eminently suited.

Cancer Treatment (Animals)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to ensure the continuation of radiotheraphy cancer treatment for animals and the close collaboration with research work on human cancer in the event of the Cambridge university veterinary school closing.

Mr. Jackson: The Universities Funding Council will wish to take matters such as these into account in its decisions on the recommendations of the review of veterinary education, which is currently out for consultation.

Violence in Schools

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the report of the inquiry under the chairmanship of Lord Elton into violence in schools; and if he will make a statement on its conclusions.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to publish the report of the committee of inquiry into discipline in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am arranging for the committee's report to be published today. Copies of the report are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament. I am grateful to Lord Elton and his colleagues for carrying out a thorough and wide-ranging inquiry.

The Government believe that immediate action should be taken to deal with indiscipline in schools and violence, wherever it occurs. It fully supports teachers in their efforts to establish good order in the classroom. It welcomes the contribution which the committee's report makes to solving these problems.

The Government have decided to act immediately on the following recommendations in the report:

I have accepted the committee's recommendation that in future all initial teacher training courses should include separate, compulsory elements of practical training in how to manage pupil behaviour, and that these skills should be a key factor in assessing a student's performance and competence to teach.

I propose to set a clear national standard for the amount of time which teacher trainers must spend in school, so as to ensure that they have sufficient recent practical experience. I shall take action forward through the review which I am conducting of the criteria for approval of initial teacher training courses.

Subject to the necessary consultation, I propose to accept the committee's recommendation that the management of pupil behaviour should become a national priority in the local education authority training grants scheme for in-service training of teachers in 1990-91.

I accept the committee's conclusion that the procedures for excluding pupils from school should be monitored closely. I propose to institute a monitoring scheme for two years, rather than the five years recommended in the report. I will require reports in all cases where a head teacher's decision to exclude a child from a school is overruled by either the governing body or the local education authority. At the same time I shall require full details of incidents leading to exclusions, so that we have a national picture. At the end of that period I shall decide on the future of the existing statutory provisions.

Subject to the necessary statutory consultations with the local authority associations, I propose to make an education support grant available to encourage local education authorities to work up coherent plans to address the problem of difficult pupils, whether on-site or off-site. I also propose to support through education support grants a programme to encourage local education authorities and schools to take positive action to tackle truancy. Both grants would be made available in 1990-91, and would be targeted on inner-city areas in the first instance.

I intend to require all local education authorities to introduce teacher appraisal schemes covering all their teachers within the next few years; and I shall expect these schemes to pay close attention to classroom management.

I am asking the school management task force to act on the committee's recommendation that management training programmes for headteachers and other senior staff should give emphasis to the skills required to motivate and lead staff, and to manage institutional change.

The National Curriculum Council is already considering the place and content of personal and social education in the curriculum. I have asked the council to report progress to me by the end of March.

The committee's recommendations are addressed not only to Government, but to local education authorities, teachers, governing bodies, parents, the police and others. I look to all those groups to play their part in responding to the report. In particular, I hope that governing bodies and schools will look hard at what they can do to win parents' active support and partnership for their policies on discipline. I hope they will find opportunities to emphasise to parents the key role which they play in promoting good discipline in schools through the example they set and the control and guidance they provide in the home.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is considering similar action in Wales on those matters falling within his responsibilities.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the inquiry into violence in schools was established; when its report was received; and what was the cost of the inquiry.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I announced the establishment of the inquiry into discipline in schools on 18 March 1988, in reply to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) at column 687. The committee's report was received on 31 January. The cost of the inquiry is approximately £70,000. This includes the cost of the survey commissioned by the committee from Sheffield university but excludes the costs of publishing and distributing the committee's report.

ENERGY

Consumers (Consultation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements there are for consulting consumers on the work and decisions of his Department.

Mr. Parkinson: My Department has contact at both ministerial and official level with groups interested in energy matters and, when appropriate, initiates more formal consultations. There are no arrangements for routine consultation.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will ascertain from the major oil companies why they are not prepared to ensure that their tied garages are supplied with unleaded petrol if they wish to sell it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The supply of unleaded petrol is a commercial decision for the oil companies. The number of garages selling unleaded petrol is growing steadily. The latest available figures, for the end of January, were a weekly conversion rate of over 200 garages and over 4,300 already converted.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in his Department; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Parkinson: The table gives the latest figures for complement, staff in post and vacancies in the Department's economics and statistics division. No decisions have been made to change the complement for 1989-90.

Grade	*Complement at 1 March 1989*	*Staff in post at 1 March 1989*	*Vacancies at 1 March 1989*
Statistical grades			
Chief statistician	1·0	1·0	—
Statistician	5·0	5·0	—
Senior assistant statistician/ assistant statistician	1·0	1·0	—
Sub total	7·0	7·0	—
Economist grades			
Senior economic adviser	3·0	3·0	—
Economic adviser	11·0	10·0	1·0
Senior economic assistant/ economic assistant	[1]6·0	5·0	1·0
Sub total	20·0	18·0	2·0
Administration grades			
Grade 3	1·0	1·0	—
Grade 7	1·0	1·0	—
Senior executive officer	5·0	4·0	1·0
Higher executive officer	7·0	7·0	—
Executive officer	[1]14·0	12·0	2·0
Administrative officer	11·0	10·0	1·0
Administrative assistant	0·5	—	0·5
Senior personal secretary	1·0	1·0	—
Personal secretary	4·0	4·0	—
Sub total	44·5	40·0	4·5
Grand total	71·5	65·0	6·5

[1] Includes supernumerary posts.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisation in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Parkinson: Total expenditure on fees paid to outside organisations in relation to the privatisation of Amersham Interntional, Britoil and Enterprise Oil could not be provided without incurring disproportionate cost. Fees paid to outside organisations in the case of the privatisation of British Gas and in the preparation for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales are:

£ million

	British Gas	*ESI*
1985-86	1·4	—
1986-87	162·4	—
1987-88	10·5	0·8
[1]1988-89	9·7	6·0
[2]1989-90	0·3	27·0

[1] Estimated outturn.
[2] Current estimate.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Parkinson: The information requested is no longer available for the financial years 1979-80 and 1980-81 and is only available for 1981-82 to 1983-84 at disproportionate cost. The cost of administrative consultancies for 1984-85 onwards is as follows:

Financial year	*Expenditure £*
1984-85	53,328
1985-86	31,209
1986-87	30,101
1987-88	35,451
[1]1988-89	25,000

[1] Estimated

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Parkinson: The staffing of my Department's press office, including the public inquiry point and support staff, is currently 13. There are no vacancies and no decisions have been made to change the complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Parkinson: The estimated expenditure for 1988-89 is £475,000. This figure includes:

(i) forecast expenditure by the press office;
(ii) staff costs (salaries, accommodation and common services) for all permanent information service and support staff currently in post in the press office including the public inquiry point.

Currently proposed expenditure for 1989-90 is £575,000.

Drinking Water

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the drinking water supply in his Department's head office building meets the European Economic Community standard.

Mr. Parkinson: Water for the Department's head office building is supplied from a borehole and the quality does

not meet the requirements of the EC directive. The premises are to be refurbished later this year and I understand that the water supply then will be taken from Thames water authority's public mains supply.

In the meantime, point of use filters have been installed to improve the quality of the drinking water.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Parkinson: The latest estimates of expenditure by my Department in 1988-89 in the following areas are:

	£ million
(a) Television advertising	nil
(b) Radio advertising	[1]—
(c) Press advertising including newspapers	2·4
(d) Other promotional material	1·3

[1] £3,504 has been spent on radio advertising.

Currently proposed expenditure for 1989-90[1] is:

	£ million
(a) Television advertising	nil
(b) Radio advertising	nil
(c) Press advertising including newspapers	0·5
(d) Other promotional material	0·7

[1] Departmental expenditure on electricity privatisation will include expenditure on advertising although at present no decision has been taken on its size and timing.

West Burton B

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what communications he has received from *(a)* the Bassetlaw district council, *(b)* the Nottinghamshire county council and *(c)* the Central Electricity Generating Board on the fulfilment of planning conditions for the proposed West Burton B power station; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what factors are now preventing him announcing his permission for the construction of the West Burton B power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 3 November 1988 at column *713*.

My Department has recently been advised by the Bassetlaw district council that agreement has now been reached, in principle, between the local planning authorities and the CEGB on the outstanding matters concerning the construction and operation of the station.

My right hon. Friend will wish to receive confirmation of this, together with copies of the separate agreements between the councils and the CEGB, before proceeding with his consideration of the application.

Sulphurous Emissions

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will direct the Central Electricity Generating Board to continue to test systems for cleansing sulphurous emissions from large fossil-fuelled power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In order to meet the requirements of the EC large combustion plant directive the Central Electricity Generating Board will wish to appraise both the technical and cost efficiency of various methods of reducing sulphur emissions. The type of process chosen for future plant as well as that retrofitted to existing power stations will be a matter for the commercial judgment of the CEGB and its successors.

Fiddlers Ferry

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will direct the Central Electricity Generating Board to fit a regenerative flue-gas desulphurisation system at Fiddlers Ferry power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Central Electricity Generating Board and its successors will decide the order in which large coal-fired power stations should be retrofitted and the type of flue-gas desulphurisation process to be used.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Foreign Office on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Eggar: Latest Foreign and Commonwealth Office estimates of expenditure on advertising and other promotional material for 1988-89 and their 1989-90 budget provision are:

	1988-89 £	*1989-90* £
FCO Diplomatic Wing	291,000	499,000
FCO ODA Wing	714,000	820,000
	1,005,000	1,319,000

A disaggregation of these figures to identify the medium used is not available.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Foreign Office; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Eggar: The Foreign Office diplomatic wing—nil.

For the Overseas Development Administration the information is as follows:

	Latest figures complement	In post	Proposed for 1989-90 complement
Statistical Posts:			
Chief Statistician (Grade 5)	1	1	1
Statistician (Grade 7)	4	3	4
Assistant/Senior Assistant	3	[1]4	3
Administrative Posts:			
Higher Executive Officer	1	1	1
Executive Officer	2	2	2
Administrative Officer	4	4	4
Personal Secretary	1	1	1
TOTAL	16	16	16

[1] Including a casual appointment to senior assistant statistician and a sandwich course student.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Eggar: No such fees have been paid for the period in question.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Eggar: Foreign and Commonwealth Office expenditure on management consultants in the financial years 1986-87, 1987-88 and estimated expenditure in 1988-89 is as follows. The figures include expenditure for both the diplomatic and aid wings.

Year	Amount
1986-87	68,329
1987-88	257,272
1988-89	62,512

Prior to 1986-87 consultancy expenditure was not separately identified in the FCO's accounts.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of the Foreign Office; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Eggar: The full complement of staff in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office diplomatic wing's news department and the aid wing's administration press office is 18. There are presently no vacant posts. The complement for 1989-90 will depend on the workload during the year.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Eggar: Total expenditure on press and public relations is estimated as follows:

	£ million 1988-89	1989-90
Payment to Central Office of Information for overseas information material and related activities	19·2	21·4
Other information services	1·0	1·6
Running costs of diplomatic wing information/news departments	1·9	2·0
Running of ODA wing information department	0·3	0·4
Cost of information staff at overseas posts	18·4	20·2
Total	40·8	45·6

Afghanistan

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what policy considerations underlie the continuing absence of a British ambassador from Afghanistan; and what arrangements are made for United Kingdom nationals such as Red Cross workers when in need of diplomatic assistance.

Mr. Eggar: We withdrew Her Majesty's ambassador from Afghanistan in 1980 to register our disapproval of the installation of an unrepresentative regime by the Soviet army. Before the temporary withdrawal of the remaining embassy staff in February this year, we informed British nationals that consular assistance would no longer be available.

British nationals who travel to, or stay in, Afghanistan now do so in the knowledge that this is so.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's ambassador will return to Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: The then British ambassador was withdrawn in 1980 shortly after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. We have since then had no ambassador in Kabul. It is too early to predict when it would be appropriate to appoint an ambassador again.

PLO

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will seek clarification from the Palestine Liberation Organisation about the public support for the use of petrol bombs expressed by Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad) in a published interview in Abu Dhabi on 1 March.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. We have already made clear to PLO representatives that the intifada should be pursued with the utmost restraint.

Angola

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether the United Nations has been directly involved in mediation between the MPLA-PT and UNITA;

(2) when the situation in Angola will next be discussed in the United Nations;

(3) when was the last occasion that the United Nations Security Council or other United Nations for a discussed the civil war in Angola; and what resolutions were passed;

(4) what contacts have been made in the last year between Her Majesty's Government and African countries concerning the civil war in Angola;

(5) whether he has made representations through the United Nations or other international organisations in order to facilitate national reconciliation in Angola and the holding of free and fair elections;

(6) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards UNITA, its leader Dr. Jonas Savimbi, and its stated objectives of national reconciliation and the holding of free and fair elections in Angola;

(7) when he last met representatives of the Angolan Government; and what was discussed;

(8) what contacts have been made by him with other governments concerning the holding of free and fair elections in Angola;

(9) what representations he has made to the MPLA-PT Government of Angola concerning the holding of free and fair elections in Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: We meet regularly with representatives of the Angolan Government in the normal course of diplomatic relations. The Angolan Ministers of the productive sector, foreign affairs and justice have all visited the United Kingdom since the beginning of 1988. In February this year my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Overseas Development visited Luanda for the annual SADCC meeting and called on President dos Santos. A wide range of international, regional and bilateral matters was discussed.

We are in regular touch with African leaders in the region, who are best placed to mediate, about moves towards internal peace in Angola. We would welcome any move to establish internal peace which had the support of both sides, but it is not for us to prescribe how elections should be conducted in another sovereign state. We have made no representations through international bodies on this subject.

We maintain contact with UNITA at official level. Mr. Savimbi is free to visit Britain as a private individual but is not received officially.

The mandate of the United Nations Angola verification mission (UNAVEM) is to verify the redeployment northwards and the phased and total withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola according to the agreed timetable which is due to start on 1 April. The internal political situation in Angola is not the subject of discussion at the United Nations.

Departmental Officials

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the officials in the Civil Service box during Foreign Office questions on 8 March.

Mr. Eggar: The officials present were appropriate for the business before the House. I see no reason to give names of officials in the officials' box on such occasions.

Salman Rushdie

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will meet the Secretary General of the Arab League to ask him to press member states and organisations to repudiate the statement on 5 March by Ahmad Jibril, secretary-general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command, threatening to murder Mr. Salman Rushdie.

Mr. Waldegrave: We condemn threats to murder Mr. Rushdie from any source, and welcome all statements by other states and organisations which repudiate such threats.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Mushtaq Ahmed, ref. GV100/4412, was interviewed at the British embassy at Islamabad in connection with his entry clearance application to enter the United Kingdom; when the entry clearance officer who interviewed him wrote to the United Kingdom immigration service requesting information about Mr. Ahmed; when the entry clearance officer sent a reminder as no reply to his request had been received; and when he expects to take a decision on Mr. Ahmed's application.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Mustaq Ahmed was interviewed at the British embassy at Islamabad on 30 November 1987. The entry clearance officer wrote to the immigration service on 7 December 1987 requesting that Mr. Ahmed's fiancée be interviewed. Due to an oversight, no reminder was sent to the immigration service until 6 March 1989. The entry clearance officer has now taken a decision on this application, which is in the process of being conveyed to Mr. Ahmed.

Mr. Madden To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Mushtaq Ahmed, ref. GV100/4412, first made an entry clearance application to the British embassy in Islamabad to come to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: On 11 June 1986.

Hong Kong

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the annual report on Hong Kong will be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Eggar: I am laying the report before Parliament today. It is also being published today, and copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Consultation Papers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost in *(a)* real and *(b)* cash terms for each of the last five years to his Department and its predecessors of producing and distributing printed material pertaining to consultation exercises on matters within his present responsibilities as (i) Green Papers and (ii) White Papers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Green and White Papers are generally published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. The Department, like its predecessor the Department of Health

and Social Security, purchases the number of copies it requires of each paper for distribution internally, and to certain other recipients, from Her Majesty's Stationery Office. The information on the costs of such purchases can be produced only at disproportionate cost. Records of distribution are not retained and retrospective distribution costs cannot therefore be calculated.

Transitional Protection

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate, by area, how many people in the Northern region in receipt of transitional payments will have no overall increase in their incomes from pensions and social security benefits this year as a result of being placed on transitional payments since April 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available, but refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 6 March at column *445*.

Computerised Information (Confidentiality)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what consideration he has given to the potential risks of social security fraud under a computerised system; and if he will take measures to minimise these risks;

(2) if he will quantify the risks posed to individuals from computerisation of the Department's files;

(3) what measures he intends to take to protect, from unathorised internal or external entry, newly computerised elements of the social security network.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 15 December 1988 at columns *693-94*. I add that the introduction of new computerised systems for administering social security will substantially reduce the risk of certain types of social security fraud.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will quantify and qualify progress made in the provision of the computer network for his Department's social security files; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: This year's Public Expenditure White Paper (Cm. 615) sets out the progress made in the development of our huge computerisation programme, the operational strategy. We are happy to add another achievment to that list, the largest and most ambitious system yet, namely the local office project which deals with the processing of income support, which was successfully introduced in Bolton and Edinburgh, South local offices on 27 February.

Benefits (Monitoring)

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to announce the outcome of his monitoring of the benefit system for 16 and 17-year-olds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Our policy is the correct one for the vast majority of 16 and 17-year-olds; it would be irresponsible to provide a perverse incentive for people of this age to leave home needlessly. However, our monitoring and our discussions with representatives of the voluntary sector and the local authority associations reveal that a minority are facing real difficulties.

We recognise that young people on income support who, for good reason, have to live independently, will have extra and unavoidable expenses. We have therefore decided that these 16 and 17-year-olds should receive a higher personal allowance in income support. They will qualify for the allowance payable to young people between ages 18 and 24 which, from April, is £27·40 a week. The increase will be available to those genuinely estranged from their parents and those who would meet the qualifying conditions for income support which already apply during the child benefit extension period.

We will also introduce a similar relaxation in the rules governing housing benefit. Young people living independently can find that they are worse off taking a YTS place or job than on income support because of the effect of housing costs and expenses such as travel costs, associated with their training or work. We therefore plan to increase the housing benefit applicable amount for all 16 and 17-year-olds.

We also plan to introduce some further minor changes. First, we will wholly disregard payments made by local authorities under the Child Care Act 1980 and the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 to young people leaving care.

Secondly, we shall extend entitlement to income support during the child benefit extension period to young people genuinely estranged from their parents, in line with the proposal for increasing the level of benefit paid to this group.

Thirdly, 16 and 17-year-olds who seek emergency accommodation in night shelters need time to sort out their affairs before taking up a YTS place. These cases will automatically be considered by the Secretary of State under the severe hardship provisions.

Fourthly, young people who have become estranged from their families or who have had to leave home for some other good reason are usually in a very vulnerable condition. Officials who deal with their claims need to do so sensitively and I plan to introduce special training to help them to carry out their task in an understanding way.

The total cost of these changes to the income-related benefit rules will be some £3·7 million in a full year. subject to the necessary consultations with the Social Security advisory committee and the local authority associations, we intend introducing the changes this July, except that the new arrangement for people in emergency accommodation will take effect from April. I believe that this package of extra help for 16 and 17-year-olds is well targeted towards those most in need. Our wider policy, of encouraging such youngsters to stay in the parental home and, if they are not in education or employment, to take up the offer of a YTS place, remains appropriate for the vast majority of young people of this age.

Staff

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he proposes to begin to monitor customer service and efficiency at local social security offices following staff changes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Department monitors customer service and efficiency in two main ways. First, clearance times for claims and accuracy of payments are monitored on at least a monthly basis in order to remedy problems

when performance falls below target levels. At present 50 per cent. of local social security activity is monitored in this way and from April 1989 this will increase to 75 per cent. Secondly, the Department also monitors the quality of service in several other key areas such as caller waiting times, telephone service, correspondence, and interviewing, and additionally does local customer opinion sampling about service standards.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details by local office of changes in staffing for social security in the north-west region between March 1988 and now and planned cuts over the next 12 months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

Local office complements: North western region

Office	*1 March 1988*	*1 February 1989*
Accrington	122	103·71
Ashton	162	129·78
Barrow	120	113·18
Belle Vale	135	105·69
Birkenhead North	231	197·91
Birkenhead South	147	131·69
Blackburn	218	186·78
Blackpool North	245	215·79
Blackpool South	125	119·42
Bolton	287	248·87
Bootle	166	140·05
Breckfield	176	168·52
Burnley	236	199·16
Bury	219	206·77
Buxton	39	32·33
Carlisle	122	106·13
Central	107	97·07
Cheetham	165	139·10
Chester	140	120·25
Chorlton	127	113·14
City	123	103·62
Crewe	144	127·92
Crosby	127	107·86
Edge Hill	119	157·01
Ellesmere Port	104	83·76
Failsworth	183	149·78
Farnworth	129	110·11
Garston	113	93·22
Huyton	189	171·15
Hyde	141	123·27
Kendal	51	43·43
Kirkby	222	186·13
Lancaster	169	146·46
Leigh	157	125·85
Longsight	162	138·07
Macclesfield	72	60·47
Middleton	124	103·64
Norris Green	73	61·10
Northwick	103	57·28
Oldham	248	194·51
Openshaw	117	122·65
Penrith	37	31·54
Preston North	166	152·49
Preston South	157	137·91
Rochdale	183	154·55
Rossendale	78	68·96
Rusholme	182	146·69
St. Helens	265	208·23
Sale	197	158·15
Salford North	208	173·57
Salford South	152	119·05
Skelmersdale	141	127·39
Southport	128	107·47
Stockport North	163	136·33
Stockport South	144	125·58
Toxteth	196	147·77
Wallasey	151	124·41
Warrington	226	188·76
West Derby AO[1]	94	68·19
West Derby NIO[1]	50	—
Whitehaven	76	60·03
Widnes	194	157·99
Wigan	272	227·95
Wilmslow	51	47·24
Workington	84	72·16
Wythenshawe	192	149·32
Total	9,946	8,473·43

The numbers will continue until April 1989. Firm figures from April 1989 are not yet available.

[1] West Derby area office and West Derby national insurance office were combined to form the West Derby integrated local office on 11 January 1989.

Access Committee for England

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the Access Committee for England's future status and role.

Mr. Scott: This matter is under consideration.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Expenditure by the Department in 1988-89 is estimated as:

	£ million
Television advertising	3·281
Radio advertising	0·199
Newspaper advertising	1·999
Other promotional material	6·521

The budget for publicity in 1989-90 is £16·3 million.

Detailed decisions on expenditure by media have not yet been taken.

Income Support

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest figure for the total annual amount paid in income support to residents of private residential homes in Derbyshire.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90;

(2) what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Functions commonly associated with press and public relations are carried out by the Department's information division.

The latest figures for the combined information divisions of the Department of Health and the Department of Social Security are:

	Numbers
Staff presently employed	77
Full complement of staff including vacant posts	80

Note: 38 of the above staff are Information Officers.

The estimated expenditure for both Departments on press and public relations manpower and running costs during 1988-89 is £1·344 million.

Discussions on the proposed complements and budgets for 1989-90 are not yet complete.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in his Department; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Staff in post and vacancies in the Department's statistical branches at 1 March 1989 are shown in the table:

Grade	*Staff in Post*		*Vacancies*	
	Administrative	*Statistical*	*Administrative*	*Statistical*
3	—	0·33	—	—
5	—	2·00	—	—
6	—	—	—	—
7	1	9·00	—	1
Senior assistant statistician	—	2·00	—	—
Assistant statistician	—	2·00	—	—
Senior executive officer	2·00	—	—	—
Higher executive officer	11·00	—	1	—
Executive officer	19·50	—	3	—
Administrative officer	33·00	—	1	—
Administrative assistant	7·00	—	—	—
Personal secretary	2·00	—	—	—
Total	75·50	15·33	5	1

The staffing complement for 1989-90 is expected to be as shown above but some adjustments may be made following the split of DHSS.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No such fees have been identified and no such expenditure is planned for 1989-90.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Moore: The estimated expenditure from 1984-85 onwards on fees and expenses for management consultants on social security matters is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1984-85	0·959
1985-86	1·722
1986-87	0·959
1987-88	1·013
1988-89	1·020

The figures are approximate since expenditure up to and including the 1988-89 financial year is from a joint Health and Social Security budget. In some cases expenditure has been apportioned where consultants have been engaged on both health and social security matters. The figures include some computer consultancy where this cannot be separately identified.

The information for years prior to 1984-85 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Approved Training (Refusal)

Ms. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many young people in Halifax have been referred to an adjudication officer for consideration of refusal of approved training.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The numbers of claims referred to the adjudication office covering the Halifax area for consideration of refusal of approved training during 1988 were as follows:

		Decision on refusal or premature termination of approved training	
Quarter ended	*Claims referred to adjudication officer*	*Disallowed*	*Allowed*
31 March	29	11	18
30 June	27	13	14
30 September	20	12	8
31 December	7	5	2

Note: Figures refer to the number of claims, rather than to the number of individuals claiming. Some individuals may have had more than one claim referred for adjudication.
Source: 100 per cent. count of adjudication officer decisions.

Severe Hardship Rule

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many young people have been refused benefit after applying to him or his officers under the severe hardship rule.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: During the period 12 September 1988, when general entitlement to income support was withdrawn from 16 and 17-year-olds, to 3 March 1989, a total of 5,127 decisions have been made under the Secretary of State's discretionary power to avoid "severe hardship". A direction to enable income support to be paid was refused in 1,799 instances. These figures relate to the number of decisions made, not to the number of young people involved. Some young people have made more than one application.

Income Support

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many young people who had been in local authority care during the previous 24 months have lost entitlement to income support since September 1988 *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in Halifax and *(c)* in Yorkshire.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants currently placed in board and lodging accommodation by local authorities and entitled to income support will have to make a second, separate, claim for living expenses from local Department of Social Security offices and will have to start claiming money for their housing costs from local authority housing benefits sections after April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Claimants in this group already recieving income support will not have to make a new claim for income support in April. Local offices are sending them the necessary forms to claim housing benefit from April. The number placed in board and lodging by local authorities is not available.

PRIVY COUNCIL

Visitorial Jurisdiction

Mr. Barry Porter: To ask the Lord President of the Council, in exercising visitorial jurisdiction over universities, in connection with petitioners referred to him, what procedures are adopted; whether there are any plans to change the procedures; to what categories of persons petitions are delegated before any decision is promulgated; how many petitions have been referred to him since 1979, with what type of matters, breaking the answer down between substantive and procedural matters, these petitions dealt; what procedure is adopted for disseminating the results of visitorial decisions amongst universities; how many visitorial decisions have been referred to the court for review since 1979; and what were the results.

Mr. Wakeham: The procedure adopted is informal and matched to the circumstances of the individual case. Where it appears that the visitor has jurisdiction, the process begins by obtaining the university's comments on the petition and, where appropriate, giving an opportunity to the petitioner to comment on the observations of the university. The opportunity is sometimes given to the parties to appear at an oral hearing.

There are no plans to change the procedures themselves, except that, under the Education Reform Act 1988, when the relevant provision comes into force, matters relating to the employment of staff will no longer fall within the visitor's jurisdiction.

The decision in relation to petitions for which the visitor has jurisdiction is always taken by the Lord President personally and no decision is delegated to another person.

The number of petitions submitted since 1979 in respect of universities for which the Lord President exercises responsibility is 65.

The majority (42) were complaints by students about various aspects of their academic assessment, 11 concerned complaints by academic staff about their employment or dismissal, six concerned complaints by students about disciplinary proceedings and the remainder concerned various matters relating to the Government or administration of the university.

The decisions are normally disclosed only to the parties and are not disseminated to other universities.

Two decisions have been the subject of applications to the courts for judicial review. One such application was dismissed by a Master of the High Court and the other by the Court of Appeal.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Privy Council Office on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

(a), *(b)* and *(d)* Nil.

(c) £3,710 will have been spent in 1988-89 on items published in the official gazettes; and the estimated figure for such expenditure in 1989-90 is £4,000.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Privy Council Office; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Wakeham: Nil.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council what were the total fees paid out by the Privy Council Office to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Wakeham: None.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by the Privy Council Office on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Wakeham: *(a)* £1,017; *(b)* Approximately £1,200.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether any staff will be employed in press or public relations roles in the office of the Privy Council in 1989-90.

Mr. Wakeham: I have no plans to employ such staff.

SCOTLAND

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Scottish Office on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Rifkind: The latest estimates of expenditure by the Scottish Office on television, radio and newspaper advertising and printed and other material in the current financial year are £257,500, £34,300, £470,600 and £1·291 million respectively. These figures do not include the running costs of the Scottish Information Office.

Proposed provision for expenditure by the Scottish Office on information campaigns in 1989-90 is £2·9 million. Detailed decisions on expenditure by media have not yet been taken.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Scottish Office; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind: The figures for the Scottish Office are:

	Staff in post at 1 March 1989	*Vacant posts*	*Proposed staff 1989-90*
Professional grades:			
Grade 5	2	—	2
Grade 7	15	1	16
Assistant/senior assistant statistician	8	3	13
Administrative grades:			
Higher executive officer	9	—	9
Executive officer	25	1	26
Administrative officer	48	—	47
Administrative assistant	22	—	22
Personal secretary	2	—	2
Total	131	5	137

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Lang: No expenditure was incurred between the years 1979-80 and 1986-87 inclusive. In 1987-88, expenditure of £615,648 was incurred on advisers' fees relating to the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in Scotland. In 1988-89, the expected outturn expenditure in respect of electricity privatisation and of privatisation of the Scottish Bus Group is around £2 million. The provision for 1989-90 will be contained in the supply estimates to be published on 14 March.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Rifkind: The following information on spending on management consultancy fees is readily available:

	£
[1]1984-85	47,512
1985-86	491,864
1986-87	569,038
1987-88	198,338
[2]1988-89	944,457

[1] The 1984-85 figure relates only to contracts let during the last quarter of the year: comprehensive figures for the full year are not held centrally.
[2] Estimated figure.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of the Scottish Office; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind: At 1 March 1989, the number of staff in post in the information officer grades in the Scottish Information Office was 29. At that date there were two vacancies. There are no proposed changes in staffing levels for 1989-90.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind: The estimated running costs of the Scottish Information Office for 1988-89 are £1·2 million. The estimated expenditure for 1989-90 is £1·3 million. These figures exclude expenditure on information campaigns.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of Forestry Commission employees in the parish of Glenelg, Highland region, in 1986 and 1988, respectively.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Forestry Commission had nine employees in the parish of Glenelg in both March 1986 and March 1988.

Legal Profession

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish his consultation paper on the legal profession in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I have today published my consultation paper "The Legal Profession in Scotland", and have placed copies in the Library. Copies have also been issued to a range of interests, and I look forward to receiving comments on the paper by 13 June.

Council House Sales

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the annual cost to date of the publicity material promoting the right to buy council houses and flats.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 March 1989]:* The information requested is set out in the table.

Year	*£*
1980	56,000
1981	75,000
1982	62,000
1984	100,000
1985	150,000
1987	120,000

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many council properties have been sold to council house tenants in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole in each of the past five years; and what proportion of the total stock of council properties in *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* these sales represent in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 March 1989]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Sales to council house tenants in Inverclyde, Strathclyde and Scotland 1984-1988

	Number of sales	*Percentage of stock sold*[1]
1984		
Inverclyde	104	0·5
Strathclyde	2,848	0·6
Scotland	11,860	1·4
1985		
Inverclyde	293	1·5
Strathclyde	3,526	0·8
Scotland	10,969	1·3
1986		
Inverclyde	224	1·2
Strathclyde	4,026	0·9
Scotland	10,306	1·2
1987		
Inverclyde	216	1·2
Strathclyde	5,900	1·3
Scotland	13,813	1·6
1988		
Inverclyde	281	1·5
Strathclyde	[2]10,425	2·4
Scotland	[3]21,785	2·6

[1] Stock at 30 September of previous year used in calculation.
[2] Returns for Eastwood, Kyle & Carrick and Motherwell outstanding for October-December.
[3] Returns for 1988 are outstanding.
Source: SDD S3 and Rent Returns.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the number of repossessions of properties purchased by ex-council house tenants who have exercised their right to buy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 March 1989]:* This information is not collected centrally.

Inverclyde Royal Hospital

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is *(a)* the total waiting list, *(b)* the longest time any patient had to wait and *(c)* the numbers waiting by number of months' wait for ear, nose and throat department at the Inverclyde royal hospital over the last four years for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 10 March 1989]:* The information available is set out in the tables.

(a) In-patient waiting list as at 31 March

	Numbers
1985	329
1986	358
1987	462
1988	[1]253

(b) The longest waiting time for those discharged during the year

Year	*Longest waiting time (months)*	*Mean waiting time (months)*
1984	36·4	3·8
1985	46·5	3·6
1986	36·8	3·0
1987	54·4	3·5

(c) Number of People on the waiting list by time spent on the waiting list at 31 March 1988[1]

	Number
Under three months	104
Three months to six months	50
Six months to nine months	38
Nine months to one year	25
One year to two years	31
Over two years	5
Total	253

[1] The altered statistical system on which these figures are collected is explained in ISD statistical bulletin 1/88.

This information is not available for earlier years and is not collected for deferred or repeat admissions.

FSAs (Trees)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names of all landowners in the Caithness and Sutherland region who have received any form of Government grant for not planting commercial trees in areas deemed to be environmentally sensitive.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have been asked to reply. This information is treated as a confidential matter between the owners and occupiers of the land concerned and the Nature Conservancy Council. It is not our policy to disclose details.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of the Lord Chancellor's Department; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

The Attorney-General: At present, there are six staff employed in the press office of the Lord Chancellor's Department. There are no vacancies at present and no current plans to increase the complement.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Lord Chancellor's Department; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

The Attorney-General: The number of staff by grade presently employed in the statistics branch of the Lord Chancellor's Department, together with the full complement, are as follows. The unfilled post has only been vacant since 1 March 1989. No changes in complement are proposed for 1989-90.

Grade of Staff	*In post March 1989*	*Complement 1989-89*
Grade 7/statistician	1	1
Assistant/senior assistant statistician	1	1
Higher executive officer	1	1
Executive officer	2	3
Administrative officer	4	4
Administrative assistant	2	2

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by the Lord Chancellor's Department on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

The Attorney-General: The estimated expenditure by the Lord Chancellor's Department on press and public relations is £35,000 excluding staff costs. The budget for 1989-90 is £41,800.

Legal Aid

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Attorney-General if he will review the legal aid provision whereby a litigant may win damages from which the legal profession is entitled to deduct defence costs if the defendant fails to pay.

The Attorney-General: The legal aid authorities are required by law to retain, from any damages won by a legally aided plaintiff, an amount equal to that paid out of the legal aid fund in respect of the plaintiff's costs, if the defendant does not pay these costs. These costs include the solicitors' charges for conducting the case, barristers' and expert witnesses' fees and court fees. The Lord Chancellor does not propose to review this provision.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Lord Chancellor's Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

The Attorney-General: The figures for the Lord Chancellor's Department, excluding staff costs, are as follows:

	Estimated expenditure	
	1988-89 £	*1989-90* £
Television advertising	Nil	Nil
Radio advertising	Nil	Nil
Newspaper advertising	15,000	15,000
Other promotional material	45,000	35,000

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Law Officers in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

The Attorney-General: None.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General what were the total fees paid out by the Lord Chancellor's Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

The Attorney-General: On the information available, the cost to the Lord Chancellor's Department of employing management consultants for each financial year from 1984-85 to date is as follows:

	£
1984-85	nil
1985-86	221,000
1986-87	473,837
1987-88	134,255
1988-89	205,882

The figures exclude computer consultancy. Figures for 1979-80 to 1983-84 could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

WALES

Artificial Limb and Appliance Service

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what developments have taken place in the provision of limb fitting centres in north Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the location of wheelchair assessment centres in Wales; if he has any plans to expand this provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Since 1 April 1988, management and operational responsibility for the artificial limb and appliance service in Wales has rested with the Welsh Health Common Services Authority. I have asked the general manager of the authority to respond directly to these inquiries.

Medical Treatment (Travel)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to reduce the need for patients from Wales to travel long distances to England for medical treatment; what effect the White Paper proposals will have on this travelling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Patterns of patient referral for treatment or diagnosis are only in part related to the location of the relevant services. Clinical and patient choice also influence such decisions. In the case of some specialised procedures, notably those designated as regional or supraregional services, the catchment population is necessarily so large or the availability of the specialist expertise so limited that only a small number of centres have been established. Although some of these are in Wales, where they are not it is desirable to refer Welsh patients to centres in England, in the same way as patients in England are sometimes referred to Wales.

The Welsh Office keeps under review the access which Welsh patients have to specialist health care services. As a result in-patient services are being expanded to improve patient access. Examples include renal dialysis, radiotherapy and oncology in south Wales, medical genetics, bone marrow transplantation and cardiac services. A report on the future development of radiotherapy and oncology services for patients in north Wales is expected shortly.

The arrangements for the management of regional services in Wales following the publication of the White Paper "Working for Patients" will be decided in consultation with district health authorities, within the Department's policy of developing in Wales as full a range of health services as is consistent with the clinical viability of the units concerned.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Welsh Office; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Walker: Current staffing levels within my Department's economic and statistical services division is shown in the following table:

As at 1 February 1989

	Staff in post	*Complement*
Professional Posts		
Senior economic adviser (grade 5)	1·0	1·0
Chief statistician (grade 5)	1·0	1·0
Statistician (grade 6)	1·0	1·0
Statistician (grade 7)	11·0	11·0
Principal research officer (grade 7)	1·5	1·5
Economic adviser (grade 7)	1·0	1·0
Senior assistant statistician	6·0	8·5
Assistant statistician	1·0	1·0
Total professional posts	23·5	26·0
Administrative posts		
Higher executive officer	1·0	—
Executive officer	16·0	16·5
Administrative officer	19·0	21·5
Administrative assistant	7·5	5·0
Personal secretary	2·0	2·0
Total administrative staff	45·5	45·0
Grand total	69·0	71·0

Staffing levels for 1989-90 will be determined in the light of running cost budgets.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Walker: All expenditure associated with privatisation has, up until 1988-89, been administered by the Departments of Industry, Transport, Energy and the Environment. An announcement in respect of any costs borne by the Welsh Office in connection with the privatisation of the water industry, will be made in due course.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by the Welsh Office on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Walker: The estimated expenditure on press and public relations (inclusive of staff and press cutting service but excluding media advertising and promotional material) for 1988-89 is £469,000. The estimated budget for 1989-90 is £487,000.

Benzodiazepines

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking or contemplating to reduce the number of people in Wales addicted to benzodiazepines.

Mr. Grist: The central initiative for combating drug misuse funded by the Department makes its own contribution to dealing with these problems. We hope to be in a position to make an announcement on funding for the coming financial year soon. Additionally, the chairman of the Welsh Medical Committee wrote to all general medical practitioners in Wales last year, to draw their attention to the views of the Welsh Committee on Drug Misuse about the prescribing of benzodiazepines.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the trend in the prescribing of benzodiazepines.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave on 31 January at column *96*.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will commission research to discover the number of people in Wales addicted to benzodiazepines.

Mr. Grist: If a suitable research proposal were put to the Department, then it would certainly be given careful consideration. The Welsh Committee on Drug Misuse is presently examining ways of collecting reliable statistical data on the incidence and prevalence of drug misuse in Wales. Their work may help to establish how many people in the Principality have problems associated with the use of benzodiazepines.

Childbirth

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for the years 1987 and 1988 the estimated percentages of women delivering in Wales whose deliveries were *(a)* spontaneous including abnormal presentation of head and breech spontaneous, *(b)* instrumental including forceps, vacuum and for breech extraction, *(c)* caesarean section and *(d)* other unspecified means.

Mr. Grist: The information requested for 1987 is given in the following table. Information for 1988 is not yet available.

Estimated percentages of deliveries by specified mode of delivery: Wales

Mode of delivery	*1987 Per cent.*
Spontaneous including abnormal presentation of head and breech spontaneous	79·6
Instrumental—forceps, vacuum and breech extraction	8·2
Caesarean section	12·2

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for the years 1987 and 1988 the estimated percentages of women delivering in Wales *(a)* whose labours were induced, *(b)* whose labours were of spontaneous onset and *(c)* who had elective caesarean sections.

Mr. Grist: The available information is given in the following table. Information for 1988 is not yet available.

Estimated percentages of deliveries by type of onset of labour: Wales

Type of onset of Labour	*1987 per cent.*
Spontaneous onset and induced[1]	94
Elective caesarian section	6

[1] Separate figures are not shown because the available information is unreliable.

Domestic Animals (Poisoning)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department has received about recent cases of poisoning of domestic animals at Penpedairheol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Two incidents involving the deaths of dogs in Penpedairheol and Cefn Hengoed, Mid Glamorgan have been brought to my Department's attention. Laboratory tests have confirmed the presence of strychnine in the stomach of one of the dogs. The result of another sample is awaited. The police are investigating.

Pesticides

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each of the last five years the number of cases in Wales of abuse of pesticides involving strychnine and if he will identify the domestic farm and wild animal species involved.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of incidents in Wales of abuse of pesticides involving strychnine, identified by the Ministry of Agriculture's wildlife incident investigation service were as follows:

	Number of incidents	*Species involved*
1984	8	7 dogs, magpie, duck
1985	none	—
1986	4	2 dogs, fox, buzzard
1987	3	3 dogs
1988	3	3 dogs, magpie, buzzard

Sewage Treatment

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of sewage treatment works in the Welsh water authority area which discharge effluent below the required standard.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 15 December 1988 at columns 663-7.

PRIME MINISTER

Ozone Layer

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will place a copy of her address to the conference on saving the ozone layer in the Library.

The Prime Minister: A copy has been placed in the Library.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister, if, during the conference on saving the ozone layer held in London on 5 and 6 March, she had an opportunity to discuss with the official Brazilian representative the present destruction of the Amazonian rain forest, in connection with damage to the ozone layer.

The Prime Minister: No.

"Peace and Security"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will obtain for the Library of No. 10 Downing street a copy of "Peace and Security" edited by Susan Forrester.

The Prime Minister: No.

United Nations Environment Programme

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to initiate an international campaign to achieve a doubling of the funding of the United Nations environment programme.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom's contribution to the voluntary fund of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is to be more than doubled to £3 million. At UNEP's governing council in May we will be calling on those nations that can afford it to make similar increases.

"The Ark Manifesto"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she has received a copy of the document "The Ark Manifesto".

The Prime Minister: Not so far as I am aware.

"The Time . . . The Place"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if she will seek to obtain for the Library at No. 10 Downing street a recording and transcript of the television programme entitled, "The Time . . . The Place", broadcast on 3 March.

The Prime Minister: No.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in her office; if she will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if she will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90;

(2) if she will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade in the statistical divisions in the Cabinet Office; if she will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if she will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

The Prime Minister: The information available relates to the Central Statistical Office, part of the Cabinet Office. The following table shows complement and number of staff in post at 1 April 1988 and complement for 1 April 1989.

Staff in the CSO

Grade	*1 April 1988*		*1 April 1989*
	complement	*staff in post*	*complement*
Members of statistician group			
1A	1·0	1·0	1·0
3	3·0	3·0	3·0
5	8·0	9·0	8·0
7	27·0	25·0	28·0
Senior assistant statistician	10·0	6·0	7·0
Assistant statistician	3·0	3·0	4·0
Cadet statistician[1]	7·0	6·0	6·0
Members of administration and other groups[2]			
5	1·0	1·0	1·0
7	4·0	4·0	4·0
Senior executive officer	8·0	8·0	7·0
Higher executive officer	21·0	20·0	20·5
Executive officer	37·0	31·0	36·5
Administrative officer	21·0	21·0	25·0
Senior personal secretary	1·0	1·0	2·0
Personal secretary	11·5	11·0	10·5
Chief draughtsman	1·0	1·0	1·0
Senior draughtsman[3]	2·0	2·0	1·0
Higher draughtsman[4]	2·0	2·0	1·0
Draughtsman[5]	7·0	5·0	7·0
Information officer	1·0	1·0	1·0
	175·5	160·0	174·5

[1] Cadet statisticians are employed to undertake postgraduate training for the Government statistical service and do not therefore contribute directly to the work of the CSO.
[2] Includes all other non-statistician group staff.
[3] Higher graphics officer from 1 April 1989.
[4] Map and chart officer from 1 April 1989.
[5] Graphics officer from 1 April 1989.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of her office; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

The Prime Minister: Including support staff, eight people are presently employed in 10 Downing street on press and public relations activities. There are no vacancies at present. The proposed complement for 1989-90 is eight.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of the Cabinet Office; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

The Prime Minister: Eighteen staff are presently employed by the Cabinet Office, including the Central Statistical Office, the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service and 10 Downing street on press and public relations activities. There are no vacancies. The proposed complement for 1989-90 is 18.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by the Cabinet Office on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

The Prime Minister: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The latest estimate of expenditure on press and public relations in 1988-89 by the Cabinet Office, including 10 Downing street, the Central Statistical Office and the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service, as well as on such services provided to the Office of Arts and Libraries, is £525,000. The budget for 1989-90 for these services is £578,500.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by No. 10 Downing street on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

The Prime Minister: The latest estimate of total expenditure by 10 Downing street on press and public relations in 1988-89 is £312,530. The budget for 1989-90 is £346,520.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by her office on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

The Prime Minister: My office has incurred no expenditure on advertising and promotional material in the current year and there are no plans for such expenditure in 1989-90.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Cabinet Office on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

The Prime Minister: The Cabinet Office does not expect to incur any expenditure on promotional advertising on television, radio or in newspapers in 1988-89 and 1989-90. The latest estimate of expenditure on other promotional material in 1988-89 by the Cabinet Office, including the Central Statistical Office and the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service, as well as on such services provided to the Office of Arts and Libraries, is £9,500. The equivalent budget for 1989-90 is £15,000.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

The Prime Minister: There has been no expenditure on fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service, or its immediate predecessor Department, the Management and Personnel Office, and no expenditure is planned for 1989-90.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what were the total fees paid out by the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

The Prime Minister: The expenditure by the Cabinet Office (including, from its creation on 1 October 1987, the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service) on management and computer consultancies in the financial years from 1983-84 is as follows:

	£
1983-84	152,000
1984-85	423,818
1985-86	329,334
1986-87	505,092
1987-88	417,778
[1]1988-89	439,806

[1] Estimate.

Some 21 per cent. of the estimated expenditure in 1988-89 is on management consultancies and 79 per cent. on computer consultancies. The figures for earlier years cannot be separated except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what were the total fees paid out by her office to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

The Prime Minister: There has been no expenditure by my office on fees to management consultants since 1979-80 and none is planned for the rest of this year.

CIVIL SERVICE

Next Steps

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement on progress in the implementation of next steps.

Mr. Luce: Since I last reported to the House, on 1 February, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that he has concluded that the Central Office of Information should become a next steps agency.

THE ARTS

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Office of Arts and Libraries on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by the Prime Minister to his corresponding question in respect of the Cabinet Office.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of the Office of Arts and Libraries; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90;

(2) what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by the Office of Arts and Libraries on press and public relations during 1988-89, and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Luce: The Office of Arts and Libraries is serviced by the press office of the Cabinet Office. I therefore refer

the hon. Member to the replies given today by the Prime Minister to his corresponding questions in respect of the Cabinet Office.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Office of Arts and Libraries; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Luce: The Office of Arts and Libraries has no staff in statistical divisions or posts. The present complement is 60 administrative and curatorial posts, and the details are as follows:

Administrative

Grade (level)	*Complement*
2 (Deputy Secretary)	1
5 (Assistant Secretary)	4
6 (Senior Principal)	1
7 (Principal)	11
Senior Executive Officer	1
Higher Executive Officer	9
Administration Trainee	1
Executive Officer	10
Administrative Officer	8
Administrative Assistant	4
Senior Personal Secretary	1
Personal Secretary	4
Total	55

Curatorial

Curator E	1
Curator G	4
Total	5

The office currently has vacancies for one administrative officer and one administrative assistant. The staff complement for 1989-90 is also 60.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by the Office of Arts and Libraries in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Luce: None Sir.

Trustees

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Minister of the Arts whether he will set up an independent review into the suitability of the trustees who are selected by him for the various institutional boards.

Mr. Luce: The trustees whom I appoint to the boards of various arts bodies are appointed for their knowledge and experience in a number of fields. They make a most valuable contribution to the management and work of those institutions. I am grateful to the trustees of all OAL-sponsored bodies, by whomever appointed, for their trusteeship and public service.

DEFENCE

Select Committee Recommendations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted, by his Department since June 1987.

Mr. Younger: Since June 1987, the House of Commons Defence Committee has published the following reports, copies of which are available in the Library of the House:

Session 1987-88

First Report—Ethnic Monitoring and the Armed Forces (HC 391)
Second Report—Business Appointments (HC 392)
Third Report—The Progress of the Trident Programme (HC 422)
Fourth Report—The Defence Requirement for Merchant Shipping and Civil Aircraft (HC 476)
Fifth Report—The Procurement of Major Defence Equipment (HC 431)
Sixth Report—The Future Size and Role of the Royal Navy's Surface Fleet (HC 309)
Seventh Report—Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988 (HC 495)
Eighth Report—British Forces in Belize (HC 624)
Ninth Report—Business Appointments (HC 622)

Session 1988-89

First Report—The Future of the Brigade of Gurkhas (HC 68)

The following Government Responses have been published in the form of a Command Paper:

CM 585 (responding to HC 392 and HC 622)
CM 501 (responding to HC 431)
CM 443 (responding to HC 309)

Copies of these are available in the Library of the House.

The Government are still considering their response to the Committee's first report (Session 1988-89) on the future of the Brigade of Gurkhas. In all other cases, where a Government response has been required, this has been made direct to the chairman of the House of Commons Defence Committee. The Committee has published the Government's responses in the following cases:

Session 1987-88

Second Special Report—Government reply to the First Report dated 6th July 1988 (HC 584)
Third Special Report—Government reply to the Third and Fourth Reports dated 26th October 1988 (HC 674).

Drinking Water

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the drinking water supply in his Department's head office building meets the European Economic Community standard.

Mr. Neubert: This building is supplied with water by Thames Water and since no drinking water is stored on the premises PSA does not take samples for analysis unless there is reason to suspect the quality of water. I am advised by Thames Water that in 1988 the supply generally complied with the EC directive.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending;

(2) what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the armed forces on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This information is not held centrally. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Computer Hacking

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to ensure the security of British and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation defence computers in the light of the KGB hacking activity in West Germany and the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The activities of the hackers in West Germany are being investigated. If this investigation indicates an increase in the threat to, or vulnerability of, British or NATO defence computer systems sufficient to warrant changes in our security policy, we will take the appropriate action to ensure that MOD information handled by these systems is adequately protected.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the armed forces; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are no statistical divisions in the armed forces.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in his Department; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiate between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Sainsbury: The staff complements by grade in Ministry of Defence statistical divisions as at 1 March 1989 is as follows:

Grade	Complement	Currrent vacancies
Grade 3	0	0
Grade 4[1]	1	0
Grade 5—Chief Statistician[1]	2	0
Grade 6[1]	1	0
Grade 7—Administration	0	0
Grade 7—Statistician[1]	25	4
PSO	0	0
SSO	0	0
SEO	1	0
HEO—Administration	16	2
HEO—ADP	6	0
HSO	1	0
RO2	0	0
SO	0	0
EO—Administration	35	3
EO—ADP	17	1
AS/SAS[1]	10	1
AO	56	9
AA	18	6
SPS	0	0
PS	3	0
Reprographic Operator	1	0
SDP	0	0
DP	0	0
Total	193	26

[1] Statistical posts.

As at 1 March 1989 there were also 14 service men employed in statistical divisions. It is not anticipated that there will be any significant changes in staffing complements for 1989-90.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Sainsbury: The fees paid out by my Department to outside organisations in respect of privatisation relate solely to the sale of Royal Ordnance plc in April 1987. These fees amounted to £1·9 million and were for work carried out between 1 January 1985 and completion of the sale.

Management Consultants'

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Sainsbury: Fees paid to management consultants engaged centrally by the Ministry of Defence for the years 1984 to 1989 are as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	0·604
1985-86	1·787
1986-87	6·203
1987-88	5·140
1988-89	[1]3·673

[1] Estimated expenditure.

Figures for earlier years cannot be produced without disproportionate effort.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, in the press and public relations of the armed forces; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90;

(2) what the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Sainsbury: There is a total of 217 posts on the strength of the Defence public relations staffs. These include staff in single service headquarters as well as in joint headquarters and in central staffs in the Ministry of Defence. Latest available figures show there to be 213 staff in post and four vacancies.

The proposed complement for 1989-90 is 221.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89, and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90;

(2) what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by the armed forces on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence expects to spend £2,419,000 on press and public relations in 1988-89. This comprises expenditure on films, exhibitions, publications and equipment, and covers expenditure on single-service activities as well as on central defence work. In addition, the estimated staff costs are £4,962,000.

The estimated figures for 1989-90 are £2,784,000 and £5,210,000 respectively.

Trident

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to place the order for the fourth Trident submarine.

Mr. Sainsbury: The formal response from Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd to the tender invitation for the construction of SSBN07 was received by my Department on 19 February, and it is planned to place the order for the submarine later this year. Both the tender and the order for SSBN08 will follow in due course.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the setting up of training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Cope: In launching training and enterprise councils on 10 March the Prime Minister underlined the need for and the benefits of this important initiative which will re-shape the way this country approaches training and help for growing business.

We have had already an excellent response to our proposals from business leaders throughout the country. Groups are even now preparing their applications to become training and enterprise councils and I shall award the first development contracts in early July.

The first training and enterprise councils will be operational in early 1990.

Training (Expenditure)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the funds spent by employers on training in 1986-87 was spent on training women, and how much was spent on child care provision allowing (i) parents and (ii) women to attend training.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available.

Child Care Facilities

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the provision of child care facilities is one of the stringent criteria which he states in the White Paper. "Employment for the 1990s", every organisation that participates in the youth training schemes has to satisfy to secure approved training organisation status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The provision of child care facilities is not one of the criteria used in assessing suitability for YTS approved training organisation status and there are no plans to introduce such a criteria.

Retail Prices Index

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the components of the retail prices index of the member states of the European Community.

Mr. Lee: The prices index for the European Community is a simple average of the consumer price indices produced by individual member states. In each case the coveragte of goods and services in the national index conforms broadly to the classification of household consumption established by the Community's Statistical Office (the European System of Ingegrated Economic Accounts, ESA), the main components of which are:

Food, beverages and tobacco.
Clothing and footwear
Gross rent, fuel and power.
Furniture, furnishings and household equipment and operation.
Medical Care and health expenses.
Transport and communication.
Recreation, entertainment, education and cultural services.
Miscellaneous goods and services.

However, the precise definition of the component categories differs from one country to another. In particular, in the "gross rent" category most of the national indices include imputed rents to represent the "shelter" costs faced by owner-occupiers, whereas the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland include mortgage interest payments for this purpose.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to whether any country other than the United Kingdom includes mortgage interest payments in their retail prices index.

Mr. Lee: Mortgage interest payments are included in the consumer price indices of the Republic of Ireland, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and a number of smaller countries throughout the world.

Hotels

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of hotels of over 15 bedrooms in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Scotland in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Lee: The national tourist boards' records currently show 5,376 hotels with more than 15 bedrooms in England, 530 in Wales and 1,098 in Scotland. Comparable figures over a period of years are not available.

European Tourism Year

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to promote European Tourism Year in 1990 *(a)* nationally and *(b)* on the south coast.

Mr. Lee: In conjunction with the British Tourist Authority, my Department is actively promoting the objectives of the Year. The British Tourist Authority is organising a conference to launch the idea to industry representatives and to encourage their participation in the Year. This will be held on 25 May. It is intended that the Year will highlight the importance of the tourism industry throughout the country including the south coast.

Income Support (Claims)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the computer paying unemployment benefit is programmed to draw to the attention of those claimants whose benefit is about to expire the need to make a separate claim for income support.

Mr. Lee: The unemployment benefit computer is programmed to notify claimants automatically of their right to claim income support. A letter is normally sent two weeks before entitlement to unemployment benefit is due to exhaust allowing a claim for income support to be made before payment stops.

Working Hours

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to advise unemployment benefit offices of the decision R(U)5/88: requalification for UB—hours of work of school teachers; and what steps he proposes to take to identify other part-time workers whose contract of employment requires hours of service or availability that are not directly remunerated.

Mr. Lee: All unemployment benefit offices were given written notice of the implications of R(U)5/88 (previously CU/009/1986) in March 1988. These instructions were subsequently updated in October 1988 and continue to apply.

The decision specifically applied to part-time teachers and their contractual arrangements. It has no implications for other groups of part-time workers. There are no plans at present to change the rules applying to other groups.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television

advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Cope: The latest estimated spending as requested for 1988-89 is as follows:

Expenditure

£ million

TV	*Radio*	*Press*	*Other*	*Total*
3·7	0·5	3·9	9·7	17·8

Note: This is the first year in which employment service expenditure is included. Training Agency expenditure is not included.

Detailed decisions on expenditure by media for 1989-90 have not yet been taken.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Manpower Services Commission on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Cope: The latest estimated spending by the Training Agency (formerly MSC) as requested for 1988-89 is as follows:

Advertising

	£ million
Television	12·6
Radio	—
Press[1]	6·5
Other	9·2
Total	28·3

[1] Includes a small amount of radio advertising. This cannot be identified separately.

Detailed decisions on expenditure by media for 1989-90 have not yet been taken.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of the Manpower Services Commission; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Cope: The number of staff presently employed in the Training Agency (formerly MSC) press and public relations office is nine. There are no posts vacant.

Detailed decisions on the complement for 1989-90 have not yet been taken.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Cope: Sixty people are presently employed, with five posts vacant. The proposed complement for 1989-90 is 68.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89, and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Cope: The estimated expenditure by the Department of Employment on press and public relations for 1988-89 is £1·458 million. The budget for 1989-90 is £1·627 million. The figures represent general administrative expenditure relating to costs for staff, accommodation and for regional services.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by the Manpower Services Commission on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Cope: The estimated expenditure for 1988-89 by the Training Agency (formerly MSC) on press and public relations is £715,000.

Detailed decisions on expenditure for 1989-90 have not been taken.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Cope: There were no fees paid to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by my Department in the financial years 1979-80 to 1987-88 inclusive.

Fees to the value of £526,212 have been incurred in 1988-89.

No firm estimates for 1989-90 are yet available.

Working Women

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the annual percentage change in the number of full-time working women since 1979.

Mr. Lee: Between September 1979 and September 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, the annual percentage changes in the female full-time work force in employment in Great Britain were as follows:

September of each year
Percentage change since preceding year

	Per cent.
1980	−3
1981	−4
1982	−2
1983	+1
1984	+3
1985	+1
1986	+1
1987	+4
1988	+5

The estimates have been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self employed, Her Majesty's Forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes. In classifying the work force in employment between full and part time, all programme participants are counted as in part-time employment.

Bridging Allowance

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people in Halifax have applied for bridging allowance since September 1988.

Mr. Cope: As at 9 February the benefit-related payment system shows that 289 young people had received bridging allowance in Halifax since September 1988. There may also be a very small number who received clerical payments.

New Businesses

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new businesses were registered for value added tax during 1988 in the Wyre Forest constituency.

Mr. Cope: I regret that the information requested is not available.

16 and 17-year-olds (Benefits)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds in Halifax have lost benefits since September 1988 because they are unemployed or have been unable to take advantage of their guaranteed YTS place.

Mr. Cope: The guaranteed offer of a YTS place to all 16 and 17-year-olds not in full-time education or employment means that there is now no need for young people to be unemployed. I am satisfied that the Training Agency has more than sufficient YTS places available in Halifax for those who apply for one.

Restaurants

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of restaurants categorised as such in each of the last 10 years in *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Lee: The information available relates to numbers of businesses, which may include more than one individual restaurant. For the years 1980 to 1986 the table below shows the available estimates for numbers of businesses in Great Britain which were classified as restaurants, snack bars, cafes, etc., supplying food for consumption on the premises only. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

	Number of businesses
1980	11,512
1981	11,735
1982	11,817
1983	12,119
1984	12,692
1985	13,362
1986	14,348

NATIONAL FINANCE

Short Sea Trades

70. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest available estimate of the fiscal advantages available to shipowners in the short sea trades in *(a)* West Germany, *(b)* the Netherlands and *(c)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am advised that in the Federal Republic of Germany shipping companies can benefit from delayed taxation of profits carried forward from the sale of a vessel. Similar arrangements apply in the Netherlands. These are generalised provisions not specific to shipping.

United Kingdom shipowners benefit from relatively low rates of United Kingdom taxation and generous writing down allowances. In addition investment in shipping attracts favourable treatment in the timing of depreciation allowances and in the business expansion scheme.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Bright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been paid in corporation tax in the United Kingdom by lower rate small companies in each of the last five fiscal years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates of mainstream corporation tax paid at the small companies rate are as follows:

	£ billion
1983-84	0·4
1984-85	0·5
1985-86	0·6
1986-87	0·7
1987-88	[1]0·8

[1] Provisional.

Over the same period, total receipts of mainstream corporation tax are estimated to have risen from £4·1 billion to £10·8 billion.

Computerised Information (Confidentiality)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the adequacy by safeguards of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise computer system against unauthorised entry.

Mr. Lilley: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise completed a thorough review of information systems security arrangements in 1988. As a result, existing measures have been strengthened including the establishment of a computer security committee and the development of an information system security strategy in accordance with CCTA-approved methods.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give consideration to the potential risks of unauthorised entry into the Customs and Excise computer system.

Mr. Lilley: These risks are kept under regular review by a computer security committee which uses the CCTA-approved risk analysis and management methodology.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in view of the computerisation of Inland Revenue files, what steps he proposes to take to ensure the safeguarding of these files from unauthorised entry by internal or external computer hackers.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Appropriate safeguards are built into the Inland Revenue's various on-line computer systems from the earliest design stages to prevent unauthorised access and ensure the integrity of the computer files. In particular, data transmission takes place over private circuits which denies external hackers the opportunity of calling up the systems. Terminals used by staff to access the on-line systems are subject to password control, and transactions are recorded in audit trails.

The Inland Revenue's computer systems are continuously monitored for possible abuse, and reviewed whenever either a significant change is made to an existing system or a new security threat emerges. The Department has in place a structure of security committees to oversee and monitor this control process.

Village Halls

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with organisations and others responsible for village halls on the question of short-term relief from the possible effect of value-added tax on non-domestic construction work by way of grant aid or a special reclaim scheme.

Mr. Lilley: Customs and Excise officials are currently engaged in discussions with representatives of village halls about the implications of the European Court of Justice judgment on VAT zero rates.

Clothing Industry (Liquidations)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many clothing industry liquidations there were in London in 1986, 1987 and 1988 reported to the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Inland Revenue does not have a record of the number of liquidations specifically reported to it. The numbers of clothing industry liquidations extracted by it from the *London Gazette* were:

Calendar year	*Number*
1986	2,688
1987	1,284
1988	456

Tax Informers

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many tax informers were there in 1987-88; how many of those were subsequently proved to be giving true information; and how many were subsequently proved to be giving false information.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Inland Revenue does not have records on informers from which such information could be obtained.

Cigarettes

Mr. Amos: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will express in real terms the ratio of the price of an average priced packet of 20 cigarettes to the average weekly wage in each of *(a)* 1959, *(b)* 1969, *(c)* 1979 and the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The ratio of the average price of a packet of 20 cigarettes to the average weekly wage in the relevant financial years is shown below:

	Per cent.
1959-60	1·1
1969-70	1·0
1979-80	0·6
1988-89	0·6

Income Tax

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish estimates of the tax yield from a 1p increase in *(a)* the basis rate and *(b)* the higher rate of tax, in each county, metropolitan district and London borough area.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that estimates by county of the effect of increasing the basic and higher rates of income tax by 1p in 1989-90 are not available.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by the Treasury in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The gross expenses incurred by Her Majesty's Treasury in connection with the sale of shares in Cable and Wireless and British Petroleum were as follows:

Thousands

	1983-84 £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1987-88* £
British Petroleum	22,108	656	—	—
Cable and Wireless	12,011	440	—	—
Cable and Wireless	—	—	21,400	—
British Petroleum	—	—	—	[1]146,707

[1] Excluding subscription for new shares and expenses of the Bank of England share purchase arrangement.

These expenses include fees paid to outside organisations, but these fees could be identified separately only at disproportionate cost.

Any costs incurred by Her Majesty's Treasury in connection with the privatisation programme in 1989-90 will be announced in due course in the usual way.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of Central Office of Information; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: The press office of the Central Office of Information is staffed by one information officer. No increase is proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by the Central Office of Information on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: The latest estimated cost of the press office of the Central Office of Information for 1988-89 is £44,350. The budget figure for 1989-90 is £48,200.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the most recent estimate of spending on advertising by the Central Office of Information in 1988-89; and what is the estimated spending for 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: The estimated spending on advertising through the Central Office of Information on behalf of other Government Departments for 1988-89 is £97 million.

Detailed decisions on estimated expenditure on advertising through the Central Office of Information on behalf of other Government Departments for 1989-90 are for departmental Ministers.

Central Office of Information

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total staff of the Central Office of Information; what it was in 1987-88; and what it is estimated to be in 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: The information requested is as follows:

Permanent staff in post

1 January	*Number*
1987	815
1988	804
1989	787

Value Added Tax

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest position regarding European Community proposals for imposing value added tax on goods and clothing sold in charity shops.

Mr. Lilley: Discussions on the Commission's proposals for the approximation of VAT rates are continuing in the Economic and Finance Council. The Government's position, which has been repeated on numerous occasions, is that we are not prepared to accept proposals which would restrict our ability to retain VAT zero rates. Our position is safeguarded because changes to EC tax law require unanimity.

Tax Forms

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total number of people who receive a tax form; and what percentage of the taxable population this represents.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 March 1989]:* The total number of people receiving income tax returns and claims forms is 9·5 million which represents around 37 per cent. of the taxable population for whom records are held.

Earnings

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many employees' earnings, including the value of benefits, exceed the rate of *(a)* £8,500 and *(b)* £17,000 per year;

(2) how many employees earning more than *(a)* £8,500 and *(b)* £17,000 a year, in each case including the value of benefits, are assessed on benefits;

(3) how much tax is raised in a year from assessing for benefits those earning as employees more than £8,500 a year, including the value of benefits; and what is his estimate of how much tax would be forgone if the figure of £17,000 was to be substituted for that of £8,500.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answers 9 March 1989]:* Provisional estimates of the number of employees in each of the categories specified are given in the table. Figures exclude directors because benefits received by directors are taxable irrespective of the level of their earnings.

Number of employees (million)

	Annual rate of earnings £8,500	£17,000
Number of employees whose earnings in 1988-89 (including any benefits received but after deductions of contributions to approved pension funds) exceed each rate	9·8	1·9
Of which:		
liable to tax on benefits received	1·5	0·7

The direct revenue yield, in 1988-89 terms, arising from the taxation of expenses and benefits received by employees (excluding directors) with earnings above the £8,500 threshold is estimated to be about £510 million. A further £370 million arises from the taxation of benefits received by directors. The direct revenue cost of an increase in the earnings threshold used to determine whether an employee is liable to tax on benefits is estimated to be about £150 million in 1988-89 terms.

Inland Revenue Staff

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Inland Revenue staff in each grade resigned in *(a)* London and *(b)* the south-east in the last 12-month period for which the figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The information, in relation to the main grades concerned, for the period from 1 February 1988 to 31 January 1989, is as follows:

Number of resignations: 1 February 1988 to 31 January 1989

	London	*South East*
Tax Office Grades		
Inspector (Fully trained)	75	14
Inspector (General group)	45	17
Technical Trainee / Tax Officer (Higher grade)	249	84
Tax Officer	190	165
Revenue Assistant	243	180
Others	64	39
Collection Office Grades		
Collector (Higher grade) and above	8	1
Collector	50	3
Assistant Collector	134	51
Revenue Assistant	45	17
Others	15	5
Valuation Office Grades		
Professional Staff	58	28
Valuation Technician and above	16	4
Valuation Clerk	51	30
Revenue Assistant	42	25
Others	17	2
Administration Group Grades		
Higher Executive Officer and above	46	16
Executive Officer	29	49

	London	South East
Administrative Officer	38	33
Administrative Assistant	133	95
Others	65	11

Note: "London" and "South East" refer to the Inland Revenue's four London regions and South East regions respectively.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Ms. Walley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice he has received from the Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association about the case for fiscal incentives for investment in plant required for recycling and safe destruction of chlorofluorocarbons.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* The association suggested the introduction of fiscal incentives for such investment.

Charities

Ms. Wise: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount paid by registered charities by way of value-added tax.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that this information is not available.

HEALTH

Abortion

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of abortions performed to save the life of the mother in Basildon health authority area from April 1968 to the latest available date; and what percentage this represents of all abortions performed.

Mr. Freeman: There were no abortions performed under ground 5 of the Abortion Act 1967, which permits an abortion in emergency to save the life of the pregnant woman, upon women usually resident in Basildon and Thurrock district health authority or its equivalent areas prior to 1982 between 1968 and 31 December 1987.

Consumers (Consultation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements there are for consulting consumers on the work and decisions of his Department.

Mr. Mellor: Ministers and officials have regular contact with representatives of all spheres of health service activity, seeking contributions towards improving quality of patient services, policy development and on technical issues. Meetings are also held on health matters with voluntary organisations and their representatives. In addition to individuals making representations either to the Department or their local health organisations, since 1974, the consumer voice has been represented by community health councils. These bodies contribute towards the planning and standard of local services and have an input when changes in the pattern of service delivery is being produced.

Smoking

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many meetings he, his Ministers and his Department's officials have had with representatives of the medical and health professions on the subject of smoking since 1 January 1988; if he will list the dates, venues and purpose of each meeting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Department of Health Ministers or officials have not met with representatives of the health professions specifically to discuss smoking. There have, however, been frequent meetings with our expert advisory committees, including the Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health, with the Health Education Authority and with bodies with an interest in the health aspects of smoking such as ASH. Ministers receive advice on the medical aspects of smoking from the chief medical officer and his staff.

Seaham Harbour Dental Unit

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether Seaham Harbour school dental unit will close as a result of the recent reorganisation of community health services for the Easington district carried out by the Northern regional health authority.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally. The hon. Member may, however, wish to contact the chairman of Sunderland health authority, the authority which, from 1 April 1989, will be responsible for the management of community health services for Seaham.

Computerised Information (Confidentiality)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what precautions are taken to ensure the confidentiality of computerised individual personal Health Department files from unauthorised internal and external penetration.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health has taken a number of precautions against unauthorised internal and external breaches of the confidentiality of personal files held on computer. There is a continuing programme aimed at raising the awareness of staff of possible threats to this confidentiality and approximate countermeasures most of which involve additional physical security. Department of Health computer systems that contain personal details of indentifiable individuals are registered in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps have been considered to protect computerised departmental waiting lists from internal or external penetration.

Mr. Freeman: The responsibility for guarding against unauthorised access to information held on hospital computer files rests with individual health authorities all of which have been made aware of the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

The issue of specific guidance to hospitals on the security of computer systems, including those holding waiting list information, is currently under consideration.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what techniques are used to protect on-line computer-held departmental systems from unauthorised internal or external access.

Mr. Freeman: Currently, most Department of Health computer systems cannot be accessed on-line by other

systems. Where on-line access is possible security measures appropriate to the sensitivity of the data held and the possible consequences of data corruption are taken. These include procedures for the security copying of computer-held information and physical checks of cabling and communications equipment.

All Department of Health computer systems are subject to physical security measures. The exact measures employed relate directly to the physical vulnerability of both the system type and its location.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice is given by his Department to relevant health authority offices to secure their computer terminals against unauthorised penetration of the Health Department mainframe in London.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health mainframe computer in London has linked terminals within its own location and at two more Department of Health central London offices. No other terminals have access to the system.

Access from the linked terminals is controlled by use of suitable physical and logical security measures for the mainframe itself and for each terminal with validated access to information held on it.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what record is kept of the use made of Departmental computer files.

Mr. Freeman: For Department of Health computer held information registered in accordance with the Data Protection Act, the rules of the Act apply. Where it is considered necessary, further controls are maintained relating to permitted access and regular checking of system usage.

Mr. H. W. Williscroft

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will examine the correspondence from Mr. H. W. Williscroft of 6 Hill street, Rugeley, Staffordshire, to his Department's agency benefit unit at Long Benton, Newcastle upon Tyne, to ascertain the reasons for the delay in determining his entitlement to help with National Health Service costs.

Mr. Freeman: I have made inquiries of the agency benefits unit of the Department of Social Security and I understand that Mr. Williscroft's claim has now been determined.

MMR Vaccinations

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were administered MMR vaccinations in the year 1988-89; in how many cases contra-indications were reported after the administering of the vaccine; and how many cases of mumps, measles and rubella occurred in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: Immunisation uptake figures for 1988-89 will not be available until later this year. However, from the launch of measles, mumps and rubella vaccine last October to the end of January, 1·2 million doses were made available. The number of children in the recommended priority groups (aged 15 months and 4 to 5 years) who became eligible for the vaccine in that period was 400,000.

Contra-indications are reasons for not administering vaccines and are not therefore reported. Mumps and rubella became notifiable only from 1 October 1988; since then 13,140 and 8,876 cases respectively have been notified. Notifications for measles for the last five years were:

	Numbers
1984	62,080
1985	97,408
1986	82,061
1987	42,065
1988	[1]85,642

[1] Provisional.
Source: OPCS (England and Wales).

Medicines (Review Bodies)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the names of those who serve on review bodies under the Medicines Act; how many medicines have been reviewed, and with what result; and what is the nature of the criteria used to assess risk/benefit ratios.

Mr. Mellor: The current membership of the Committee on the Review of Medicines is given in its annual report for 1987, a copy of which is available in the Library. This and previous annual reports of the Committee on the Review of Medicines from 1975 give details of the progress of the review. Of the approximate 3,360 medicines which have been reviewed so far some 3,205 were permitted to remain on the market and some 160 have been removed. The latest figure excludes medicines withdrawn by companies themselves: an estimated 39,000 medicines subject to the review were on the market when it began in 1975. Risk/benefit ratios are assessed on the available evidence in relation to the uses for which medicines are claimed to be effective. Particular guidance on herbal medicines was issued in 1985 in the herbal information sheet, a copy of which is in the Library.

Cunliffe Evans Report

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Cunliffe Evans report on alternative medicine was submitted to his Department; and when he expects to publish it.

Mr. Mellor: The report of the study on the control of medicines (the Evans Cunliffe report) was published in January 1988. Its main thrust was on the management and organisation of the general arrangements for licensing medicines. Only one of its 54 recommendations concerned alternative medicines. This was that product licensing was not appropriate for the control of homoeopathic and similar alternative medicines. However, the Medicines Commission in its annual report for 1987 expressed a preference for a product licensing system for homoeopathic medicines addressing safety and quality but not efficacy, which the Commission acknowledged would not be possible under the Medicines Act 1968 as it stands. The Commission of the European Community has a commitment to a directive on homoeopathic medicines. When a proposal is made to the Council of Ministers, we shall consider it carefully. It would serve no useful purpose to pursue meantime in the United Kingdom either the

Cunliffe Evans or Medicines Commission views until we have Commission proposals for European Community law on this matter.

National Health Service Funding

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the National Health Service provision, excluding boards of governors and special health authorities, that is currently funded, completely or partly, directly by his Department;

(2) if he will list the services, now funded by districts, which were started in the National Health Service with either direct central or supra-regional funding;

(3) if he will list the National Health Service provision, excluding boards of governors and special health authorities, that has been funded completely or partly by direct central funding in the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: The services for which revenue funding has been specifically provided to regional health authorities in 1988-89 are:

Waiting Lists and Times
AIDS
Breast Cancer Screening
Measles Mumps and Rubella Vaccine
Services for Drug Misusers
Supra Regional Services:
- Spinal Units
- Cranio-facial Services
- Liver Transplants
- Chorion-carcinoma Services
- National Poisons Information Unit
- Neonatal and Infant Cardiac Surgery
- Specialised Liver Services
- Heat Transplantation (including Heart and Lung Transplants)
- Endoprosthetic Services for Primary Bone Tumours
- Psychiatric Services for Deaf People

United Kingdom Transplant Service
Quality Assessment of Clinical Laboratories
Health Authority Central Fund (1)
Portman and Tavistock Clinics
London Emergency Helicopter Service.

Other services funded in this way since 1983-84 are as follows. Information for previous years is not readily available.

Local Dental Health Survey and Education Programme
Psychiatric Rehabilitation
Renal Services Expansion
Transplant Advisors: Kidney Donors
Rural Practice Payments for Dispensing
Hearing Aids
Cervical Cytology Kits
Community Medicine Register.

Note: Each year the Department reserves centrally a small proportion of resources to fund developments in the hospital and community health services where central intervention is considered both desirable and cost effective; for example, specialised new activities arising from research which needs to be tried under central oversight.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the National Health Service services which receive supra-regional funding.

Mr. Freeman: The following services have received supra-regional funding in 1988-89 and will continue to do so in 1989-90;

Chorioncarcinoma Services
Craniofacial Services
Endoprosthetic Services for Primary Bone Tumours
Heart Transplantation (including Heart and Lung Transplantation)
Liver Transplantation
National Poisons Information Services
Neonatal and Infant Cardiac Surgery
Psychiatric Services for Deaf People
Specialised Liver Services
Spinal Injury Services

Hearing Aids

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of totally and profoundly deaf people who get no benefit from hearing aids but who might be helped by a cochlear implant.

Mr. Mellor: Estimates from those units which currently provide a cochlear implant service suggest that between 5,000 and 6,000 profoundly deaf people in England might get some benefit from a cochlear implant.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is currently issued by his Department to people with a hearing loss.

Mr. Mellor: All National Health Service patients issued with a hearing aid are given a copy of the Department's booklet HA1 "How to use your Hearing Aid", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the number of hearing aid users in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: Figures provided by the Institute of Hearing Research suggest that around 1·3 million people aged 17 and over in England and Wales use a hearing aid. We have no precise information about the number of children using hearing aids.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last reviewed the adequacy of the range of hearing aids available on the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: The range of hearing aids available under the National Health Service is kept under constant review by the commodities advisory group advising Mersey regional health authority, which is responsible for the procurement and distribution of all National Health Service hearing aids.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what regulations currently govern cigarette advertisements in duty-free areas at ports, airports, and other similar areas under United Kingdom jurisdiction under current agreement with the tobacco industry; whether he will be taking steps in his negotiations with the tobacco industry to include such areas under new regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The current voluntary agreement with the industry requires companies to

"continue to include a health warning in cigarette or hand-rolling tobacco brand advertising posters for display in lounges, corridors or shops of land duty free areas".

Other forms of advertising in duty free areas are not covered by the voluntary agreement. The Government will consider whether to seek any appropriate extension or clarification of the agreement as regards duty free areas when renegotiating the agreement. Cigarettes sold in United Kingdom duty free shops are however, intended for consumption outside this country.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Mellor: Expenditure in respect of Department of Health in 1988-89 is estimated as:

	£ million
Television advertising	1·724
Radio advertising	0·161
Newspaper advertising	1·176
Other promotional material	7·413

The budget for publicity in 1989-90 is £19·586 million. It is not yet possible to say how this sum will be divided between categories of publicity.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on *(a)* TV advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Freeman: No expenditure of TV advertising, radio advertising and newspaper advertising is planned by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for 1988-89 or 1989-90. The expenditure on other promotional material in 1988-89 is estimated to be £105,000. The corresponding budget figure for 1989-90 is £210,000. These figures include expenditure on or planned for the 1989 census test and 1991 census.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: The number of staff presently employed in the press and publicity section of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is seven. There are no vacancies. The figure includes four staff who have been employed on a temporary basis to work on publicity activities for the 1989 census test and the 1991 census. An additional temporary post is to be added in 1989-90 to work on the 1989 census test and 1991 census.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, in press and public relations offices in *(a)* the Health Education Authority and *(b)* the National Health Service generally; and what are the proposed complements for 1989-90.

Mr. Mellor: The Health Education Authority currently employs three people in its press office and has a vacancy for one public relations officer on the "Look After Your Heart" campaign. In 1989-90 one additional post is planned to deal with the new teenage smoking campaign.

The employment and numbers of press and information officers in the NHS is a matter for regional and district health authorities and not for the Department of Health. The hon. Member may care to write to the individual regional health authority chairmen.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Mellor: Functions commonly associated with press and public relations are carried out by the Department's information division.

The latest figures for the combined information divisions of the Department of Health and the Department of Social Security are:

	Number
Staff presently employed	77
Full complement of staff inlcuding vacant posts	80

Note: Thirty-eight of the above staff are information officers.

Discussions on the proposed complements for 1989-90 are not yet complete.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by (i) the Health Education Authority and (ii) the National Health Service as a whole on *(a)* TV advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the 1989-90 budgets for each of these categories of spending by (1) the Health Education Authority and (2) the National Health Service as a whole;

(2) what are the latest figures for *(a)* the estimated expenditure on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90 for both (i) the Health Education Authority and (ii) the National Health Service generally.

Mr. Mellor: A large proportion of the Health Education Authority's expenditure is related to advertising, and promotional work. Expenditure is as follows:

Health Education Authority

	£
1988-89	
TV advertising	2,000,000
Radio advertising	400,000
Newspaper advertising	4,450,000
Other promotions and material	1,548,000
1989-90	
Advertising (media spit not yet determined)	7,850,000
Other promotions and material	741,000

For the National Health Service as a whole, this information is not collected separately.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have the information in the form requested. However the estimated expenditure for

the combined Departments of Health and Social Security on press and public relations during 1988-89 is £1·344 million.

The budget for the Department of Health for 1989-90 has not yet been agreed.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: The total estimated expenditure by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on press and public relations activities in 1988-89 is £190,000. The corresponding budget figure for 1989-90 is £340,000. These figures include the salaries of staff employed on these activities, including those working on the 1989 census test and plans for the 1991 census.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: The information is shown in the table. This covers all the staff employed in the statistical divisions of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys including the medical statistics and social survey divisions. It excludes staff employed in the finance personnel and administration division and staff employed in the information technology division. Staff complements as such are no longer used since expenditure is controlled by financial rather than manpower limits. The planned staff figures for 1 October 1989 are therefore less rigid and subject to change.

	Number in post (1 March 1989)	*Number planned to be in post (1 March 1989)*	*Number planned to be in post (1 October 1989)*
Statistical posts			
Grade 5 (Chief Statistician)	3·0	3·0	3·0
Grade 6 (Statistician)	2·0	2·0	2·0
Grade 7 (Statistician)	11·5	11·5	11·5
Senior Assistant Statistician	3·0	6·0	6·0
Assistant Statistician	2·0	2·0	3·0
Medical Officer Grades	2·5	2·5	2·5
Survey Officer posts			
Grade 5 (Chief Social Survey Officer 'A')	1·0	1·0	1·0
Grade 6 (Chief Social Survey Officer 'B')	4·0	4·0	4·0
Grade 7 (Principal Social Survey Officer)	14·0	12·5	12·5
Senior Social Survey Officer	11·0	12·0	12·0
Social Survey Officer	4·5	5·5	5·5
Assistant Social Survey Officer	4·0	8·0	8·0
Administrative posts			
Grade 6 (Senior Principal)	2·0	2·0	2·0
Grade 7 (Principal)	12·0	11·0	11·0
Senior Executive Officer	17·0	19·0	20·5
Higher Executive Officer	57·5	58·0	59·0
Executive Officer	93·0	110·5	111·5
Administrative Officer and others	331·0	368·5	415·0

Blood Transfusion Service

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what developments have taken place in the organisation of the blood transfusion service in England and Wales following publication of the study by the National Health Service management consultancy services branch; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We announced on 28 July 1988 that new arrangements would be made to manage the supra-regional and national dimension of the national blood transfusion service (NBTS). Operational responsibility at national level is now exercised on behalf of Health Ministers for England and Wales by the NHS management board and undertaken by its director of operations, in consultation in respect of Wales with the director, NHS Wales. Day-to-day implementation of the national strategy is delegated to the national director of the NBTS and a small supporting staff.

HEALTH

Stastistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions of *(a)* the Health Education Authority and *(b)* the National Health Service as a whole; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Mellor: In 1988-89 the Health Education Authority employed one statistician, in its public health division. There are also 20 professional posts and one administrative post in the division, and a current vacancy for a statistical assistant. The complement will remain the same for 1989-90.

The number of whole time equivalent staff in post in the statistics and information area of work within the administrative and clerical staff group in the NHS (England) at 30 September 1987 was 867 whole time equivalent staff. Of these only four could be separately identified as being statisticians.

We do not collect information on staff vacancies centrally. Staff complements for specific areas of work are a matter for local determination.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in his Department; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Mellor: Staff in post and vacancies in Department of Health statistical branches at 1 March 1989 are shown in the table:

	Staff in post		*Vacancies*	
	Administrative	*Statistical*	*Administrative*	*Statistical*
Grade 3	—	0·66	—	—
Grade 5	—	6·00	—	—
Grade 6	—	—	—	—
Grade 7	1·0	25·00	—	—
Senior Assistant Statistician	—	3·00	—	—
Assistant Statistican	—	3·00	—	—
Senior Executive Officer	13·0	—	2	—
Higher Executive Officer	29·0	—	3	—
Executive Officer	53·0	—	—	—
Administrative Officer	56·5	—	—	—
Administrative Assitant	17·5	—	—	—
Personal Secretary	6·0	—	—	—
Total	176·0	37·66	5	

The staffing complement for 1989-90 is expected to be as shown but some adjustments may be made following the split of Department of Health and Social Security.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Mellor: No expenditure on fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation of health-related areas of work prior to 1986-87 has been identified. Expenditure in 1986-87 and each year to date, and the estimated expenditure in 1989-90, are as follows:

Year	*£*
1986-87	63,000
1987-88	61,000
1988-89	202,000
1989-90	250,000

All expenditure up to and including 1988-89 has been from a joint Health and Social Security budget.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Mellor: The estimated expenditure from 1984-85 onwards on fees and expenses for management consultants on health matters is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1984-85	0·613
1985-86	0·479
1986-87	2·103
1987-88	1·316
1988-89	1·347

The figures are approximate since expenditure up to and including the 1988-89 financial year is from a joint Health and Social Security budget. In some cases expenditure has been apportioned where consultants have been engaged on both health and social security matters. The figures include social services consultancy and some computer consultancy where these cannot be separately identified.

The information for years prior to 1984-85 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Health Service (Annual Returns)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for health (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of annual financial and statistical returns made by district and regional health authorities to his Department;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each statistical and financial return, a list showing which regional and district health authorities did not return such information on time;

(3) which health authorities did not return their financial returns for 1987-88 by the published deadline.

Mr. Freeman: 1987-88 was the first year for the new Körner data sets for hospital activity, patient transport, manpower and finance; 1988-89 the first for the community and paramedical services. A list has been placed in the Library showing the statistical and financial returns required for 1987-88 ad 1988-89 including those which existed before the implementation of the Körner review recommendations.

Apart from the financial data which are currently submitted by each health authority, the general responsibility for submitting returns to the Department is on regional health authorities, who collate the returns from their districts; special health authorities submit their returns direct.

There are more than 50 annual returns required for each district to target dates given in the list. It is not practical to expect all these returns to arrive by the appropriate target date (some are at site level and there are nearly 2,500 sites for which returns are made) nor to list, for each, those authorities that missed it. A full analysis would incur disproportionate cost. It is estimated that 93 per cent. of all district-level aggregated returns about hospital patient activity and facilities, 70 per cent. of all manpower returns and some 90 per cent. of all finance returns had been received within three months of the target date. On returns at site level, performance varied between 50 and 80 per cent. completion within three months of the target.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will next publish an edition of the Health Service costing returns.

Mr. Freeman: We intend to publish an edition of "Health Service Costing Returns" for 1987-88 during the summer.

Capital Expenditure (North West)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress of capital expenditure work by the North West regional health authority during 1988-89.

Mr. Freeman: Capital expenditure work has progressed as expected during 1988-89. The regional health authority has recently approved its major schemes capital programme for 1989-90 and it is expected that approval for capital projects up to 1991-92 will be given later this year. This is in line with the region's policy of only issuing a firm capital programme on a rolling three-year basis.

Residential Care

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will identify the groups which have carried out studies of the costs of residential care and the full costs to public funds of private residential care of which his Department is aware.

Mr. Mellor: I am aware of the following studies of the costs of private and voluntary residential care:

Title and Organisation

Survey of Private and Voluntary Residential and Nuring Homes for the Department of Health and Social Security—Ernst and Whinney.

Residential Care Homes Reasonableness of Charges. Reasonableness of Nursing Home Charges—University of York Social Policy Research Unit.

National Survey of Independent Residential Care and Nursing Homes—University of Kent Personal Social Services Research Unit/University of York, Centre for Health Economics.

Evaluation of Very Sheltered Housing—Department of the Environment.

Copies of the Ernst and Whinney study and that into the reasonableness of charges in residential care homes are in the Library. The reports of the remaining three studies are awaited. As my reply of 6 March to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) at column *421* indicated, none of these studies enable us to draw general conclusions about the full costs to public funds of care in either sector and only limited comparisons have been possible.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provisions are made for the care and well being of residents of private homes during change of ownership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It is for registration authorities to see that adequate arrangements are made by those running a home for the continuing care of residents during a change of ownership. The code of practice for residential care, "Home Life", advises that proprietors notify the registration authority of any intended change of ownership. Advice to health authorities is that home owners be asked to make completion of sale conditional upon, and not effective until, the home is re-registered. This will avoid the nursing home having to cease operations until the new registration is granted.

Benefit Payments (Delay)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will adequately compensate the 8,809 claimants waiting for financial help with National Health Service costs for the delay in payment.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 7 March at column *491* regarding claims for refunds of charges paid while claims have been delayed at the agency benefits unit.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether there is a risk to the consumer of cook-chill food when his Department's 1980 guidelines are not followed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 27 February at column *69*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cook-chill products examined recently by the public health laboratory service were found to contain salmonella.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The survey conducted recently by the public health laboratory service was to test for the

presence of listeria monocytogenes and not for salmonella. However, out of 197 retail ready to eat cooked-chilled poultry and chilled and frozen retail ready-to-eat meals four were found to be positive for salmonella.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has conducted or commissioned into why so many cook-chill products contain listeria monocytogenes; and with what results.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department has not carried out any research into why listeria monocytogenes is contained in some cook-chill products. We are working with the food industry to produce a code of practice designed to minimise the possibility of contamination of cook-chill products with listeria monocytogenes.

Waterborne Diseases

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the total numbers of incidents and cases of waterborne disease in the United Kingdom since 1979.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 28 February 1989]:* The figures are not available in precisely the form sought, but during the ten years 1977-86 there were 15 recorded outbreaks of waterborne disease in the United Kingdom comprising 5,955 cases and no deaths. Subsequent observations have indicated that this is likely to be an underestimate.

During the years 1987 and 1988 a further four outbreaks in England and Wales were reported to the PHLS communicable disease surveillance centre. Three of these were due to campylobacter; two outbreaks affecting over 36 people were associated with consumption of stream/spring water and in the other incident, when several people were taken ill at a youth hostel, organisms were found in the well water. The fourth outbreak, comprising at least 77 cases, was due to cryptosporidium and was associated with a swimming pool.

I am sending to the hon. Member an extract from a published paper which gives further details of outbreaks of waterborne disease in the United Kingdom from 1937.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Scrapie

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will break down the 16 cases of incidence of scrapie in goats in the last five years by year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Scrapie is not a notifiable disease but from samples submitted to the Ministry's veterinary investigation centres disease was confirmed in goats as follows:

	Cases
1984	4
1985	0
1986	1
1987	1
1988	10

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the future incidence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is not possible to predict the future course of the disease with any accuracy. However, having banned the use of feed, which is the most likely cause of the disease, and provided it does not pass from cattle to cattle, the incidence should start to decline after 1992.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further action he intends to take in the light of the Southwood report on bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) on 27 February at columns *89-91.*

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has commissioned research to test the infectivity of bovine spongiform encephalopathy on human cellular material.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No, but trials are under way using marmosets, which are primates.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to follow up recommendations contained in the report of the working party on bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) on 27 February at columns *89-91.*

Food Hygiene

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has received any recent representations from food manufacturers on the issue of food hygiene.

Mr. Ryder: We have received a number of such representations and will be considering these with the Department of Health in the developing of our policies.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Ministry on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest figures for estimated spend by my Department in 1988-89 are as follows:

(a) television advertising—nil;
(b) radio advertising—nil;
(c) newspaper advertising—£111,000 in the trade press only and £269,000 as MAFF's contribution to press advertising about salmonella in eggs;

(d) other promotional material—£992,000.

Detailed decisions on expenditure by media have not yet been taken but we expect the overall publicity spend for 1989-90 to be £1·3 million.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of his Ministry; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The number of staff and the complement in the press branch of information division and related posts in the regions is 29 and 31, respectively. The complement of staff is expected to be the same in 1989-90.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in his Ministry; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is as follows:

Grade	*Staff in post 1 March 1989*	*Complement 1 March 1989*
Grade 5	2·0	2·0
Grade 7	10·0	11·0
Senior Assistant		
Statistician/Assistant	10·0	10·0
Statistician		
Support staff	127·5	136·5

It is expected that the staffing complements for 1989-90 will be similar to current levels.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department has not paid any sums to outside organisations for this purpose in the period 1979-80 to date. I keep continually under review the contribution that my Department might make to the Government's privatisation policy.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The total fees paid out by my Department to management consultants, excluding computer consultants, for 1984-85 to 1987-88 and the estimated expenditure in 1988-89 are as follows:

	£
1984-85	27,110
1985-86	174,724
1986-87	135,279
1987-88	44,015
[1]1988-89	164,846

[1] Estimate.

Information for earlier years is not available except at disproportionate cost.

Press and PR

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by his Ministry on press and public relations during 1988-89, and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest figure for the estimated expenditure by my Ministry on press and public relations during 1988-89 is £900,000. The latest estimate for the budget for 1989-90 is £1 million.

Festival of Food and Farming

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what representations he is proposing to make to help ensure that the produce of 550 hectares of English vineyards and of English and Welsh agricultural land is exhibited at the festival of food and farming in Hyde park on 4-7 May;

(2) whether he will make a grant to the English Vineyards Association to cover the cost of the planning and organisation which the English Vineyards Association is incurring to enable vineyards to exhibit at the festival of food and farming to be held in Hyde park from 4 to 7 May.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

The festival of food and farming to be held in Hyde park from 4 to 7 May is being financed by sponsors in the industry, and by the many individual companies and organisations that have taken up exhibition space. It will be a fine opportunity for British producers to display the products of their enterprise to the general public. I am sure that it is right for such an event to rely on private initiative rather than on public subsidy for its success.

Bacteriological Testing

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consider setting up an accreditation scheme to control the quality of bacteriological testing of food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The Government have a well-established national measurement accreditation service (NAMAS) for all types of testing and calibration laboratories, which is managed by the Department of Trade and Industry. My Ministry is represented on the NAMAS advisory committee. Accreditation is open to any laboratory carrying out objective testing, including bacteriological laboratories and NAMAS has produced a guidance document covering the specific interpretation of the accreditation criteria for laboratories carrying out bacteriological testing.

Abattoirs

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the general conclusions of the European Community inspector's current visits to abattoirs in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I will ensure that the hon. Member receives a copy of the letter which will be sent to all operators of export approved plants summarising the main points of the 1989 inspection visit.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to his answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *533-4*, how many of the abattoirs which received suspension warnings in each year since 1982 subsequently received suspensions in the same year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The number of plants which received warnings and subsequently were suspended within a year is as follows:

	Number
1982	1
1983	4
1984	—
1985	9
1986	6
1987	8
1988	1

Suspension warnings specify a period within which the deficiencies must be rectified. Where changes to practices are required the period may be one or two weeks. For structural work up to six months may be permitted, depending on the work required and its urgency. Exceptionally, the Ministry may grant a further extension of the time for structural work if satisfied with the progress which is being made.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what inspection of animals is carried out in non-European Community approved abattoirs prior to slaughter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The feeding to ruminants of animal protein derived from ruminants has been prohibited. The prohibition will remain unless and until it is possible to identify processing methods which are capable of destroying the agent which causes bovine spongiform encephalopathy and which are widely available.

Salmonella

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to prevent salmonella contamination in imported feedstuffs containing vegetable matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A very small proportion of compound animal feedingstuffs is imported. The majority of imports comprise raw materials including vegetable protein which are incorporated into feedingstuffs. Detailed codes of practice will be introduced shortly for the control of salmonella in feedingstuffs and their ingredients, including measures for monitoring.

Near Market Research

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all the organisations he has consulted about near market research; and how many times each one has been consulted.

Mr. Ryder: The following organisations were sent a consultation document on agriculture and food listing the work identified as near market. My noble Friend the Baroness Trumpington has held a series of meetings, one with each sector of the industry and one with all sectors represented. Further meetings are due to take place in the near future.

1 British Bedding Plant Association
2 Mushroom Growers Association
3 British Pot Plant Growers Association
4 National Farmers Union
5 Country Landowners Association
6 Agricultural and Food Research Council
7 Food and Drink Federation
8 Home Grown Cereals Authority
9 UK Agricultural Supply Trade Association
10 Grain and Feed Trade Association
11 Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives (UK) Ltd.
12 Maltsters Association of Great Britain
13 British Oat and Barley Millers Association
14 Seed Crushers and Oil Processors Association
15 British Edible Pulses Association
16 Potato Marketing Board
17 Potato Processors Association
18 National Federation of Fruit and Potato Traders Ltd.
19 National Association of British and Irish Millers
20 Flour Milling and Baking Research Association
21 Processors and Growers Research Organisation
22 Federation of Oils Association
23 British Starch Industry Association
24 British Association of Green Crop Driers Ltd.
25 Horticultural Development Council
26 Horticultural Trades Association
27 Apple and Pear Development Council
28 National Hop Association
29 UK Hop Growers Association
30 Meat and Livestock Commission
31 National Cattle Breeders Association
32 National Pig Breeders Association
33 British Veterinary Association
34 National Sheep Association
35 Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
36 Livestock Traders Association of Great Britain Ltd
37 Livestock Auctioneers Market Committee for England and Wales
38 Association of British Abattoir Owners
39 National Federation of Meat Traders
40 Federation of Fresh Meat Wholesalers
41 UK Provision Trade Federation
42 Bacon and Meat Manufacturers Association
43 British Wool Marketing Board
44 International Meat Trade Association
45 British Poultry Federation
46 British Poultry Breeders and Hatchers Association
47 National Egg Marketing Association
48 British Egg Association
49 British Egg Products Association
50 British Egg Industry Council
51 Milk Marketing Board
52 Dairy Trade Federation
53 British Food Manufacturing Research Association
54 Campden Food and Drink Research Association
55 British Society of Plant Breeders Ltd.
56 British Agrochemicals Association
57 British Hotels, Restaurants and Caterers Association
58 Federation of Wholesale Distributors
59 British Retailers Association
60 Farmers Union of Wales
61 National Farmers Union of Scotland
62 Scottish Landowners Federation
63 Agricultural Engineers Association

64 National Office of Animal Health
65 Scottish Potato Trades Association
66 Scottish Seed Potato Development Council
67 Scottish Seed Growers Association
68 Scottish Seed and Nursery Trade Association
69 National Association of Wholesale Meat Salesmen for Scotland
70 Scottish Timothy Seed Growers Association
71 Institute of Auctioneers and Appraisers for Scotland
72 Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association
73 Scottish Milk Marketing Board
74 Aberdeen and District Milk Marketing Board
75 North of Scotland Milk Marketing Board
76 Scottish Dairy Trade Federation
77 Royal Agricultural Society of England
78 Women's Farming Union
79 Fertiliser Manufacturers Association
80 Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers
81 Milking Machine Manufacturers Association
82 Institute of Refrigeration

My hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) has consulted the following organisations on fisheries research and development:

1 United Kingdom Association of Fishmeal Manufacturers
2 Worshipful Company of Fishmongers
3 Food and Drink Federation
4 National Federation of Fish Friers Ltd.
5 Scottish Fisherman's Federation
6 Shellfish Association of Great Britain
7 United Kingdom Association of Frozen Food Producers
8 Association of Fish Canners
9 Scottish Fish Merchants Association
10 Sea Fish Industry Authority
11 Herring Buyers Association

In addition, many of these organisations will have had meetings with my colleagues and me at which near market research and development will have been one of the issues discussed.

Pigs

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to prohibit the inclusion of animal products in feedstuffs for pigs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. The use of animal products in feedstuffs is already subject to the strict statutory controls laid down in the Diseases of Animals (Waste Food) Order 1983, the Diseases of Animals (Protein Processing) (Amendment) Order 1989.

Tropical Oils

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals to encourage food manufacturers to voluntarily remove tropical oils from their products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: No sir. The real issue is not between tropical or temperate oils but between saturated and unsaturated fats. United Kingdom traders and consumers are aware of the medical advice in the COMA report on diet and cardiovascular disease that overall fat consumption, and particularly saturated fat consumption, should be reduced and our nutrition labelling guidelines provide for the indication of fat and saturated fat contents of food products.

Rivers

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the level of funding allocated to field trials of the system of concrete deflectors for flow and flood control in meandering rivers currently being conducted on the River Roding and the River Wensum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Thompson: I am aware of the field trials carried out on the rivers Roding and Wensum which were undertaken by the University of East Anglia with funding from the Thames water authority and the Anglian water authority respectively. There has been no funding from this Department for these trials.

Sheepmeat Regime

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the present state of the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. MacGregor: The regime that we negotiated in 1980 has served the United Kingdom well. Expenditure on the regime is, however, increasing rapidly and measures to restrain costs are needed.

Official Secrets Act

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all his advisory committees where members are required to sign the Official Secrets Act declaration.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There is no precise definition of my advisory committees, but in the following cases we ask members to sign the Official Secrets Act declaration in order to bring it to their attention;

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service Commercial Management Board (formerly Agricultural Development and Advisory Service and Regional Management Board).

Review of the Organisation of Horticulture Research Group Steering Group on Food Surveillance.

Sheep Remains

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has made any changes to the regulations covering the treating process of sheep remains which are included in animal feed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Inspection of animals prior to slaughter in non-EC approved abattoirs is not yet a requirement of legislation in England and Wales. In October 1987 the Government announced that it is to be made so. We have since agreed in the Council of Agriculture Ministers in Brussels that ante-mortem inspection should be introduced in non-exporting abattoirs from 1 January 1991.

Veterinarians

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many veterinarians from *(a)* each of the European Community countries and *(b)* elsewhere overseas are currently practising in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 March 1989]:* The numbers of veterinarians from overseas currently registered with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and believed to be practising in this country are:

	Numbers
EC member states	
Belgium	28
Denmark	3
France	4
Germany	19
Greece	5
Ireland	29
Italy	1
Netherlands	30
Spain	1
TOTAL	118
Other countries	
Australia	173
Canada	22
New Zealand	75
South Africa	50
TOTAL	320

Public-house Tenants

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the current conditions of tenure of public-house tenants, and in particular about the desirability of making the current voluntary code of practice on this subject enforceable in the courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I met the National Licensed Victuallers Association on 20 February and took note of the association's views on this matter. It was agreed that there should be a further discussion after the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission inquiry into the supply of beer has been made public.

ENVIRONMENT

Unleaded Petrol

69. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further steps he will take to promote unleaded petrol.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Measures to promote unleaded petrol are co-ordinated by the unleaded petrol group, which I chair. The Government provide a range of information and publicity material. On Friday, I launched Tyne and Wear lead-free petrol week, one of a series of national and local weeks which we support. Other initiatives are being pursued. Motability has responded to our request for help in encouraging the wider use of unleaded petrol: its campaign has the full support of Government.

Water Pollution

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many pollution control officers with responsibility for water pollution under COPA are currently employed; and how many posts are vacant.

Mr. Howard: The information is not available in the form requested. At present, the 10 regional water authorities in England and Wales are responsible for the control of pollution from industrial, agricultural and domestic sources. When these functions transfer to the National Rivers Authority, approximately 450 staff working directly on these functions will transfer to the NRA, along with some 210 support staff. This excludes laboratory staff and others who also deal with other functions, and also excludes staff who will continue to work on pollution control and related functions for the PLCs.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution employs 11 inspectors on water pollution control activities mainly in connection with consents issued on behalf of the Secretary of State for water authorities' own discharges. There are no vacancies.

Lowermoor Treatment Works

Mr. Neale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any claim for damages has been received from any reputable source in relation to the production by a farm animal of deformed offspring in the Lowermoor treatment works distribution area as a result of the contamination incident in July 1988.

Mr. Howard: I understand that the South West water authority has received no such claims.

Mr. Neale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent his Department's water inspectorate remains in contact with the South West water authority in conjunction with the supply of water from the Lowermoor treatment works; and if it continues to monitor the authority's performance in supplying water in the Lowermoor distribution area.

Mr. Howard: The Department maintains regular contact with the South West water authority and receives a weekly summary of results of sampling in the distribution system served by the Lowermoor treatment works.

Tree Planting

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funding for tree planting has been given following the hurricane of 15 and 16 October 1987; to which bodies it has been given; how many trees have been planted; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the period to 1991-92, we are providing some £13 million for replacement planting of amenity trees following the storm. Most grants are being allocated through Task Force Trees, a special unit of the Countryside Commission; others are administered by English Heritage. The bulk of aid from Task Force Trees has been given to local authorities, either in respect of their own trees or to assist planting by landowners; Task Force Trees have also assisted conservation bodies. In the last planting season Task Force Trees estimated that some 500,000 trees were planted with their help, and surgery had been carried out on 30,000 trees. There is assistance from English Heritage for the restoration of parks and gardens of outstanding architectural or historic interest; grants for parks and gardens of special historic interest are available from Task Force Trees. Other programmes of aid for replacing trees destroyed in the storm are administered by the Forestry Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Robert Banks To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list his Department's priorities for protecting the environment.

Mr. Ridley: We will be following up this month's highly successful conference by continuing to take a lead internationally on the protection of the ozone layer. We will continue investing in research into the greenhouse effect. We will take forward our plans for establishing an integrated system of control over industrial pollution and reforming waste disposal legislation. We will further the implementation of the package of measures to protect the United Kingdom's marine environment agreed at the second North sea conference. We will continue to take steps to clean up power station and vehicle emissions and to promote the use of lead-free petrol. We will continue to support a high level of investment in sewage treatment and disposal in order to improve the quality of our rivers and beaches.

Bathing Waters

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department's recent announcement that in 1988, 254 out of the 380 designated British bathing waters met European Economic Community standards used the same basis of evaluation as his written answer on 5 May 1988 that 262 out of 374 bathing waters met European Economic Community standards.

Mr. Moynihan: No. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Water and Planning explained in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) at column 572, the 1988 results reported on 21 February were assessed on a more stringent basis.

Drinking Water

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the drinking water supply in his Department's head office building meets the European Economic Community standard.

Mr. Chope: The Marsham street building is supplied with water by Thames Water, and since no drinking water is stored on the premises, the PSA does not take samples for analysis unless there is reason to suspect the quality of the water.

I am advised by Thames Water that in 1988, the last year for which complete records are available, the supply generally complied with the European Community directive.

Press and Public Relations and Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90;

(2) what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff, including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90;

(3) what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Ridley: Estimated outturn for paid publicity and associated staff costs for my Department, including PSA, is £6·4 million for 1988-89. The budget for 1989-90 will be some £7·5 million. Expenditure is not broken down between different publicity media. The current complement for my Department's press office is 56·5, including three vacancies. The complement for 1989-90 has not yet been finalised.

Rating Reform

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each charging authority in England *(a)* the financial provision made for the administration of community charge registrations and collection preparations in 1989-90, and *(b)* the Government allocation aid grant for the same period.

Mr. Gummer: I have today laid in the Library a table setting out the resources the Government have made available to charging authorities towards their costs in preparing for the community charge. In addition, a further £55 million of expenditure will be supported through RSG in 1989-90.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines are to be issued to community charge registration officers with regard to the exemption of hospital patients from payment of the community charge.

Mr. Gummer: Preliminary advice was included in a practice note No. 2, "The Community Charge: Exemptions from the Personal Community Charge", published in June last year. More detailed advice will be included in a further practice note on exemptions, a draft of which is under discussion with the local authority associations.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of all written representations he has received in response to the draft community charge regulations.

Mr. Gummer: No, since we do not have the permission of those making the representations to do so.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what circumstances a community charge registration officer may refuse exemption to a severely mentally impaired person who has been issued with the relevant certificate by a medical practitioner.

Mr. Gummer: I would not expect a community charge registration officer to question the clinical judgment of a medical practitioner that an individual is severely mentally impaired.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines are to be issued to community charge registration officers with regard to how they establish relevant factors, such as where each member of the household works, in establishing sole or main residence for the purposes of community charge registration.

Mr. Gummer: Community charge practice note No. 9, published in November last year, contains guidance for registration officers on establishing a person's sole or main residence. Copies of all community charge practice notes are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in his Department; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Ridley: The numbers and grades of staff and complement of the statistical divisions[1] of DOE(C) at 1 March 1989 are as follows:

	Staff in post as at 1 March 1989	*Present complement*
Chief Statistician	5	5
Statistician	20	19
Senior Assistant Statistician	4	6
Assistant Statistician	3	2
G7	3	2
SEO	4	5
HEO	16	15
EO	33	33
AO	44	46
AA	16	15
Secretary/typist	5	5
Total	153	153

[1] The statistical divisions in DOE(C) comprise Housing Data Statistics, Construction Industry Statistics, Local Authority Statistics, Land and General Statistics, and Environmental Protection Statistics.

There are also statisticians employed throughout the Department in posts of a largely administrative nature; these number 13 at 1 March 1989.

Complements for 1989-90 have not yet been finalised.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Ridley: Following is the information for DOE(C):

Year	*£ million*
1986-87	1·1
1987-88	0·6
1988-89	[1]5·0

[1] Provisional O/T.

No expenditure was incurred on privatisation advisers prior to 1986-87. Cost incurred in 1989-90 will be announced in due course in the usual way. For PSA, expenditure in 1988-89 is £50,000.

Fees

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Ridley: Information relating to the financial year between 1979-80 and 1984-85 inclusive is not readily available and cannot be obtained without disproportionate cost. Following is the information relating to the remaining financial years for my Department including PSA:

Year	*£ million*
1985-86	4·3
1986-87	5·0
1987-88	5·3
[1]1988-89	8·0

[1] Estimate.

Waveney (Pipeline Scheme)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce approval for the Waveney district council pipeline in-out scheme at Holton, Halesworth, Suffolk, Ref: FLAZ/10/32/T3535.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The council was informed on 10 March that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not propose to issue an additional capital allocation for this scheme. It will, however, be open to the council to carry it out as part of its normal capital programme if it considers it to be of sufficient priority.

Low-cost Rural Housing

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of his answer to the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) of 3 February, *Official Report*, columns *433*, on the role of the planning system in releasing land for low-cost housing in rural areas, he will incorporate his answer into "Planning Policy, Guidance" of 7 January 1988, paragraph 16, in order to allow local authorities to establish permanent low-cost rural housing.

Mr. Chope: We shall be incorporating my right hon. Friend's announcement into revised versions of PPG3 (land for housing) and PPG7 (rural enterprise and development) later this year. However, local planning authorities in rural areas are already entitled to treat local needs for low-cost housing as a material consideration in appropriate cases, on the strength of the recent announcement.

Montreal Protocol (Ozone Layer)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the countries which have so far ratified the Montreal protocol of 1987 on the ozone layer.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The following had become Parties to the protocol before the London "Saving the Ozone Layer" conference held on 5-7 March:

Belgium
Byelorussian SSR
Canada
Denmark
Egypt
Finland
France

Federal Republic of Germany
German Democratic Republic
Greece
Ireland
Italy
Japan
Kenya
Liechtenstein
Luxembourg
Malta
Mexico
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nigeria
Norway
Portugal
Singapore
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Uganda
Ukrainian SSR
United Kingdom
United States of America
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
European Community

(Total 33) *(Source:* United Nations environment programme).

At the conference some 20 further countries said that they would become parties and another 14 said that they would seriously consider doing so.

Festival of Food and Farming

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that at the festival of food and farming to be held in Hyde park on 4-7 May English food and the produce of English farming are both on display and available for purchase;

(2) when his Department was advised of the forthcoming festival of food and farming to be held in Hyde park on 4 to 7 May;

(3) in view of the cost of producing English wine, whether he will ensure that charging is permitted for samples of English wine at the festival of food and farming to be held in Hyde park from 4 to 7 May;

(4) what steps he is taking to ensure that at the festival of food and farming to be held in Hyde park on 4 to 7 May English wine will be both on display and available for purchase.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department was first approached about this event in March 1986. Approval for it to be held in Hyde park was given on 6 May 1988. Exhibitors may display and sell a range of agricultural goods, including food. Exhibitors may display English wine and take orders for later delivery or collection. They may also give away small free samples. I have accepted the advice of the Metropolitan police that alcohol should not be on direct sale to the public on site.

Leeds UDC

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he has issued any guidelines to the urban development corporation in Leeds as to the length of time it should take to process planning applications; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will provide information as to the total number of planning applications received by the Leeds urban development corporation; and how many of those have been determined within *(a)* four weeks, *(b)* six weeks and *(c)* eight weeks;

(3) whether he has given any guidance to the Leeds urban development corporation in relation to consultation on planning applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: UDCs are required to operate within the same statutory framework as any local planning authority when considering planning applications. This includes requirements to undertake consultations in accordance with article 18 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988. All the relevant guidance has been provided to the corporations.

All local planning authorities, including UDCs, are expected to provide quarterly returns giving details of the number of planning applications received and the number determined within the statutory eight-week period. These statistics are published by the Department. Figures for the final quarter of 1988 will include the first return from LDC. By 31 December 1988, LDC had received 51 applications, 14 had been determined and of these 12 (86 per cent.) were determined within eight weeks. This is substantially better than the national average.

Working Groups and Working Parties

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library papers produced for recent meetings of the *(a)* new systems working group, *(b)* rates working party, *(c)* community charge working group, *(d)* community charge implementation sub-group and *(e)* capital programmes working party; and if he will undertake to do so for future meetings of these working groups and working parties.

Mr. Ridley: No.

Severn-Trent Water Authority (SSIs)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites and acreage of special scientific interest in the ownership of the Severn-Trent water authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is currently being assembled by the Nature Conservancy Council. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as it is available.

Capper Pass Works, North Humberside

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet received Her Majesty's inspector of pollution's report on the subject of the emission of radiation from the Capper Pass works in north Humberside.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The report on emissions from the Capper Pass works completed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has been received by the Secretary of State and will shortly be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Water Authorities (Capital Debt)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to write off part or all of the capital debt of any of the English water authorities.

Mr. Howard: The Water Bill contains powers which will enable National Loans Fund and Public Works Loans

Board debt, inherited by the new companies from the water authorities, to be replaced by a combination of equity and debentures. These powers will be used to put in place capital structures appropriate for the new companies.

Water Industry, Derbyshire

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much capital investment was made in Derbyshire's water industry in 1979; and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Howard: Information in the form requested by my hon. Friend is not available.

Assured Tenancies

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what circumstances it is intended that the new assured tenancy replaces retrospectively a statutory tenancy under the Landlord and Tenancy Act 1954 (PL1) or the Rent Act 1968.

Mr. Trippier: Under part 1 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 most long leaseholders of residential property at a low rent can convert to a statutory tenancy under the Rent Act 1977 when the lease comes to an end. Clause 137 of and schedule 9 to the Local Government and Housing Bill would replace this right with a right to convert to an assured tenancy under the Housing Act 1988. These new provisions would apply to such leases entered into after clause 137 comes into force, and also to such leases which come to an end on or after 15 January 1999. The provisions would have no retrospective effect on statutory tenancies which arise before they come into force.

House Prices

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for each county, metropolitan district and London borough area estimates of average prices for (i) all houses, (ii) flats, (iii) terraced houses, (iv) semi-detached and (v) detached houses.

Mr. Trippier: I have today arranged for a table giving figures for building society mortgages for 1988 to be laid in the Library.

AIDS

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the longevity of the HIV AIDS virus in untreated sewage sea outfalls.

Mr. Howard: I am advised that there is no evidence to suggest that the HIV AIDS virus survives in the sea.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Insider Dealing

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list in chronological order all the cases of suspected insider dealing which have been, or are being, investigated by his Department, the date the investigation started, the sum involved in each case, the date of the suspected offence, the action taken on conclusion of the case, and the penalty imposed, if any.

Mr. Maude: In the interests of efficiency and justice, the fact that an insider dealing investigation is being considered or has been started, the details of the possible offence or possible offender, and the progress of the investigation and its outcome, are not normally announced or confirmed. However an announcement of an investigation may be made if it is considered to be in the public interest to do so, and the fact of a prosecution becomes known when the matter first comes before the court. It has been possible to appoint inspectors to carry out investigations into possible insider dealing offences since November 1986 (though not all investigations of insider dealing have involved inquiries by inspectors). Since then, 28 such appointments have been made. The following investigations have been announced:

Possible insider dealing offences related to:	*Date of appointment of inspectors*
(a) Certain actions by Mr. Geoffrey Collier	15 November 1986
(b) Dealings in securities of British and Commonwealth Shipping Company plc	12 December 1986
(c) Information about mergers possibly deriving from the Department of Trade and Industry, the Office of Fair Trading or the Monopolies and Mergers Commission	12 December 1986
(d) Dealings in securities of Unigroup plc	19 October 1987
(e) Dealings in securities of Grand Central Investment Holdings plc	16 November 1987
(f) Dealings in securities of Peachey Property Corporation plc	5 February 1988
(g) Dealings in securities of Consolidated Gold Fields plc	21 October 1988

Prosecutions have been instituted in relation to cases (a), (b) and (c), and it has been decided to take no further action on case (f).

Information about completed prosecutions for insider dealing offences, and about cases where criminal proceedings in respect of such offences have begun but are not completed, is as follows:

(A) Completed prosecutions

Defendant	*Company security(ies) involved*	*Date of offence or alleged offence*	*Outcome*	*Penalty*
1. John Bryce	Winterbottom Trust Ltd.	5 January 1981	Guilty	None
2. John Titheridge	Joseph Stocks and Sons (Holdings) Ltd.	11 December 1980	Guilty	Fine £4,000 each + £250 to Legal Aid Fund + £250 costs—or 3 months imprisonment in default of payment
Joyce Titheridge		Day between 15 April 1980 and 11 December 1980	Guilty	
3. John Allan Crump Dickinson	Harris and Sheldon Group Ltd.	Day unknown between 4 June 1981 and 18 June 1981	Guilty	6 months imprisonment suspended for 2 years + £100 costs

Defendant	Company security(ies) involved	Date of offence or alleged offence	Outcome	Penalty
4. David John Brooks	Suter Electrical Ltd.	4 December 1980 15 December 1980 23 December 1980 24 December 1980 30 December 1980 5 January 1981 6 January 1981	Not guilty	n/a
Ronald Hancock	Suter Electrical Ltd.	8 January 1981 15 January 1981	No case to answer	n/a
5. Colin Kettle	Blockley plc	9 August 1982	Not guilty	n/a
Neil Thorneywork	Blockley plc	9 August 1982	Not guilty	n/a
6. Maurice John Naerger	Martin the Newsagent plc	6 March 1984 9 March 1984	Guilty	Fine £800, £100 costs
7. Brian Fisher	Thomson T-Line plc	5 December 1985	Not guilty	n/a
8. William Antony Reardon-Smith	Reardon-Smith Line plc	28 May 1985	Guilty	£3,000 fine; £2,000 costs
9. Geoffrey William Collier	AE plc	3 November 1986	Guilty	12 months suspended for 2 years; £25,000 fine; £7,000 costs
	Cadbury Schweppes plc	14 October 1986		
10. Ronald Richard Jenkins	The British and Commonwealth Shipping Co. plc	14 October 1986	Guilty	£10,000 fine; £2,000 costs
	Steel Brothers Holdings plc	14 November 1986		
11. John Morris Cross	Wordplex plc	30 April 1987	Guilty	£7,000 fine; sentence of 9 months imprisonment in default of payment. A notice of appeal has been lodged

(B) Current prosecutions

Defendant	Company security(ies) involved	Date(s) of alleged offence(s)
12. Jonathon Howard Greenwood, Sara Joy Coren	Richard Clay plc	August 1985 and October 1985
	SGB plc	December 1985
	Allied Lyons plc	December 1985
	Wedgwood plc	June 1986
	McCorquodale plc	February 1986
13. Keith Thomas Robinson, Penelope Jane Scott Robinson	Mercantile House Holdings plc	5 January 1987
14. David Ivor Holyoak, Arthur Francis Nicholas, Wills Hill, Ian Michael Morl	Press Tools plc	5 August 1987
15. Frederick John Briggs	Wheway plc	10 November 1987
16. Piers Richard Fitzwilliams	Centreway Industries plc	3 July 1987; 9 July 1987; 29 July 1987; 30 July 1987

Cases 9, 10 and 12 resulted from the investigations by the inspectors at *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)*. Case 13 also resulted from inquiries by inspectors who were appointed on 11 June 1987. In addition information obtained by inspectors has, in appropriate cases, been disclosed to regulatory authorities, as permitted by section 180 of the Financial Services Act.

Information Technology

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to reply to the Trade and Industry Select Committee's report on information technology.

Mr. Forth: The Government's response to the Trade and Industry Select Committee's report on information technology was published on 9 March.

UK-EC Development

Mr. Cox: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the major joint industrial projects now being developed between the United Kingdom and other member states of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Atkins: We keep no central record of such projects. However, the indications are that there is increasing collaboration between United Kingdom companies and those in other member states as evinced by such projects as the Channel tunnel and the Airbus and the by the United Kingdom participating in the EC R and D framework programme.

Hearing Aid Council

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what review he has made of the effectiveness of the Hearing Aid Council.

Mr. Forth: I am content that the Hearing Aid Council fully discharges its responsibilities set out in the Hearing Aid Council Act 1968.

The Bill promoted by the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) would make changes to the Act. The Government will seek to ensure that the best possible Bill for all concerned emerges.

I am also considering with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health the suggestions made by the RNID in its "Fair Hearing Campaign" document.

Oil Exports

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been for each year since 1981, the total contribution of oil exports, in 1989 terms, to the balance of trade.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information requested is as follows. Figures are expressed in 1988 prices as 1989 prices are not yet available.

£ billion constant 1988 prices

	Visible trade balance	*Exports of oil*
1981	1·6	2·9
1982	0·4	3·2
1983	−3·1	5·5
1984	−5·6	6·1
1985	−4·1	6·4
1986	−6·8	6·5
1987	−8·7	6·5
1988	−20·6	5·6

New Businesses

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate for each of the past 10 years of the number of new businesses established in *(a)* Suffolk, *(b)* Norfolk and *(c)* Waveney.

Mr. Forth: The table gives the numbers of new businesses registering for VAT. Reliable estimates are not available prior to 1980 or for 1988.

	(a) Suffolk	*(b) Norfolk*	*(c) Waveney*
1980	1,659	2,183	260
1981	1,777	2,052	282
1982	1,818	2,147	255
1983	1,898	2,351	301
1984	1,931	2,338	324
1985	1,935	2,306	305
1986	2,100	2,621	338
1987	2,325	2,840	345

Over the period of total numbers of businesses registered for VAT increased by 21 per cent. for Suffolk, 15 per cent. for Norfolk and 19 per cent. for Waveney.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Department of Trade and Industry on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Forth: Expenditure under the Department's paid publicity budget is expected to total some £29 million in 1988-89. Of this, some £13·5 million will have been spent on television advertising, about £4·3 million press advertising, £75,000 on radio advertising, and the balance on other publicity activities. Expenditure in 1989-90 is expected to be some £25 million; detailed allocations by media have not yet been made.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of the Department of Trade and Industry; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Forth: The manpower allocations for 1989-90 will be set by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State later this month in the light of the Department's annual activity and resource management review. The number of staff currently employed in the Department's press office is 37 (including 16 on clerical and other support duties). The current manpower allocation is 41.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Department of Trade and Industry; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Forth: The manpower allocations for 1989-90 will be set by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State later this month in the light of the Department's annual activity and resource management review. The current allocation, and the number of staff in post on 1 February 1989 (part time staff are counted as half), is as follows:

Statistics division 1

Grade	*SIP 1 February 1989*	*Allocation of posts 1988-89*
Grade 3	1·0	1·0
Grade 5	3·0	[1]3·0
Grade 7	12·0	[1]12·0
SEO	1·0	1·0
HEO	8·0	8·0
Senior Assistant Statistician	2·0	7·0
Assistant Statistician	1·0	
EO	16·0	14·0
AO	17·5	17·5
AA	3·0	3·0
PS	4·0	4·0
Subtotal—Statistical Grades	3·0	7·0
Subtotal Other Grades	65·5	63·5
Total	68·5	70·5

[1] Following the introduction of unified grading, chief statistician and statistician grades were absorbed into Grades 5 and 7 respectively. All of the Grade 5 and 7 posts are filled by professional statistical staff.

In addition on 1 February 1989 there were four casual staff in post of which one was Senior Assistant Statistician.

Statistics Division 2

Grade	*SIP 1 February 1989*	*Allocation of posts 1988-89*
Grade 3	1·0	1·0
Grade 5	3·0	[1]3·0
Grade 7	9·5	[1]8·5
SEO	1·0	Nil
HEO	10·5	11·0
Senior assistant statistician	1·0	6·0
Assistant statistician	3·0	
EO	18·5	18·0
AO	40·5	41·0
AA	4·0	5·0
SPS	1·0	Nil
PS	3·0	4·0
Paper Keeper	1·0	1·0
Unallocated	—	1·0
Subtotal—Statistician grades	4·0	6·0
Subtotal—Other grades	93·0	93·5
Total	97·0	99·5

In addition on 1 February 1989 there were two casual staff in post of which one was an Assistant Statistician.

[1] Following the introduction of unified grading, chief statistician and statistician grades were absorbed into Grades 5 and 7 respectively. All of the Grade 5 and 7 posts are filled by professional statistical staff.

Business Statistics Office

Grade	*SIP 1 February 1989*	*Allocation of posts 1988-89*
Grade 3	1·0	1·0
Grade 5	5·0	[1]5·0
Grade 6	1·0	1·0
Grade 7	20·0	[1]20·0
SEO	18·0	20·0
HEO	85·0	80·0
Senior Assistant Statistician	3·0	10·0
Assistant Statistician	3·0	
SEO/SIO	1·0	1·0
EO	173·5	184·0
AO	224·5	242·5
AA	60·0	63·5
PS	6·0	6·0
Librarian	1·0	1·0
Assistant Librarian	1·0	1·0
Typing Manager	2·0	2·0
Typist	10·5	15·0
Senior Messenger	2·0	2·0
Porter/Messenger	8·0	9·0
Paper Keeper	2·0	3·0
Repro Graphics Officer I	1·0	1·0
Repro Graphics Officer II	2·0	2·0
Superintendent Telephonist	1·0	1·0
Telephonist	2·0	2·0
Subtotal—Statistician grades	6·0	10·0
Subtotal—Other grades	627·5	663·0
Total	633·5	673·0

In addition on 1 February 1989 there were 11 casual staff in post of which three were Assistant Statisticians.

[1] Following the introduction of unified grading, chief statistician and statistician grades were absorbed into Grades 5 and 7 respectively. However, 4 of the Grade 5 posts and 12 of the Grade 7 posts are filled by professional statistical staff.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by the Department of Trade and Industry in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Forth: The following table, based on information already published, shows gross expenditure incurred by the Department of Trade and Industry in connection with the sale of shares in British Aerospace, British Steel, British Telecom, Rolls Royce, and Rover Group plc since 1979-80, together with an estimate for expenditure in 1989-90. The figures exclude subscriptions for new shares and injections of funds for capital restructuring but include commission and some relatively minor items (including stamp duty) which were not paid as fees to outside organisations. The Department also incurred expenses in 1986-87 under a single contract in connection with the sale of certain British Shipbuilders' yards, but these are excluded on the ground of commercial confidentiality:

Company	*Year*	*Amount £ thousands*
British Aerospace	1980-81	4,635
British Aerospace	1981-82	887
British Aerospace	1984-85	69
British Aerospace	1985-86	16,740
British Aerospace	1986-87	717
TOTAL		23,048
British Telecom	1983-84	515
British Telecom	1984-85	138,477
British Telecom	1985-86	26,461
British Telecom	1986-87	10,425
TOTAL		175,878
Rolls Royce	1985-86	100
Rolls Royce	1986-87	981
Rolls Royce	1987-88	40,704
Rolls Royce	1988-89	[1]1,182
TOTAL		42,967
Rover	1988-89	[1]1,800
British Steel	1988-89	64,949
British Steel	1989-90	5,000
TOTAL		69,949

[1] Provisional.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the total fees paid out by the Department of Trade and Industry to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Forth: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the fees paid by the Department of Trade and Industry for general consultancies from 1984-85 to the current financial year

are given in the table. In addition to management consultancies the figures also include procurement of other specialised services by the Department to improve its efficiency. The apparent decrease from 1986-87 indicates a shift of consultancy expenditure from general to programme-related consultancies for which separate consolidated records are not kept.

	£'000
1984-85	6,104
1985-86	6,417
1986-87	4,650
1987-88	3,050
1988-89	[1]2,500

[1] Forecast outturn.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the total fees paid out by the Duchy of Lancaster to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Newton: Fees paid out by the Duchy of Lancaster to management consultants in 1979-80 and subsequent years were as follows:

	£
1979-80	34,097
1985-86	10,524
1986-87	28,629
1987-88	4,185

The forecast payment for 1988-89 is £4,000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by the Department of Trade and Industry on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Forth: Estimated expenditure on press and public relations in 1988-89 is £1,426,000. The detailed budget for 1989-90 has not yet been agreed but is expected to be broadly the same in real terms.

Care Homes (UK) plc and Anglo Dutch Ltd.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what action he proposes to take in respect of the failure of Care Homes (UK) plc and against the original directors of the company;

(2) what information he has given the professional bodies of which the shareholder trustee accountants, auditors, lawyers and certain directors of Care Homes (UK) plc and Anglo Dutch Limited are members about the circumstances concerning the collapse of those two companies; and whether he has requested those professional bodies to take any action;

(3) if he will examine a copy of the prospectus of Care Homes (UK) plc, dated 6 March 1986;

(4) if his Department is aware of any misleading or untrue statement made in the prospectus issued by Care Homes (UK) plc;

(5) whether he proposes to take any action with regard to the prospectus issued by Care Homes (UK) plc, on 6 March 1986.

Mr. Maude: I am aware of the proposal to place Care Homes (UK) plc in liquidation. It is not my right hon. Friend's practice to comment on the affairs of individual companies.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what basis his Department decided to grant a licence to Anglo Dutch Ltd in 1983; and whether his Department received the information required to renew the licence in subsequent years.

Mr. Maude: A principal's licence issued under section 3 of the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act 1958 was granted to Anglo Dutch Limited (then known as Hay Hill Securities Limited) in 1983 following the submission by the company of the information required at that time from applicants for such licences and the carrying out of the checks then made to establish whether the applicant was a fit and proper person to hold a licence. Further applications were submitted in 1984 and 1985. In both cases these were submitted late, but the relevant forms and supporting documents were properly completed and licences were issued on both occasions. The company's licence lapsed in September 1986.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action his Department is to take in respect of the failure of the licensed dealer in securities, Anglo Dutch Ltd.

Mr. Maude: Anglo Dutch Limited was wound up by the High Court of Justice on 8 December 1986. Accordingly, the Official Receiver has a statutory duty to investigate its affairs and his inquiries are nearing completion.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the country in which the shareholders of Anglo Dutch Ltd resided; and who were the ultimate beneficial shareholders in the company during the period of the licence to deal in securities.

Mr. Maude: Anglo Dutch Limited is a subsidiary of Anglo Dutch Holdings Limited which is also in liquidation in this country. The shareholders of the holding company appear to be resident in the Channel Islands, although information as to the identities of the ultimate beneficial shareholders is not available.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of the directors of Care Homes (UK) plc, at the time the prospectus was issued, are still engaged in business activities in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude: This information is not available.

Companies (Investigations)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he intends to take to improve the speed, efficiency and effectiveness of investigations into companies where there are allegations of wrongdoing.

Mr. Maude: The present Companies Bill contains proposals to amend and strengthen the investigation powers contained in the Companies Act and related legislation. The subjet is kept under constant review within my Department.

Scientific Collaboration (Japan)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will outline the results of talks between

his Department and the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry on scientific collaboration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: My Department and Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry regularly exchange information on science and technology matters. The most recent opportunity for such exchanges was the latest round of annual DTI/MITI talks held in Tokyo on 28 February and 1 March 1989. Both sides reviewed the growing number of opportunities for exchange of scientists and engineers between the United Kingdom and Japan and reaffirmed the value they attach to such exchanges. The opportunity was also taken to hold an exchange of views between experts in the fields of biotechnology, ocean technology, superconductivity and software engineering.

JESSI

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to support the joint European submicron silicon intitiative following the project's adoption by the Eureka programme of applied science; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: A definition phase for JESSI (the joint European submicron silicon initiative) has been carried out in the EUREKA initiative. United Kingdom companies have been associated with this work and are considering their further involvement. JESSI needs clarification by its proposers before any decision can be made on the provision of suport from public funds.

Turkey (Association Agreement)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent discussions have taken place between his Department and the European Economic Community Committee to discuss breaches of the association agreement with Turkey; what progress has been made in reducing Turkish breaches of the agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* A group of experts drawn from the Commission and Turkey has met twice since last November to discuss problems impeding the achievement of free trade as laid down in the EC-Turkey Association agreement. The Department of Trade and Industry submitted a note of the United Kingdom's concerns about import taxation and state aids to the Commission in preparation for these meetings and we shall continue to give full support to the work of this group.

TRANSPORT

North-West Region

7. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on recent plans to invest in the rail network in and to the north west region in order to maximise the benefits to this region.

Mr. Portillo: BR is spending a total of nearly £50 million on new locomotives and driving van trailers on the west coast main line, and another £35 million on the Windsor link and the resignalling and remodelling of Piccadilly station in Manchester. The area is also benefiting from BR's substantial rolling stock investment.

Fast Trains (Continental Travel)

13. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department is *(a)* carrying out and *(b)* sponsoring on potential demand for fast trains for passengers and freight to the continent after 1992.

Mr. Portillo: Forecasts of potential demand have been produced for BR, SNCF and Eurotunnel. BR is taking account of them in preparing the plan required by the Channel Tunnel Act, setting out its proposals for Channel tunnel rail services.

Channel Tunnel

15. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters he has received *(a)* in support of and *(b)* in opposition to the proposed high-speed Channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Portillo: We have received a large number of letters, mainly from people who were opposed to British Rail's original proposals. BR has announced a revised route proposal which takes account of the comments received.

17. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest information on the proposed level of investment in the north-west region by British Rail intended to maximise the benefits to that region of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail is still working on its proposals for Channel tunnel passenger and freight services and any associated investment. It is required by the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 to publish a plan by the end of this year.

22. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the north-west regional managers of British Rail to discuss the implications of the Channel tunnel for the north-west.

Mr. Portillo: I meet regional managers from time to time on regional visits. I look forward to the plans for freight and passenger services from the north-west to the Channel tunnel which British Rail is obliged to publish by the end of the year.

23. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent his Department has been consulted to date by British Rail in reaching their decision as to the route of the proposed Channel tunnel high-speed rail link.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail has kept us in touch with the progress of its work on the rail link proposal.

24. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what discussion he is having with those London borough councils whose areas would be affected by the high-speed train services connected to the Channel tunnel development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail consulted all those boroughs which would have been affected by its original proposals. It will now enter detailed consultations with those affected by the revised proposal even though its impact would be much less.

27. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake a research programme into

the investment needed by British Rail and other transport operators if the port of Liverpool and the north-west region are to take full advantage of the Channel tunnel.

29. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will undertake an urgent research programme into the needs of the north-west region with respect to the Channel tunnel.

42. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that *(a)* the port of Liverpool and *(b)* the north-west region are able to take advantage of the Channel tunnel.

34. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further assessment he has made of the transportation advantages of the development of the port of Liverpool to coincide with the opening of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: A partnership of public and private sector interests in the north-west, led by chambers of commerce there, is already carrying out a study into the region's requirements arising from the single European market and the Channel tunnel. Government Departments will assist with information and advice as necessary.

The plan that British Rail is required to prepare under section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 on international passenger and freight "Services" will cover all regions.

The impact of the Channel tunnel is one of the many factors taken into account in planning the national trunk road programme. There is already a number of schemes in the programme that will improve north-south links. A review of the trunk road programme is in progress, and we expect to make an announcement in the spring.

31. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the regional impact of the Channel tunnel.

36. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the regional impact of the Channel tunnel.

56. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the effects of the Channel tunnel on the north-west.

Mr. Portillo: There have been some representations from right hon. and hon. Members, local authorities and other organisations, mainly about improvements to road and rail links between the regions and the Channel tunnel.

On rail, these points are best made to the British Rail working groups which have been set up in each region as part of its planning services.

32. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any proposals to improve existing railway lines from Kent, around London, and through the north-west of England, to Glasgow, to create a high-speed rail link from the Channel tunnel to Scotland.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail's proposal for a new rail link between the Channel tunnel and London will make possible improved links from the tunnel to the north of England and Scotland. BR will be setting out its proposals for Channel tunnel rail services to the north of London in the plan which it will publish later this year, in compliance with section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987.

40. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek a meeting with the chairman of British Rail to discuss investment plans for the north-west in the years prior to the opening of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend and I will want first to see the plan that BR is due to publish later this year, in compliance with section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987.

41. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on plans to protect the environment along the Channel tunnel high-speed rail link route.

Mr. Portillo: The revised proposal which British Rail has now announced includes a number of very significant changes designed to protect the environment.

45. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with British Rail about the Channel tunnel and related investment in the north-west.

Mr. Portillo: The importance of direct freight links from the regions to the Channel tunnel is raised in our discussions from time to time. British Rail is still working on the plan which it will present to Ministers later this year, in compliance with section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987.

48. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what level of investment is currently planned to be spent by British Rail in the north-west region to coincide with the opening of the Channel tunnel.

50. **Mr. Terry Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that British Rail's investment plans will maximise the benefits to the north-west region of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail is still working on the plan which it will be publishing later this year, in compliance with section 40 or the Channel Tunnel Act 1987.

53. **Ms. Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussion he has had with his French counterpart regarding transport links to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend and I regularly meet French transport ministers and discuss transport links to the Channel tunnel when necessary.

54. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the implications for the environment of the proposed rail link for the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: The revised proposal which British Rail has now announced includes a number of very significant changes designed to protect the environment.

P and O

18. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many times he has met representatives of P and O since 1979; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Channon: I meet representatives of P and O and other shipping companies from time to time.

British Rail

12. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chair of British Rail; and what matters will be discussed.

25. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chair of British Rail; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Channon: I shall be meeting the chairman of British Rail on Thursday, to discuss a variety of railway matters.

19. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Rail; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Channon: I shall be meeting the chairman of British Rail this Thursday, 16 March, to discuss a variety of railway matters.

Highway Maintenance

20. **Mr. Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will next meet the Association of District Councils to discuss highway maintenance.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend met representatives of the Association of District Councils last week. Highway maintenance was among the issues they discussed.

Light Rail Proposals

21. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what light rail proposals he has received in the last 18 months.

Mr. Channon: Promoters of light rail schemes for Manchester, Avon, South Yorkshire, west midlands, Leeds and an extension of the Tyne and Wear metro have had discussions with us. Light rail schemes are also being considered in the east London rail study, as well as for Croydon, Nottingham and Southampton.

Bus Industry

26. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the bus industry to be fully privatised.

Mr. Portillo: Once the Scottish Bus Group subsidiaries have been privatised, only London Buses Limited and the local authority-owned bus companies will remain in public ownership. Four of the latter have already been sold and I hope that others will follow shortly.

Airline Punctuality

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss the timing of the publication of a league table of airline punctuality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Such a meeting would not be helpful at present. The authority will be collecting information on airline punctuality from 1 April, but has yet to devise the form of publication of punctuality statistics, or to decide the timetable for publication. The Department is being kept informed as the proposal is developed.

British Rail (Privatisation)

30. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a further statement on his plans with regard to the eventual privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: Privatisation is being considered. It will be some time before we are ready to reach any conclusions.

London Underground (Policing)

33. **Mr. Hary Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many police are stationed on Underground trains and stations at any one time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The numbers of police officers on Underground trains and stations varies according to the time of day, but at 6 o'clock in the evening, on an average day, there would be about 80 British Transport police officers and 45 officers of the Metropolitan and City police forces on duty on the Underground.

British Rail (Investment)

35. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent investment he has recently approved for British Rail.

Mr. Portillo: Since 1 January my right hon. Friend has approved investment for 138 class 158 Sprinter express DMU vehicles for the provincial sector, 77 class 165 networker DMU vehicles and the electrification of the Cambridge-King's Lynn line, at a total cost of some £113 million.

M40

37. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on the completion of the M40.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer to my answer earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry).

Motorways (Business Traffic)

38. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the estimated increase in the flow of business traffic on Britain's motorways over the past five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no direct estimates of the amount of business traffic on roads in Britain. The flow of traffic by vehicle type can be a guide to business use, and the data are summarised in the following table.

Percentage increase from 1983 to 1988 in the annual average daily flow per kilometre of motorway in Great Britain by type of vehicle

Type of vehicle	*Percentage*
Heavy goods vehicles	44
Light goods vehicles	88
Buses and coaches	30

For all cars and taxis growth has been 55 per cent. A proportion of this traffic will be for business purposes, but such traffic cannot be separately identified in the traffic census.

During this period, the length of motorways open to traffic has risen by 9·5 per cent. This means that the total

number of kilometres travelled on motorways has risen more quickly than the flow per kilometre. The details of total traffic are:

Percentage increase from 1983 to 1988 in kilometres travelled on motorways in Great Britain by type of vehicle

Type of vehicle	*Percentage*
Heavy goods vehicle	58
Light goods vehicle	106
Buses and coaches	42

Notes:
For cars and taxis as a whole the growth has been 70 per cent.
1. Light goods vehicles covers goods vehicles up to 30 cwt unladen weight.
2. Heavy goods vehicles are goods vehicles with an unladen weight greater than 30 cwt.
3. Buses and coaches covers vehicles with nine or more seats.

Drawbar Trailers

39. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to increase the weight restrictions for drawbar trailers from the present 32·520 tonnes gross to 38 tonnes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no plans to increase drawbar weights to 38 tonnes.

In discussing these vehicle weights in Brussels we would expect to argue to have a drawbar limit in the United Kingdom at no higher than 35 tonnes, together with a derogation for the 10·5 tonne axle loading.

Railway Stations

43. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many railway stations have been opened in the last 10 years.

Mr. Portillo: A total of 132 stations have been opened or re-opened since the beginning of 1979.

Airport Services

44. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received in 1989 from airlines and passengers, respectively, on the services provided at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has received one such representation about the portering service at Heathrow. He has also received many letters about aviation security, some of which contain representations about services provided at various United Kingdom airports. The number relating to Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted could not be established without disproportionate cost.

London Underground (Automatic Ticket Barriers)

46. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received about the new automatic barriers on the London Underground system.

Mr. Portillo: In addition to two early-day motions, about 30 representations have been received from Members of Parliament and members of the public since 1 January.

Kent County Council

47. **Mr. Prescott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of Kent county council; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Channon: I have had no recent requests to receive a delegation but we are frequently in touch with county council representatives about a wide range of transport matters.

Burscough-Rufford Bypasss

49. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his intentions for the Burscough-Rufford bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Proposals for a bypas of Burscough and Rufford have not been abandoned, although the orders considered at the 1986 public inquiry will be withdrawn shortly. Further consideration is being given to the trunk road network in the Preston to Liverpool corridor.

I have written to my hon. Friend.

Taxi Trade

51. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to discover the needs of the taxi trade and its passengers.

Mr. Portillo: I have recently asked the Department's transport and road research laboratory to conduct a survey of taxi journeys in London to provide information on the current demand for and pattern of taxi journeys. The main survey will be in May with a pilot run on 21 March. TRRL has in the past reported on taxis in provincial towns and I am arranging for this work to be updated. We also recently conducted a consultation exercise to seek the views of all interested parties on possible changes to taxi and private hire vehicle legislation.

West Sussex (TSG)

52. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level of transport supplementary grant paid to West Sussex county council in 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Transport supplementary grant of £1·526 million will be paid to West Sussex county council in support of capital expenditure on roads of more than local importance in 1989-90.

This sum includes support of over £1·3 million for major schemes, including the newly accepted A259 Rustington bypass, and over £200,000 for minor works.

Grant is less than for 1988-89 because four major schemes are expected to have opened to traffic by the end of March and so expenditure on them in 1989-90 will be small.

Central London Rail Study

55. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to announce a decision on the central London rail study.

Mr. Portillo: We hope to announce decisions later this year once the views of the interested parties and the results of the further work currently in hand have been considered.

Airport Security

57. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in the light of the recent international conference on aviation security in Montreal, what action he intends to take to improve security at British airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State attended the ministerial meeting of the ICAO council on 15-16 February. We explained to my hon. Friend for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) on 21 February at column *556* that the purpose of that meeting was to agree work which member states will take forward through ICAO rather than individually.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of reported *(a)* violent crimes and *(b)* other crimes on (i) London Underground, (ii) British Rail and (iii) all public transport in 1979 and 1988.

Mr. Portillo: London Underground and British Rail figures for 1979 and 1987 are as follows; comparable figures for 1988 are not yet available. Information on crimes on other forms of public transport is not held centrally.

	1979	*1987*
London Underground		
(i) violence against the person	646	1,045
(ii) other crimes	15,645	18,952
British Rail[1]		
(i) violence against the person	1,365	1,908
(ii) other crimes	58,354	64,375

[1] includes Sealink services.

Select Committees (Recommendations)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted, by his Department since June 1987.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have been three inquiries completed by the Select Committee on Transport since June 1987:

(i) The decline in the United Kingdom-registered Merchant Fleet;
(ii) The Government's Expenditure Plans for Transport 1988-89 to 1990-91;
(iii) Airline Competition: Computer Reservation Systems.

The Government's responses to these reports have been published by the Committee as HC681, HC128, and HC61 respectively.

Consultations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements there are for consulting consumers on the work and decisions of his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department consults extensively on all aspects of its work and decision-making. It issues many consultative documents ranging from specific surveys of customer attitudes to Green Papers. It fully complies with all statutory obligations to hold public inquiries and goes beyond these obligations in consulting the public at an early stage on road scheme proposals. Few consumers fail to offer their experience, views, advice and comments.

Computer Information (Confidentiality)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the potential security risks of the computerised driving licence systems; and what steps he intends to take to guard against these risks.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are bound to be potential security risks in any system. We would prefer not to publicise them or our counter-measures. We are satisfied that the regular scrutiny of the DVLC driving licence system both by the Department and by Government experts in computer security, coupled with firm management controls and staff training, represent a good level of security.

If my hon. Friend has any particular potential security risk in mind, perhaps she would tell me or write to Mr. P. G. Collis, Head of driver licensing division, Room 27, D9, Department of Transport, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre, Longview road, Swansea SA6 7JL.

Roads (Hampshire)

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all road schemes in Hampshire which he is financing directly and those which he is helping the Hampshire county council to finance for each of the next five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following trunk road schemes to be financed by the Department are in preparation.

M3	Bar End-Compton
M3	Compton-Bassett
A339	Basingstoke Northern bypass stage 3 dualling
A3	Liphook and Petersfield bypasses
A36	West Wellow bypass
A339	Headley bypass
A31	Picket Post junction improvement
A31	Stoney Cross junction improvement
A36	Maureys lane, West Wellow junction improvement
A339	Black Dam roundabout, Basingstoke improvement

19 minor improvements
8 schemes to install central reserve safety fencing.

Information cannot be provided on an annual basis as timing of construction depends generally on progress of design and statutory procedures.

Transport supplementary grant is available for the following Hampshire county council schemes:

A3	Market way, Portsmouth
A33	Six Dials, Southampton
A326	West Totton bypass (Stage 2)
A331	Blackwater valley route
A335	Portswood/Swaythling bypass
B3340	Hook bypass underbridge

Minor schemes to the value of £511,000.

No decisions have yet been made about transport supplementary grant for county council schemes starting in 1990-91 and subsequent years.

Merchant Shipping

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking in the Council of Ministers to ensure that there is a level playing field within the European Community in respect of merchant shipping, and that other member Governments abandon their fiscal preferences to their own ships.

Mr. Portillo: We press at every opportunity for the liberalisation of shipping cabotage. Substantive discussions are scheduled for the June Transport Council. We are still waiting for the Commission to produce proposals on the harmonisation of state aids and ways of improving the competitiveness of Community fleets. In the meantime we have registered with the Commission our strong opposition to any preferential treatment for intra-Community shipping.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current size of the United Kingdom-owned trading fleet; how it is distributed between mainland United Kingdom registration, Crown dependencies, dependent territories and foreign registration; and what were the comparable figures in 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The following table gives the information requested for vessels of 500 gross registered tons and over at 31 December 1988.

United Kingdom-owned trading vessels (500 grt and over) at 31 December 1988

Registered in:	*Number*	*(GRT) million*	*(DWT) million*
United Kingdom	350	4·3	5·4
Crown dependencies	87	1·8	3·2
Dependent territories	91	3·3	6·0
Foreign countries	93	1·2	1·9
Total	621	10·6	16·5

The comparable figures for vessels registered in the United Kingdom or Crown dependencies at 31 December 1987 were 1,194 vessels (22·5 million grt and 35·7 million dwt). Information is not available for 1979 for Crown dependencies separately or for dependent territory and foreign registered United Kingdom-owned ships.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest estimate for spending by the Department of Transport in 1988-89 on publicity and advertising is £5,708,000. The 1989-90 budget is £5,878,000. These figures are broken down as follows:

	1988-89 £	*1989-90* £
Television advertising	1,867,000	1,900,000
Radio advertising	110,000	113,000
Newspaper advertising	365,000	332,000
Other promotional material	3,367,000	3,503,000
	5,709,000	5,878,000

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has a current complement within its information division of 17 posts for press and public relations with no vacancies. The proposed complement for 1989-90 is 16.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest figure for information division press and public relations costs for 1988-89 is £451,000. The budget for 1989-90 is £446,000. These figures cover the overall costs of running the press office, calculated using the Her Majesty's Treasury simplified ready reckoner for staff and other costs.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in his Department; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I praise the directorate for the latest figures they produce on a regular basis.

The Department's directorate of statistics had 110 staff in post at 1 March 1989. The current complement is 116 and that proposed for 1989-90 is 119·5. The division between grades is as follows:

	At 1 March 1989 *Complement*	*Staff-in-post*	*Complement 1989-90*
Statistician Posts	34	32	36·0
Grade 3	1	1	1·0
Grade 5	4	4	4·0
Grade 7	23	23	23·0
(Senior) Assistant Statistician	6	4	8·0
Administrative Posts	78	73	77·0
Senior Executive Officer	1	1	1·0
Higher Executive Officer	10	10	9·0
Executive Officer	30	28	32·0
Administrative Officer	26	25	25·0
Administrative Assistant	6	4	4·0
Senior Personal Secretary	1	1	1·0
Personal Secretary	4	3	4·0
Typographer	0	1	1·0
Other Posts	4	5	6·5
Principal Scientific Officer	Nil	1	Nil
Higher Scientific Officer	Nil	Nil	0·5
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	2	2	2·0

	At 1 March 1989 Complement	Staff-in-post	Complement 1989-90
Scientific Officer	Nil	Nil	20
Professional and Technical Officer	2	2	20

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The sums involved are as follows:

£000s

Privatisation	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	Estimate 1988-89	Estimate 1989-90
Sale of shares in National Freight Corporation	151	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sale of shares in Associated British Ports	—	1,889	260	1,494	—	—	—	—	—
Sale of shares in British Airways plc	—	—	50	1,012	674	20,804	11,364	180	380
Sale of shares in BAA plc	—	—	—	—	—	564	41,149	3,200	—
Sale of National Bus Company operations	—	—	—	—	—	635	324	140	40
British Rail privatisation study (consultants fees)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	300	300

No expenditure was incurred before 1981-82.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The total fees paid by the Department to management consultants since 1 April 1984 were as follows:

	£
1984-85	250,000
1985-86	272,000
1986-87	218,000
1987-88	371,000

The latest estimate for 1988-89 is £595,000.

This excludes fees on computing consultancies. Information for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Blackwall Tunnel

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the general level of traffic on *(a)* Saturdays and *(b)* Sundays in winter, in PCUs per hour flowing through the southbound bore of the Blackwall tunnel and along the A13 at the northern entrance to the Blackwall tunnel, together with the maximum flow capability of that road between that point and the northern portal of the Rotherhithe tunnel; and what adjustments were made to signal phasing at the junctions adjacent to the northern portals of both tunnels on Saturday and Sunday 4 and 5 March.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In winter, normal hourly traffic flows southbound through the Blackwall tunnel vary between 200 vehicles and 2,100 vehicles on Saturday, and between 200 vehicles and 1,800 vehicles on Sunday. The lowest flows occur in the early hours of the morning, the highest usually in the early afternoon. Occasionally flows of about 2,500 vehicles are observed on Saturdays between 5 pm and 6 pm probably as a result of sporting events in the vicinity. The information is not available in terms of passenger car units.

Detailed information on weekend and hourly traffic flows and maximum flow capability along the A13 near the northern entrance of the Blackwall tunnel is not available. Estimates of annual average daily two-way traffic flow, based upon traffic counts taken in 1986 and 1987, are available as follows:

Section	All motor vehicles
A102M (Blackwall Tunnels) to A1206 (Cotton St.)	52,500
A1206 (Cotton St.) to A1205 (Burdett Rd.)	43,500
A1205 (Burdett Rd.) to A101 (Rotherhithe Tunnel approaches)	35,500

Traffic flows on Saturday and Sunday are generally below the average for the whole week.

The capacity of an all-purpose urban road depends on a number of factors including traffic pattern and composition, junctions, access, bus lanes, numbers of pedestrians, etc., and it is not possible to give a maximum figure.

The traffic signals at the A13/Blackwall northern approach road were adjusted to account for the planned closure. The police were able to monitor the junction by closed circuit television and make further adjustments as necessary. No change was made in the phasing of the signals at the Rotherhithe tunnel junction. The closure of the tunnel while an accident was cleared was too short to allow adjustments to be made.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the area of maximum congestion on Saturday and Sunday 4 and 5 March, respectively, occasioned by the closure of the south bound bore of the Blackwall tunnel; and what was the general level of time penalty experienced by travellers on the main east-west and north-south routes, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The worst delays were on the A13 from Gardiners corner east to Prince Regent lane. On Saturday morning these delays were equivalent to those experienced on a weekday rush-hour at their peak.

The delays were aggravated by other factors, including an accident in Rotherhithe tunnel, the closure of Tower bridge, and a strike by Woolwich ferry operators.

Mr. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reason the southbound bore of the Blackwall tunnel was closed on 4 and 5 March; what consideration he has given *(a)* to confining such closures to 12-hour periods from 2100 hours to 0900 hours over each night or *(b)* to confining traffic to smaller vehicles using one lane through the tunnel or approach roads; and what would be the additional cost of these or similar measures to minimise congestion.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department announced in February that the southbound bore of the Blackwall tunnel would be closed for annual maintenance from 10 pm on 4 March to 5 am on 6 March, and during the same hours on the two succeeding weekends.

Good progress has been made with the work. The tunnel was re-opened ahead of schedule at 6.15 pm on 5 March, and the final proposed closure may not be necessary.

Alternative arrangements for these closures were considered and rejected either for reasons of safety or because they would increase the overall closure period required.

Automatic Train Protection

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* the commencement date of British Rail's pilot schemes to test and develop a system of automatic train protection; how much finance is committed to the project; how long it will last; where the pilot scheme will be carried out; and when it is anticipated evaluation will be completed.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that BR have been considering the possibility of introducing an automatic train protection (ATP) system for some time. On 16 November 1988 it agreed that proposals for ATP should be progressed without delay, and on 6 March its investment committee authorised an initial £1 million for development. My right hon. Friend's approval was not needed.

Although some automatic train protection systems have been or are being installed on a few other railway systems, none of them is at present technically compatible with BR's signalling system. The development programme will investigate and test hardware to enable a specification to be drawn up which will be suitable for application in differing locations and situations on BR's network.

As part of the development programme BR plans to undertake pilot schemes, which are likely to be on the Chiltern lines and the Great Western main line. BR has made financial provision for the pilot schemes, but the amounts are not yet finalised. BR hopes to commence installation of the first pilot scheme in October 1990. Assuming tests are satisfactorily completed, a programme for national introduction could start in 1992.

Aberdeen MRC

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a table showing the planned number of people on watch at Aberdeen MRC at the following dates *(a)* 5 April, *(b)* 5 June and *(c)* 5 August 1989 showing a detailed split into qualified officers, trainees and auxiliaries.

Mr. Portillo: The planned strength for 5 April is four experienced regular officers, one regular officer under training, and one auxiliary.

It is not possible to forecast with certainty the composition on the other dates, due to the possibilities of unforseen absences affecting any plans which may be made now. However, the watch is expected to comprise four regular officers (of whom normally not more than one would be under training) and one or two auxiliaries per watch. It is planned not to have fewer than four persons on watch.

Ness Railway Bridge

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, following the collapse of the Ness railway bridge, there has been an inspection of other bridges on the Inverness-Wick/Thurso railway line.

Mr. Portillo: Yes. British Rail is satisfied as to the integrity of other bridges on the Inverness-Wick/Thurso railway line, but precautionary inspections by divers are being carried out where it is considered advisable.

Swansea MRC

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what official record has been kept of technical difficulties with interference and breakthrough at Swansea MRC since the transfer of additional aerials following the closure of Hartland MRSC; and if he will publish this information.

Mr. Portillo: All instances of breakthrough were logged by the staff at Swansea, and reported to the coastguard maintenance authority for rectification. The interference was unrelated to the closure of Hartland Point MRSC and has been successfully eliminated.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what problems have been experienced with interference and breakthrough at Swansea MRC since the transfer of additional aerials following the closure of Hartland MRSC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Interaction between two VHF frequencies was experienced which was unrelated to the transfer of control of aerials following the closure of Hartland Point MRSC.

The problem has been traced to a change of frequency used by the police, and the Home Office has dealt with it by modifying the coastguard radio sites affected.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will assess the impact on coastguard operations of technical difficulties being experienced at Swansea MRC following the closure of Hartland MRSC.

Mr. Portillo: There is no evidence of any operational impact due to technical difficulties at Swansea.

Transportation Unit

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the role of the head of the transportation unit.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Leadership: achieving the tasks, building the team and getting the best from individuals.

Mathematical Models

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of development work on mathematical transport models for use in analytical work was tendered out to consultancies in each year since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's records do not enable a year-by-year breakdown to be compiled. The development of models often takes place in step with their operational use, as needs for improvement arise.

The best estimate which can be made is that for the period 1983 to date, 76 per cent. of development has been carried out by extra mural contract and 24 per cent. in-house mainly at the transport and road research laboratory.

Ramsey MRSC

Mr. Leyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the financial, buildings, equipment and manpower arrangements made between the Department of Transport and House of Keys in respect of the closure of Ramsey MRSC.

Mr. Portillo: The Isle of Man Government have accepted full responsibility for the coastguard auxiliary companies on the island. Their continuing training and administration will be under the supervision of a Her Majesty's Coast Guard officer on secondment to the Isle of Man Government.

The existing Her Majesty's Coast Guard rescue equipment has been valued and offered to the Isle of Man Government for purchase. They are currently considering the offer.

The buildings vacated by Her Majesty's Coast Guard are subject to negotiation between the Isle of Man authorities and the Property Services Agency.

Merchant Navy Certificates

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet decided whether to accept Merchant Navy certificates of competency issued by other European Community member states as valid for service in junior officer posts on United Kingdom registered ships.

Mr. Portillo: Following the consultation exercise announced on 1 December 1988, the Government have decided to implement certain changes to the certification requirements for officers serving on United Kingdom registered merchant vessels.

These changes will allow holders of certificates of competency issued by any member state of the European Community—in accordance with the International Maritime Organisation convention on standards of training, certification and watchkeeping—to serve in junior officer posts on board United Kingdom vessels. The Department has written to the certification authorities in other member states for the information needed to give effect to these changes. They will be introduced as soon as this information is available.

We have also decided to extend recognition to certificates of competency issued by the Norwegian authorities subject to satisfactory assurances on reciprocity.

Merchant Ship Registration

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act 1988 relating to merchant ship registration are to be brought into effect.

Mr. Portillo: The Merchant Shipping Act 1988 (Commencement Number 3) Order 1989, published today, brings part I of the 1988 Act fully into force in the United Kingdom on 1 April 1989. Part I modernises the system for registering British ships and strengthens the enforcement of safety requirements. Similar provisions are already in force or being introduced in the other British flag registries in Crown dependencies and dependent territories.

Boeing 737 (Accident)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the official report into the cause of the accident to a Boeing 737 aircraft at Manchester airport on 22 August 1985 will be published.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The report by the Department's air accidents investigation branch (AAIB) was published today. Copies have been placed in the Library.

The report took longer than normal to produce because of the extent of the investigation required into the circumstances surrounding this accident and as a result of the decision by AAIB to devote exceptional resources and time to conduct a large scale examination of the survivability aspects of the accident.

The report contains 31 safety recommendations. It is the Civil Aviation Authority who has the statutory responsibility for the regulation of civil aviation in the United Kingdom and all of the recommendations were passed to the CAA for action as the investigation progressed.

The report is very detailed and comprehensive and the AAIB is to be congratulated on a most thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding this accident.

Passenger Ferries

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about roll-on roll-off passenger ferries built before 1980.

Mr. Portillo: The report of the formal investigation into the loss of the Herald of Free Enterprise drew attention to the revised requirements for stability in damaged condition introduced in 1980 and applied to United Kingdom roll-on roll-off passenger vessels built after that date. Although the Herald of Free Enterprise was in fact built to the 1980 standards, and although the accident was not caused by any damage to the vessel, the report nevertheless recommended that the stability in a damaged condition of the vessels built before 1980 should be

reviewed, and that consideration should be given to the phasing out of those that did not meet, or could not be modified to meet, the 1980 standards.

As the first step in considering this recommendation my Department invited the owners of all United Kingdom registered roll-on roll-off passenger vessels built before 1980 to submit to the Department calculations of the vessels' stability in a damaged condition to establish whether or not they complied with the 1980 standards, and if not to consider the scope for modifications to the vessels, or for changes to their methods of operation to ensure that they did comply.

This exercise is now complete. In all 72 vessels were examined. Of those it was found that 55 already complied with the 1980 standards. Of the remainder, the majority are being voluntarily adapted by their operating companies to comply with the 1980 standards by means of physical modifications and/or changes in operating procedures. My inquiries of the companies indicate that they are unlikely to retain the small number of remaining vessels, where modification is not a realistic proposition, for more than about another three years.

It is important to recognise that all operating British ferries, in whatever category they fall, fully comply with the relevant national and international regulations.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 14 March 1989

DEFENCE

Nuclear Submarines (Liverpool)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what detailed information is available to the population of Merseyside on the consequences of an accident involving a nuclear reactor on the nuclear-powered submarines using the port of Liverpool.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Liverpool special safety scheme contains information on the possible consequences of accidents involving reactors on nuclear-powered submarines. Copies of the scheme are held by local civil authorities, and it is being distributed to public libraries in the area.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements exist for the disposal of nuclear material arising from an accident to a nuclear submarine in or around the port of Liverpool.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The possibility of an accident involving a release of nuclear material from a submarine is extremely remote. However, our accident response plans do allow for such an occurrence, and for the controlled monitoring and decontamination of affected areas. Disposal methods would vary depending on the type and amount of materials involved.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what incidents have been reported in the past 10 years involving nuclear submarines coming in to the port of Liverpool.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There has never been an incident involving a Royal Navy submarine which has led to a radiological hazard to service men or members of the public. No nuclear submarines of other navies have visited Liverpool during this period.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which countries by order of either national or local government to his Department's knowledge forbid the docking of nuclear submarines at ports near high population urban areas; and which countries forbid completely the entry of nuclear submarines into their waters.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence does not maintain a list of countries which make such prohibitions.

PRIME MINISTER

Brunton

Q76. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Brunton near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Hugo Young (Book)

Q173. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will acquire for the Library of 10 Downing street, a copy of Mr. Hugo Young's book of the Thatcher premiership.

The Prime Minister: No.

Engagements

Mr. Holt: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 14 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

ENERGY

Redundant Mineworkers

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the suspension of payments to redundant mineworkers under the redundant mineworkers' payments scheme arising from the tighter enforcement of the criterion of availability for work.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *161*, whether he will now make a statement on restart and the redundant mineworkers payments scheme.

Mr. Parkinson: I recognise that restart procedures in respect of availability-for-work have resulted in suspension of payments to former mineworkers who are beneficiaries under the redundant mineworkers' payments scheme. Following discussions with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, work has been put in hand on the options for modifying the link between benefits under the RMPS and unemployment benefit availability procedures, having regard to cost and consequential effects. It is very possible that as a result of this work I will need to introduce an amending order to modify the RMPS. In the meantime, I understand that the employment service is taking into account this development in its application of its procedures.

Petrol Sales

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of petrol sold is sold through outlets owned by integrated oil companies.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There are no figures available providing a breakdown of United Kingdom petrol sales by company type.

Nuclear Power

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy for what aspects of the application of Euratom safeguards to civil nuclear power plants and civil nuclear fuel cycle facilities he is responsible to Parliament to give details.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The detailed application of safeguards procedures by Euratom and the IAEA is a matter for them. The Government's obligations arise from the Euratom treaty and our safeguards agreements with the IAEA. I am satisfied that we are fulfilling these obligations.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many kilogrammes of safeguarded plutonium have been exported; to which commercial operators in which countries on which dates, for each year since 1979; and which exports involved sales and which leasing arrangements.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 17 January 1989 at column *157*. Detailed information relating to the quantities of plutonium exported to individual operators and countries, and the frequency and nature of shipments, cannot be revealed for reasons of security and commercial sensitivity.

Piped Gas

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he has any information as to what proportion of piped gas is presently supplied to large consumers by any company other than British Gas;

(2) if he has any information as to what proportion of piped gas in the United Kingdom is presently supplied by British Gas.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department does not have reliable information available.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *210*, if he has any information about how British Gas will determine in the future the actual level of prices of firm gas for large industrial consumers; and whether a competitive market for the supply of piped gas currently exists in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have nothing precise to add to my answer of 1 March 1989 at column *210* about the actual level of prices of firm gas. However, the measures taken following the MMC report are intended to encourage the development of competition in gas supply to customers over 25,000 therms.

Gas Prices

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what policy considerations underlie his decision to subject to control prices for domestic gas consumers but not prices for large industrial consumers.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The distinction was established by the Gas Act 1986, which subjected prices for large industrial consumers to competition law. The recent MMC report has justified that approach.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inflation

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received on the effects of the level of inflation on industry.

Mr. Atkins: A number of those who make representations to my Department refer to the need to contain inflation. The great majority recognise that this must remain a top priority both for Government and for business itself.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has made any study of opportunities existing for United Kingdom companies to provide dismantlement, storage and sealed-disposal services for refrigeration units containing chlorofluorocarbons in industrial developing Third world countries.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 7 March 1989 at column *461* to the hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, North (Ms. Walley). The parties to the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer have yet to approve procedures for the destruction of chlorofluorocarbons and other chemicals that are controlled under the protocol.

Radioactive Waste Disposal

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, during his recent meeting with Soviet Trade Minister Kamentsev in London the prospects for the sale of British radioactive waste disposal technology and expertise were discussed.

Mr. Forth: No.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will be in a position to announce the areas in the United Kingdom which the Economic Community have decided will be eligible for support under the European regional development fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Areas to be eligible for support from the European regional development fund will be those selected for assistance from the reformed European structural funds under their new objectives 1, 2 and 5(b).

The objective 1 areas were listed in Council regulation (EEC) No. 2052/88 of 24 June 1988. They include Northern Ireland.

Objective 2 and 5(b) areas are to be determined by the European Commission. It announced a provisional list of objective 2 (industrial) areas on 8 March 1989. This contains nearly all the industrial assisted areas, including the hon. Member's constituency, and also a number of other areas. Following consultation of an advisory committee of national officials, this list is expected to be finalised during March 1989.

The Commission is expected to decide within a few weeks on a first list of objective 5(b) (rural) areas. It assured us in May 1988 that the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, rural Wales and the assisted areas of Devon and Cornwall would be eligible under objective 5(b).

Regional Aid

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what limits he proposes to set upon the charities component of European regional development aid to the United Kingdom; if he will break down the figure by economic region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The composition of future applications to the European regional development fund is under consideration.

Research and Development

Mr. Blair: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures on the regional distribution of his Department's budget for research and development.

Mr. Forth: This information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Arms Sales (Iran and Iraq)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if United Kingdom arms manufacturers will be granted export licences for sales to Iran or Iraq in the near future.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* I refer the hon. Lady to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade on 18 January 1989 at column *241*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

Satellite Broadcasting

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps his Department is taking, in conjunction with the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the European Space Agency, to resolve potential problems of signal interference between BSB and the Olympus satellite; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* We are currently negotiating with the European Space Agency and other interested parties an arrangement which will ensure that reception of the United Kingdom's fifth direct broadcasting satellite channel will not suffer unacceptable signal interference from the Olympus experimental satellite. This arrangement is based on internationally agreed criteria (as prescribed in the final acts of the world broadcasting satellite administrative radio conference, Geneva, 1977—the 77 plan—and incorporated in appendix 30 of the International Telecommunications Union radio regulations): It also takes account of the possibility that the operator of the fifth United Kingdom DBS channel may wish to operate at only one half of the satellite power prescribed in the 77 plan.

Radio Communications (Central London)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many operating licences have been issued by his Department's radio communications division in central London to users operating on base transmission of 442·97500 mHz and mobile transmission of 428·47500 mHz; and how many users have complained about overcrowding of the frequency.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* There are six licensed operators on these frequencies within the M25, and one licensed operator in the west midlands area.

Three users, from within the M25 area, have complained about overcrowding of these frequencies. These complaints are being investigated.

Gas Prices

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he now expects British Gas to publish its schedule of prices to large industrial consumers following the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay in implementing the recommendation in the report.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* I hope that British Gas will be able to publish in the very near future its schedule of prices for large consumers, together with details of how it will be implemented. Many of the large customers of British Gas have asked for a delay in the implementation of the new schedule beyond 1 April to enable them to consider the implications for themselves.

Steel Industry (Gas)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *190*, what information he has as to what proportion of production costs firm gas accounts for in *(a)* the steel forgings industry and *(b)* the steel castings industry.

Mr. Atkins: According to the latest five-yearly inquiry, gas purchasing amounted to just under 2 per cent. of the production costs of the forging, pressing and stamping industry (including steel forging) and the ferrous metal foundries industry (including steel castings) in 1984. Data for firm gas alone, or for all gas to the specific industry sectors, are not available to me.

Imitation Food

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has reached a decision on whether imitation foods for dolls' houses and collectors of miniatures should be covered by the proposed Food Imitations (Safety) Regulations 1989; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: In the course of consultation on the regulations to implement the European Community directive on dangerous imitations a large number of representations have been made for the regulations not to apply to imitation food supplied for use in dolls' houses or model scenes or settings. These items are exempt from the Food Imitations (Safety) Regulations 1985 but are subject to the general safety requirement under section 10 of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 and where appropriate to the Toys (Safety) Regulations 1974. After careful consideration of these representations, I have concluded that these items should be excluded from the new regulations.

Computer Hacking

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, following the recent cases of unauthorised electronic penetration of computerised information, when he intends to bring forward a Bill to outlaw computer hacking.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply. We are awaiting the final report of the Law Commission, which is looking at the matter as part of a review of the law on computer misuse.

WALES

Urban Programme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what was the value of urban programme moneys for each year since 1979 *(a)* for Wales, and *(b)* for district councils in the valleys initiative area, at constant prices.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 9 March 1989]: (a)* The main urban programme and special and supplementary allocations in cash and real terms for all Wales for each of the years since 1979-80 is shown in the following tables:

£ million

Year	Cash allocations			Real terms		
	Main allocations	Special and supplementary allocations	Total	Main allocations	Special and supplementary allocations	Total
1979-80	5·5	0·6	7·1	12·1	1·1	13·2
1980-81	8·4	0·7	9·1	13·2	1·1	14·3
1981-82	10·0	0·9	10·9	14·3	1·3	15·6
1982-83	15·3	3·3	18·6	20·5	4·4	24·9
1983-84	17·7	—	17·7	22·7	—	22·7
1984-85	17·6	4·45	22·05	21·4	5·4	26·9
1985-86	15·7	3·5	19·2	18·1	4·1	22·2
1986-87	18·75	4·95	23·7	21·0	5·5	26·5
1987-88	20·05	3·0	23·05	21·3	3·2	24·5
1988-89	17·8	6·7	24·5	17·8	6·7	24·5
1989-90	27·6	—	27·6	26·3	—	26·3

(b) The total urban programme allocations in cash and real terms for the district councils which have all or part of their areas within the Programme for the Valleys area are as follow:

£ million

Year	Cash allocation	Real terms
1979-80	2·1	3·9
1980-81	3·3	5·2
1981-82	3·5	5·0
1982-83	7·1	9·5
1983-84	6·7	8·5
1984-85	8·5	10·4
1985-86	6·4	7·4
1986-87	10·0	11·1
1987-88	10·5	11·1
1988-89	13·3	13·3
1989-90	13·4	12·8

Notes:

1. The allocations in real terms have been derived by the application of the GDP deflator at market prices with 1988-89 as base year.
2. Boundaries for district councils do not correspond to boundary of Valleys Programme area and the figures in table b above do not include allocations for county councils.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of applications for home improvement grants and the number accepted for each year since 1979, by district and at constant prices.

Mr. Ian Grist *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The information available is shown in the following tables:

(a) Number of Renovation Grant applications[1]

	1982-83[2]	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Alyn and Deeside	973	705	189	220	223	197
Colwyn	598	183	161	342	366	455
Delyn	785	390	82	123	187	172
Glyndwr	1,042	649	90	131	195	274
Rhuddlan	244	122	87	114	107	98
Wrexham Maelor	719	183	104	134	130	110
Carmarthen	2,766	765	480	546	614	460
Ceredigion	1,525	336	127	110	127	336
Dinefwr	2,552	611	103	107	134	121
Llanelli	2,441	131	128	683	680	654
Preseli	1,368	220	1,148	731	686	844
South Pembrokeshire	1,499	679	278	711	640	495
Blaenau Gwent	11,176	702	400	791	941	677
Islwyn	2,687	1,354	1,178	785	1,312	1,221
Monmouth	2,520	187	440	653	661	89
Newport	6,071	827	910	1,227	889	770
Torfaen	1,467	3,226	253	849	465	265
Aberconwy	664	199	204	199	199	245
Arfon	1,613	797	212	317	592	533
Dwyfor	1,816	600	77	128	183	153
Meirionnydd	1,559	575	68	67	56	120
Ynys Mon	1,652	942	101	119	115	131
Cynon Valley	5,206	408	560	1,119	2,029	1,989
Merthyr Tydfil	4,950	172	187	244	268	388
Ogwr	3,350	1,342	562	1,140	966	1,089
Rhondda	15,800	2,731	1,771	2,118	1,578	1,813
Rhymney Valley	5,641	1,165	496	778	974	1,103

	1982-83[2]	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Taff-Ely	5,411	1,336	649	266	513	587
Brecknock	2,046	419	83	120	165	231
Montgomery	2,294	464	95	103	77	118
Radnor	530	222	92	97	123	104
Cardiff	11,521	5,364	2,060	3,608	4,053	4,296
Vale of Glamorgan	4,075	578	249	450	452	391
Port Talbot (Afan)	660	1,131	100	114	184	1,233
Lliw Valley	972	468	340	377	506	610
Neath	2,551	259	283	258	491	498
Swansea	8,357	2,331	1,617	1,909	1,594	1,767
Wales	121,101	32,773	15,964	21,788	23,475	24,637

[1] Number of renovation grant applications are not available prior to 9 March 1982.
[2] Total grant applications between 9 March 1982 and 31 December 1983.

(b) Number of renovation grant approvals

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Alyn and Deeside	109	125	153	397	428	154	86	242	226	243
Colwyn	156	135	76	182	328	60	213	274	278	341
Delyn	133	69	153	259	328	160	150	195	266	152
Glyndwr	78	68	78	330	500	230	95	106	206	180
Rhuddlan	32	16	22	54	94	68	52	84	83	63
Wrexham Maelor	72	88	25	170	140	94	85	115	71	96
Carmarthen	298	244	180	633	1,790	424	617	445	468	465
Ceredigion	176	165	130	365	999	68	337	316	108	291
Dinefwr	181	49	45	160	461	171	130	150	125	165
Llanelli	338	123	132	323	1,523	258	484	515	461	853
Preseli	187	177	188	373	902	196	423	397	427	443
South Pembrokeshire	131	95	162	483	682	605	286	555	440	447
Blaenau Gwent	275	220	169	928	2,325	319	225	776	907	345
Islwyn	286	176	214	528	997	978	1,447	1,186	1,419	1,582
Monmouth	115	116	100	364	912	196	335	237	413	89
Newport	240	160	288	1,147	1,108	413	1,021	55	517	874
Torfaen	98	47	87	414	773	404	286	370	433	444
Aberconwy	117	104	127	168	301	220	209	155	195	203
Arfon	279	275	269	412	698	465	562	553	468	437
Dwyfor	101	50	141	528	758	289	79	194	132	154
Meirionnydd	120	104	69	353	1,208	861	68	223	61	116
Ynys Mon	114	84	75	264	1,271	198	162	196	232	303
Cynon Valley	225	171	158	422	677	221	348	1,263	1,518	1,430
Merthyr Tydfil	202	81	225	705	2,068	377	420	547	606	1,036
Ogwr	493	329	455	700	1,418	1,125	574	1,120	904	1,267
Rhondda	514	415	782	1,723	3,570	5,068	579	2,329	1,332	1,642
Rhymney Valley	331	207	355	953	1,192	944	393	739	952	954
Taff-Ely	320	291	854	1,432	2,205	557	677	742	256	587
Brecknock	124	127	141	296	776	111	62	202	331	236
Montgomery	69	59	63	471	733	139	167	228	116	279
Radnor	72	58	31	204	372	82	181	127	101	92
Cardiff	497	457	698	1,425	4,031	1,821	2,866	3,122	3,051	3,107
Vale of Glamorgan	228	207	316	788	1,101	402	205	590	452	386
Port Talbot (Afan)	202	157	163	225	204	68	186	403	609	451
Lliw Valley	301	283	222	402	261	315	339	535	484	574
Neath	394	141	235	884	1,727	259	304	656	774	493
Swansea	977	937	444	1,501	1,987	1,546	2,046	1,219	1,276	1,279
Wales	8,585	6,610	8,025	20,966	40,848	19,866	16,699	21,661	20,698	22,099

(c) Value of Renovation Grant approvals (£000) at 1988 prices[1,2]

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Alyn and Deeside	—	—	—	1,033	1,484	636	285	937	788	871
Colwyn	—	—	—	1,020	1,817	203	751	1,050	1,102	1,088
Delyn	—	—	—	999	1,108	660	422	487	695	391
Glyndwr	—	—	—	1,261	2,496	1,486	423	454	757	664
Rhuddlan	—	—	—	57	213	135	83	161	218	170
Wrexham Maelor	—	—	—	586	572	408	316	413	231	313
Carmarthen	—	—	—	3,250	8,623	2,052	2,728	2,144	2,028	1,772
Ceredigion	—	—	—	1,987	5,876	302	1,624	1,555	421	1,083
Dinefwr	—	—	—	805	2,159	580	378	439	381	519
Llanelli	—	—	—	1,136	4,371	797	1,819	1,323	1,252	2,235
Preseli	—	—	—	2,074	5,598	976	2,138	1,669	1,792	1,537
South Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	2,518	3,503	3,047	1,300	2,610	2,258	2,189
Blaenau Gwent	—	—	—	4,332	9,705	1,038	1,028	3,202	3,295	1,153
Islwyn	—	—	—	2,061	3,639	2,780	3,656	3,698	4,343	4,230
Monmouth	—	—	—	1,505	4,024	977	1,068	767	1,265	173
Newport	—	—	—	5,086	6,313	1,846	3,321	1,917	2,127	3,287

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Torfaen	—	—	—	1,410	2,658	1,716	998	1,014	1,610	1,837
Aberconwy	—	—	—	752	1,159	707	679	473	579	654
Arfon	—	—	—	1,588	3,112	2,275	2,442	2,278	1,735	1,567
Dwyfor	—	—	—	2,305	3,327	1,252	333	877	523	648
Meirionnydd	—	—	—	1,407	5,152	3,893	236	881	211	402
Ynys Mon	—	—	—	1,336	6,581	833	627	750	890	1,078
Cynon Valley	—	—	—	2,443	3,837	843	1,363	4,098	5,562	2,979
Merthyr Tydfil	—	—	—	2,167	5,245	1,211	1,233	1,515	1,532	2,539
Ogwr	—	—	—	3,276	4,696	3,384	1,322	3,855	2,851	3,490
Rhondda	—	—	—	6,165	12,540	17,854	1,883	7,493	4,605	5,561
Rhymney Valley	—	—	—	2,769	4,848	3,900	1,298	2,704	3,639	3,396
Taff-Ely	—	—	—	4,576	8,202	2,273	2,601	3,377	641	1,508
Brecknock	—	—	—	1,155	3,165	479	235	499	753	599
Montgomery	—	—	—	2,032	3,290	547	619	758	369	877
Radnor	—	—	—	694	1,398	409	530	333	352	248
Cardiff	—	—	—	5,080	16,228	6,959	10,158	12,250	11,735	10,622
Vale of Glamorgan	—	—	—	3,027	4,553	1,769	859	2,321	1,554	1,351
Port Talbot (Afan)	—	—	—	534	636	250	392	965	590	1,268
Llw Valley	—	—	—	1,806	1,096	1,413	1,299	2,093	1,520	1,612
Neath	—	—	—	2,093	4,884	604	841	1,236	1,824	962
Swansea	—	—	—	6,510	8,396	6,937	7,947	5,194	5,640	5,770
Wales	31,265	21,324	30,520	82,476	166,503	77,428	59,233	77,791	71,665	70,643

[1] Information by district is not readily available prior to 1982.
[2] Value of approvals has been expressed at 1988 prices using GDP deflators.

This does not include allocations for area based renovations for which the totals are as follows:

1986-87 £ million	1987-88 £ million	1988-89 £ million
11	20	24

Urban Development Grants

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the value of urban development grants by district council for each year since 1979 at constant prices.

Mr. Ian Grist *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* Urban development grant was introduced in 1982. The following table represents the value of capital allocations made in each year are expressed in real terms and have been devised by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the latest GDP deflators. 1988-89 is the base year for the calculations.

£ million

Local authority	Capital allocations: UDG 1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Alyn and Deeside District Council	—	0·062	0·012	0·008	0·694	—
Colwyn Borough Council	—	—	0·092	0·229	0·114	—
Delyn District Council	—	—	—	—	0·060	0·042
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council	—	1·205	—	—	—	—
Preseli Pembrokeshire District Council	—	—	—	—	0·170	0·008
South Pembrokeshire District Council	—	—	—	—	0·213	0·068
Blaenau Gwent Borough Council	0·220	0·284	0·353	0·234	0·027	—
Islwyn Borough Council	—	—	—	0·262	0·058	0·376
Newport Borough Council	0·013	0·024	0·821	0·783	—	—
Torfaen Borough Council	—	—	—	—	—	0·090
Cynon Valley Borough Council	—	—	—	0·065	0·345	0·141
Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council	—	—	0·101	0·010	0·106	0·201
Rhondda Borough Council	0·038	0·451	0·959	0·318	0·171	0·897
Rhymney Valley District Council	—	—	0·129	—	0·018	—
Cardiff City Council	0·640	1·473	1·289	0·210	0·244	0·636
Vale of Glamorgan District Council	—	—	—	0·744	0·594	0·022
Neath Borough Council	—	0·061	0·058	—	—	0·435
Port Talbot Borough Council	—	—	—	—	0·090	0·186
Swansea City Council	0·640	0·249	0·058	0·023	0·327	1·717

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has received any representations concerning the payment under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme of money to landlords; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* In addition to the letter that I have received from the hon. Gentleman the president of the Farmers Union of Wales has written to me about problems which his members are facing in reaching agreement with the Crown Estate and the water authority about the apportionment of grant that would be paid under the ESA scheme. I have arranged for my officials to meet the union to discuss the problem.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, in the press and the public relations office of the Welsh Office; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* There are 22½ staff in the information division which has a notional complement of 28½. Under delegated budgets staffing levels for 1989-90 will be determined by the resources made available to line managers and decisions on budget allocations for 1989-90 have yet to be finalised.

Bed and Breakfast

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what is the number of people for whom bed-and-breakfast payments are being made; and whether they are single, single with children, a couple or a couple with children for each year since 1979.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The available information is set out in the following tables:

Households accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation[1]

	Numbers
1979	22
1980	67
1981	63
1982	21
1983	17
1984	31
1985	20
1986	35
1987	45

[1] On 31 December, under Part III of the Housing Act 1985.
Source: Welsh Office.

Households placed in bed and breakfast accommodation, by type of household[1]

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Single persons	n/a	n/a	83	74	44	54	113	56	74
Lone parents with children	n/a	n/a	165	160	108	148	268	211	248
Married couple with/without children	n/a	n/a	168	160	106	117	225	147	177
Other	n/a	n/a	—	1	3	—	2	4	6
Total	133	348	416	395	261	319	608	418	505

[1] During the year as a whole, under Part III of the Housing Act 1985.
Source: Welsh Office.

Neath-Port Talbot Hospital

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether in the consideration he is now giving to the proposals of the health authority for the building of a new hospital in the Neath-Port Talbot area he is still on target so far as the intended commencement of work is concerned.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am at present examining the proposals from West Glamorgan Health Authority. The scheme is currently on target to start in 1991-92.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Plastic Bullets

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will now make it his policy to answer detailed questions on the rules governing the use of plastic bullets.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing further to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on 15 December 1988, at column 677.

Information Technology

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement of progress on the introduction of information technologies to facilitate internal communications in his Department and the provision of information to the public concerning those areas for which he is responsible; and if he has any further plans to apply the newest technologies in these fields.

Mr. Ian Stewart: All Northern Ireland Departments have prepared, and are implementing, information technology strategies geared to their individual business objectives with the aim of increasing efficiency and effectiveness while ensuring value for money in the purchases of systems. The Northern Ireland Office is in the process of preparing its own strategy. Each strategy includes provision for improving internal communications through the use of voice and data transmission facilities, office automation and management information systems. Fax and telex facilities are also available in Departments and local offices dealing with matters such as social security. In particular, the Northern Ireland Office has recently introduced a secure inter-communicating word processing system and a secure video conferencing system linking its Belfast and London offices. A telecommunications strategy has also been drawn up, and plans are being prepared to provide a modern, fully integrated, digital network.

The departmental information technology strategies address the provision of information to the public where this is appropriate and a number of computer systems providing this facility are operational in areas such as social security benefits, economic development and agriculture. In addition a free telephone service, freeline DHSS, is provided to anyone in Northern Ireland linking inquirers directly to a centre where full-time staff provide information and advice on all social security benefits and related services.

Departmental information technology strategies are continually reviewed to ensure that they match administrative and policy objectives. Departments also endeavour to keep abreast of the latest developments in technology and seek to apply these where they fit into their strategies.

Genealogists (Fees)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is he will list *(a)* the standard fees and *(b)* the discretionary fees charged for services provided by the public record office (i) to commercial genealogists and (ii) where YTP or ACE workers are working on behalf of commercial genealogists.

Dr. Mawhinney: Fees charged for services provided by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland are set out in a schedule to the Public Record of the (Public Use Of The Records) Rules (Northern Ireland) 1953. The current schedule of fees is contained in a statutory rule, No. 180 of 1988 a copy of which is available in the Library.

The deputy keeper of the records has discretion to waive such fees if the records are being inspected for the purposes of private, non-profit-making research. The rules are interpreted in the same way in respect of services provided for ACE and YTP workers as for other members of the public.

Consumers (Consultation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secreatary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements there are for consulting consumers on the work and decisions of his Department.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Tobacco Industry

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total of grants in aid paid to the tobacco industry in Northern Ireland since 1979; if he will list these; what other financial assistance has been made to tobacco companies by the Government in the same period; if he will list these; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: There have been no grants in aid paid to the tobacco industry in Northern Ireland since 1979. In terms of financial assistance, the Department of Economic Development (including the Industrial Development Board) has paid a total of £33,909,246 to tobacco companies in Northern Ireland since 1979.

SCOTLAND

Chlorofluorocarbons

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his best estimate of the amount of chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants under the control of his Department;

(2) what plans there are to minimise the risk of leaks of chlorofluorocarbons from refrigeration and air conditioning systems under his Department's control.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 March 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Merionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on Monday 6 March.

Telephone Survey

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the questions that were asked in the recent Scottish Office telephone survey.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* The interview schedule contained questions about respondents' experience of a number of crimes, including car theft, bicycle theft, theft from vehicles, vandalism to vehicles, housebreaking, robbery, sexual offences and assault. Questions were also asked about fear of crime and household security.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether surveys similar to the recent telephone survey by the Scottish Office have been conducted under its auspices in the past.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* The questions asked in this survey are very similar to those used in the British crime surveys of 1982 and 1988.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how people who took part in the recent Scottish Office telephone survey were chosen.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* A random sample was obtained by means of computer-generated telephone calls.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the purpose of the recent telephone survey by his Department.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* The survey in Scotland was part of an international exercise involving 15 countries mainly from the European Community but also including the United States of America, Canada and Australia. The survey used tightly standardised methods in order to obtain comparative information on the nature and scale of victimisation and other criminal justice information across the various participating countries.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the recent telephone survey conducted by his Department.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* My Department's central research unit, which acted as co-ordinator for the survey in Scotland, received about 30 telephone calls and one letter from the public. For the most part the callers sought only to confirm the bona fide nature of the survey though a number voiced specific concerns and complaints mainly related to the household security questions. Two of the calls related to the question about sexual assault.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether the people who carried out the recent Scottish Office telephone survey had received any formal training in counselling techniques;

(2) what qualifications the people who carried out the recent Scottish Office telephone survey had.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:*

The staff of the survey firms which conducted the survey are experienced in the use of telephone interviews

for research purposes. The interviewers were given introductory training for the special needs of this survey which paid particular attention to the sensitive nature of many of the topics included in the questionnaire.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the findings of the recent Scottish Office telephone survey will be published in full.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* A report on the results of the survey is to be published later this year.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps were taken to ensure that respondents to the recent Scottish Office telephone survey were made aware of the voluntary nature of the survey.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The introduction to the questionnaire used by all survey interviewers offered the respondent a number of opportunities to decline to participate before commencing the interview. At this stage, also, respondents were given the opportunity to verify the authenticity of the survey. This could be done by telephoning the liaison contact in the Scottish Office or the free telephone number of the Market Survey Society. That this was effective was demonstrated by the fact that, to achieve a sample of 2,000, approximately 4,000 calls had to be made. One person in two approached declined to participate. Those who participated were, of course, free to put down the telephone at any point.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps were taken to protect the confidentiality of respondents to the recent Scottish Office telephone survey.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* Confidentiality was a principal factor in the decision to use computer-generated telephone interviewing. This technique offers greater confidentiality than the more usual doorstep interviews since neither the name nor address of the respondent is known to the interviewer. This was explained by the interviewers to potential respondents before seeking their agreement to participate.

Hospitals (Capital Evaluation)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give for each hospital over 250 beds *(a)* the land and building capital evaluation and *(b)* equipment capital evaluation;

(2) on what date he proposes that hospitals will start paying capital interest charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have asked each health board to compile a register of all capital assets held, their location and their value, but this information is not yet available. A Scottish working paper on capital charging, including a proposed timetable, will be published shortly.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the proportion of Forestry Commission sales since the introduction of the rationalisation plans sold *(a)* back to the previous owners, *(b)* privately and *(c)* by public sale.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* This information is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Manouchehn Tehrani

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has now received a copy of the written decision of Lord Weir, in the Court of Session, concerning the dismissal of Mr. Manouchehn Tehrani, consultant surgeon, from his employment at the Inverclyde royal hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has seen a copy of Lord Weir's opinion. It now falls to Argyll and Clyde health board to consider anew the courses of action open to it.

Fish Farms

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what quantities of Nuvan 500 EC have been released into the marine environment via salmon farms in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information is not available in the form requested.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inspections of marine fish farms have been made in each of the last five years by *(a)* the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, *(b)* the river purification boards and *(c)* the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of marine fish farms by scientists from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland were as follows:

	Numbers
1984	68
1985	101
1986	110
1987	133
1988	176

Information is not held centrally on the number of inspections of marine fish farms by river purification authorities.

Information as to inspections carried out by the Health and Safety Executive is a matter for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Employment.

Matrimonial Homes

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish the report of the research into the working of the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am placing copies of the report in the Library, and the Scottish Home and Health Department is sending copies to interested organisations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has reviewed the

report, "The Transport of Plutonium by Air and Sea", written by Jonathan Spink and Paul Helliwell for the European Proliferation Information Centre on behalf of the national steering committee of the nuclear free zone authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The honorary secretary of the nuclear free zone national steering committee wrote to the permanent under-secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 16 January enclosing a copy of the report. A reply to the honorary secretary's letter issued on 9 February. A copy of the reply is being placed in the Library of the House.

Condor 2

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek a meeting with his counterpart on the Federal Republic of Germany to discuss the assistance given by Federal Germany aerospace companies to Argentina for the production of the Condor 2 ballistic missile system.

Mr. Waldegrave: No, but officials from the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany frequently discuss the effective implementation of the missile technology control regime.

Rain Forests

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made any recent representations to the Brazilian ambassador over the chopping down of the Amazonian rain forest and its consequent implications for the depletion of the ozone layer.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I both drew to the attention of the visiting Secretary-General of the Brazilian Ministry for Foreign Affairs last week the strong concern felt in this country on environmental issues, notably the future of the Amazon rain forests. We stressed that our overall approach was to work with the Brazilian Government on these matters.

PLO (Bombings)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, at his recent meeting with representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, he raised the question of compensation for victims of past Palestine Liberation Organisation bombings.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has not met PLO representatives. We have not discussed with the PLO possible compensation for victims of acts of violence. We oppose such acts from whatever quarter.

Israel (Nuclear Weapons)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, during his recent meeting with Israeli Government officials in Israel, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) raised the issue of Israeli possession of nuclear weapons and the prospects of Israel signing the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State raised the question of Israeli accession to the non-proliferation treaty during his talks with Professor Arens on 15 February.

Albert Mukong

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make inquiries of the Government of Cameroon about the reasons for the trial of Albert Mukong, a civilian, by a military court.

Mrs. Chalker: We are aware of the case of Albert Mukong and have raised it with the Cameroon authorities. We shall continue to monitor the case.

Oil Spill (Antarctic)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what treaty obligations and resources are available for oil spill control in the Antarctic; and whether Vikoma skimmers and the Frogmat boom have been evaluated in these latitudes.

Mr. Eggar: There are no specific treaty obligations which require the United Kingdom to clean up oil spills in Antarctica and there are no resources deployed in Antarctica by the United Kingdom for that purpose. The equipment referred to in the question has not, so far as I am aware, been evaluated in Antarctica although boom and skimmer devices were used in connection with the oil spill from the Bahia Paraiso which sank on 31 January.

Iraq

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on steps he has taken to advise the Government of Iraq of Her Majesty's Government's attitude towards human rights violations in Iraq.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have repeatedly made clear to the Government of Iraq our concern at their failure to respect human rights in their country. On 9 March, we co-sponsored a draft resolution on human rights in Iraq in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and voted against Iraq's successful motion to take no action on that draft. Our representative at the Commission made clear our concerns in his statement.

China

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on human rights in China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: In addition to publicly available sources, Her Majesty's embassy in Peking provides regular reports on human rights questions.

We are concerned about human rights in China. Our general aim is to encourage the Chinese Government to continue their programme of economic, social and political reforms, in the belief that in the long run this will lead to the development of a stable and democratic society in China, which is essential for the respect of human rights.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veterinary Practitioners

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many qualified veterinary practitioners completed their training in the United Kingdom in each year from 1985 to 1988; and how many veterinary practitioners, qualified abroad, were registered to practice in the United Kingdom in each year over that period.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The numbers of veterinary students who completed their training and obtained veterinary degrees in the United Kingdom in each year from 1985 to 1988 are:

	Number
1985-86	379
1986-87	366
1987-88	384
1988-89	314

The numbers of qualified veterinarians from abroad registering with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons entitling them to practise in the United Kingdom in each of these years was:

	Number
1985-86	122
1986-87	224
1987-88	263
1988-89	256

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what mandatory training veterinary practitioners undergo with respect to *(a)* the treatement of marine fish and *(b)* protection of the marine environment.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Undergraduate veterinary training courses include basic instruction on all animal species. Veterinary graduates may choose to specialise in any aspect of veterinary surgery including marine fish.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what central records are kept of products prescribed by veterinary practitioners.

Mr. Donald Thompson: None.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax System

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he anticipates that the law relating to capital gains tax, capital allowances and the management of the tax system will be consolidated.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* Consolidation of statute law is the responsibility of the Law Commission. One present plans, it is expected that a Bill consolidating the law on capital allowances will be ready for introduction early in the 1989/90 Session of Parliament. The Law Commission envisage that further work on consolidation of tax law will follow.

National Debt

Mr. Conway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what components comprise the calculation of the national debt.

Mr. Lilley: The national debt is conventionally defined as the nominal liabilities of the National Loans Fund. These consist mainly of short, medium and long-dated Government securities, national savings products and Treasury bills. As such, they take no account of the public sector's holdings of short-term assets (for example foreign exchange reserves held in the exchange equalisation account). At 31 March 1988 the national debt stood at £197·5 billion, of which market holdings were £177·9 billion.

Full details of the national debt are published annually in the consolidated fund and national loans fund accounts: supplementary statements, and placed in the Library.

However, net public sector debt is nowadays a more appropriate measure of public sector indebtedness than the traditional measure of "national debt" as it covers the whole of the public sector rather than just central Government and it also takes account of the public sector's short-term assets. At 31 March 1988 net public sector debt stood at £171·3 billion. Full details of the components of net public sector debt are published in the November 1988 *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin.*

Mr. Conway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the national debt at today's value in *(a)* 1973-74, *(b)* 1978-89 and *(c)* 1987-88.

Mr. Lilley: In 1987-88 prices, the national debt at the end of each year was as follows:

	£ billion
1973-74	177·5
1978-79	178·3
1987-88	197·3

However the national debt is conventionally defined as the liabilities of the national loans fund. As such it is not the most useful or comprehensive measure of the total state of public sector indebtedness. It comprises debt held by official bodies within central Government, it does not cover the whole of central Government debt and it excludes entirely the debt of other parts of the public sector. In addition, it takes no account of the public sector's short-term assets including foreign exchange reserves. A better measure is public sector net debt, though figures for this are only available from end 1974-75. In 1987-88 prices, the public sector net debt at the end of each year was as follows:

	£ billion
1974-75	218·9
1978-79	180·3
1987-88	171·3

Mr. Conway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much of the national debt was repaid between *(a)* 1974-75 and 1978-79 and *(b)* 1978-79 and 1987-88.

Mr. Lilley: The national debt is conventionally defined as the liabilities of the national loans fund. As such it is not the most useful or comprehensive measure of the total

state of public sector indebtedness. It includes debt held by official bodies within central Government, it does not cover the whole of central Government debt and it excludes entirely the debt of other parts of the public sector. In addition, it takes no account of the public sector's short-term assets. A better measure is public sector net debt, whose flow analogue is the PSBR-PSDR.

In 1987-88 prices the cumulative PSBR was as follows:

(a) 1974-75 to 1978-79 £118·9 billion (or £22·4 billion a year on average).

(b) 1979-80 to 1987-88 £88·4 billion (or £9·8 billion a year on average).

Select Committees (Recommendations)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted by, his Department since June 1987.

Mr. Major: The reports of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee and the Government's replies to them are available in the Library of the House of Commons.

VAT

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy concerning the provision to credit reference agencies of information concerning the non-payment of value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* Information held by Customs and Excise about the VAT affairs of registered traders is confidential and is not disclosed to credit agencies.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each of the past 10 years thg number of new businesses which have registered for value added tax in Waveney.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* I regret that statistics are not maintained on a district basis. The local VAT office at Ipswich covers not only the Waveney constituency but the area which includes Ipswich itself, Felixstowe, Newmarket and Bury St. Edmunds. The number of VAT registrations processed by that office for each of the calendar years 1979 to 1988 was:

Year	*New registrations*
1979	1,612
1980	1,497
1981	1,726
1982	1,528
1983	1,557
1984	2,321
1985	2,094
1986	2,180
1987	2,324
1988	2,826

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Central Office of Information on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The estimated spending for 1988-89 by the Central Office of Information on behalf of other Government Departments for the above categories is:

	£ million
(a) TV advertising	49·5
(b) Radio advertising	1·1
(c) Newspaper advertising	35·0
(d) Other promotional material	23·5
	109·1

Detailed decisions on estimated expenditure by media through COI on behalf of other Government Departments for 1989-90 is a matter for departmental Ministers.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Central Office of Information; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiate between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The Central Office of Information does not have statistical divisions or staff in statistical posts; nor are any proposed for in 1989-90.

Civil List

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the total amount payable under the Civil List Acts to the royal family in the calendar years 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Lawson: The information on amounts payable to the royal family in the present and previous year is as follows:

	1988 *£*	*1989* *£*
The Queen's Civil List	4,500,000	4,650,000
HM Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother	390,300	404,000
HRH The Duke of Edinburgh	217,700	225,300
HRH The Duke of York	86,500	155,400
HRH The Prince Edward	20,000	20,000
HRH The Princess Royal	135,600	140,400
HRH The Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowdon	132,100	136,700
HRH The Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester	53,500	55,400
HRH The Duke of Gloucester	106,300	110,000
HRH The Duke of Kent	143,500	148,500
HRH Princess Alexandra, Hon. Lady Angus Ogilvy	136,800	141,600
Total	5,922,300	6,195,300
Refunded by Her Majesty The Queen	386,600	400,100
	5,535,750	5,795,200

HOME DEPARTMENT

Work Permits

183. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the position on the granting of work permits to husbands of Commonwealth exchange teachers working in schools in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Under the immigration rules, the husbands of women admitted to the United Kingdom as Commonwealth exchange teachers cannot themselves be admitted to take employment unless they qualify in their own right—for example, by obtaining work permits in accordance with the usual criteria. I am, however, considering whether husbands should be admissible, with freedom to take employment, on the basis that their wives are being admitted as Commonwealth exchange teachers.

Court Service (Clerks)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the number of justices' clerks, their deputies and court clerks in the magistrates courts service who have left the service to take up similar positions with the Crown prosecution service.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that at the end of February there were 278 court clerk vacancies in England and Wales. The number of court clerks who have taken up appointments with the Crown prosecution service during the previous year is not available except at disproportionate cost, but is due to be collected shortly. Information about justices' clerks and their deputies has not so far been available separately, but we propose to collect it.

Women's National Alliance

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the decision to refuse a grant to the National Alliance of Women's Organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend has received 26 representations and, having considered the points that they have made, can see no reason to change his decision that the Home Office should not make a grant to the proposed national alliance.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what applications he has received for the funding of a women's national alliance; whether he has reached a decison on any such application; and whether he will be taking into account existing funding provided to bodies representing women's interests in reaching his decision.

Mr. John Patten: The National Council for Voluntary Organisations has applied for a grant for a new National Alliance of Women's Organisations. My right hon. Friend has decided that funds should not be made available for the organisation. In reaching a decision he took account of existing funding provided to bodies representing women's interests.

Entry Applications

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each country *(a)* the number of applications to enter the United Kingdom for marriage under paragraphs 41 and 46 of the immigration rules and *(b)* the number of refusals of such applications in (i) 1987 and (ii) 1988.

Mr. Renton: The information requested on fiancé(e)s (paragraph 41 of the immigration rules) and spouses (paragraph 46) applying for entry clearance to the United Kingdom is available centrally only for those countries specified in the following table.

Fiancé(e)s and spouses applying for entry clearance to the United Kingdom
Number of persons

Country	Applications		
	Newly received[1]	*Granted*[2,3]	*Refused initially*[2]
Bangladesh			
1987	1,720	1,180	250
1988[4]	1,270	1,000	280
India			
1987	3,450	2,520	890
1988[4]	2,290	2,030	610
Pakistan			
1987	5,370	3,060	940
1988[4]	4,040	2,530	730
Hong Kong			
1987	320	250	10
1988[4]	230	210	[5]

[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn.
[2] Granted initially or on appeal.
[3] These applications may have been received in an earlier period.
[4] January to September.
[5] 5 or fewer.

Telephone Survey

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how people who took part in the recent Home Office telephone survey relating to sexual harassment in England and Wales were chosen.

Mr. John Patten: Those interviewed in the recent Home Office telephone survey were chosen from listings of randomly generated England and Wales telephone numbers. This maintained the confidentiality of the name and address of the respondent. The sample in England and Wales—2,000 men and women—was chosen to be a representative cross-section of those aged 16 or over.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether surveys similar to the recent telephone survey by the Home Office relating to sexual harassment in England and Wales have been conducted under its auspices in the past.

Mr. John Patten: Surveys similar to the recent telephone survey have been conducted in the past under Home Office auspices, though this is the first occasion on which telephone interviewing has been used. Other surveys have used face-to-face interviewing with similar questions asked. The British crime survey was conducted in England and Wales in 1982, 1984 and 1988 (and in Scotland in 1982

and 1988). The Home Office has also commissioned surveys to measure criminal victimisation at the more local level. Telephone interviewing was used in the current survey because it was less expensive than face-to-face interviewing, but mainly because it allowed greater standardisation of field work methods across the participating countries.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the questions that were asked in the recent telephone survey by the Home Office relating to sexual harassment in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The questionnaire contained questions about respondents' experience of eight crimes —vehicle theft from, bicycle theft, theft vehicles, vandalism to vehicles, burglary, thefts of personal property, robbery, and assault. Additionally, women were asked about sexual assault. Other questions asked included fear of crime, satisfaction with local policing, and crime prevention behaviour. Some social-demographic information was also collected.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the recent telephone survey by the Home Office relating to sexual harassment in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office research and planning unit (who acted as co-ordinator for the survey in England and Wales, and to whom respondents were referred if they had any queries) received about 50 calls from people who were either interested in confirming that the survey was bona fide, or wished to know why questions on household security had been asked. No one in England and Wales complained directly about the sexual assault question. One person wrote to the Home Office for confirmation that the interview she had given was part of a survey which the Home Office had commissioned.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the purpose of the recent telephone survey by the Home Office relating to sexual harassment in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The survey in England and Wales was conducted as part of an international exercise in which 15 countries have so far taken part. The countries are mainly those from the European Community, though the United States, Canada and Australia have also participated. Because of problems in comparing levels of crime across countries using information on recorded crime, the international survey used an identical questionnaire and highly standardised sample selection and field work methods to provide a comparable measure of levels of victimisation. Sexual harassment was one of nine forms of victimisation which women in the same were asked about. The survey also aims to compare attitudes to and responses to crime in the different countries.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps were taken to protect the confidentiality of respondents to the recent telephone survey by the Home Office relating to sexual harassment in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The names and addresses of those interviewed in the recent telephone survey on crime in England and Wales were not known to interviewers as they were contacted through randomly generated telephone numbers. The Home Office do not know (and will not know) which telephone numbers were called. The full confidentiality of the information obtained was explained by the interviewers to potential respondents before seeking their agreement to take part.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what qualifications the people who carried out the recent telephone survey by the Home Department relating to sexual harassment in England and Wales had.

Mr. John Patten: Interviewers in the company which conducted the recent telephone survey in England and Wales (and Scotland) are experienced in interviewing for research purposes. They had undergone a full training programme for telephone interviewing and operate under the Market Research Society's code of conduct. There was also a full briefing for interviewers by a female Home Office survey expert in which the special features of this survey were emphasised.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps were taken to ensure that respondents to the recent telephone survey by the Home Office relating to sexual harassment in England and Wales were made aware of the voluntary nature of the survey.

Mr. John Patten: The interviews were carried out according to the Market Research Society's code of conduct which requires that respondents must be made aware of the voluntary nature of all surveys. Respondents were allowed the opportunity to decline to take part before the interview began. Respondents were also given the opportunity to check that the survey was bona fide. In England and Wales, one person in two declined to take part in the interview.

Police Officers

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many police officers have *(a)* applied for a transfer from the Metropolitan police to provincial forces since 1 January and *(b)* had their applications approved; and what were the comparable figures for the year ended 31 December 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the commissioner that of the 201 applications for transfer received since 1 January 1989, five had been accepted by 10 March. In 1988, 464 applications were received, of which 92 had been accepted by 31 December, and a further 82 have been accepted since.

Broadcasting Levy

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to announce the revised broadcasting levy arrangements for the period 1990 to 1992.

Mr. Hurd: Full details of the new levy arrangements will be published in the Finance Bill. A levy rate of 10 per cent. will be applied to net advertising revenue for each ITV company after their fourth channel subscription and a £15 million "free slice" have been deducted. A levy rate

of 25 per cent. will then be applied to the net domestic profits for each company after the advertising revenue levy and a £2 million "free slice" have been deducted. There will be no levy on profits from overseas sales.

HEALTH

Salmonella

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will give a member of the public suffering from salmonella poisoning the identity of the source of their infection when it is known to his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department is not the source of such information. The local authority environmental health department has primary responsibility for investigating cases of food poisoning. Any requests for information relating to such cases should be directed to the medical officer for environmental health of the appropriate authority.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the average waiting times for the following operations at each of the hospitals in the Trent regional health authority *(a)* hip replacements, *(b)* knee replacements, *(c)* hernias, *(d)* cataracts, *(e)* ear, nose and throat, *(f)* varicose veins, and *(g)* gynaecological; if he will show in his answer comparative figures for five and 10 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect waiting time information centrally for individual hospitals. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Trent regional health authority, who may be able to provide this information.

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the waiting list statistics for September 1988 are yet available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I have today published a statistical bulletin giving details of numbers of in-patients and day cases on the NHS hospital waiting lists for the six months which ended on 30 September 1988.

On a comparable basis with earlier figures, there were 691,100 patients on the in-patient waiting lits for England at 30 September last year. This is a slight increase on the figure for March 1988, although it is still more than 8 per cent. lower than in March 1979.

During the six months in question 941,400 in-patients and 359,200 day cases were treated from the waiting lists. For in-patients and day cases treated, the median waiting time was estimated to be around five weeks—a period which we have managed to sustain since March last year, in spite of the fact that the NHS is now treating more patients than ever before.

General Practitioners (Contracts)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has made to the general medical services committee to safeguard the earnings of general practitioners in the transition of any new general practitioner contract.

Mr. Mellor The GMSC negotiators were sent proposals for transitional arrangements associated with changes in the GPs' remuneration system on 27 February. Those proposals formed part of confidential discussions with the GMSC negotiators and I have no plans to disclose the details at this stage.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new money is being made available to ease the transition to any new general practitioner contract.

Mr. Mellor I refer my hon. Friend to the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (paragraph 2·6) which states: "the Government are prepared to invest substantial extra resources into those parts of the FPS where they are most needed, in order particularly to develop positive health promotion activities, raise standards and make the services more sensitive to the needs of the consumer."

AIDS

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the allocation of special funds for AIDS to the North East Thames regional health authority in 1987-88 and 1988-89 and what it will be in 1989-90; what has been the North East Thames regional health authority programme of expenditure on AIDS, listed by each district, in 1987-88 and 1988-89; and for what specific capital and revenue schemes the North East Thames regional health authority has allocated funds from its AIDS budget in 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Mellor The table shows the funds allocated for AIDS to the North East Thames RHA.

	£ million
1987-88	6·163
1988-89	11·417
1989-90	16·655

We do not hold centrally details of the region's AIDS expenditure by district and on its specific capital and revenue schemes held. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the North East Thames RHA for this information.

Computerised Information (Confidentiality)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what regulatory guidelines are issued to general practitioners who store confidential patient data on general practitioner personal computers.

Mr. Freeman: All general medical practitioners who control the contents and use of automated data (including data held on practice personal computers) are required to be registered under the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984. The general medical services committee of the British Medical Association has drawn up guidance, working in close consultation with the Data Protection Registrar's office and the Department of Health.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what protection from unauthorised internal and external access is afforded to computerised testing information on pharmaceuticals for approval.

Mr. Mellor: Access to confidential information relating to medicinal products which is held on the licensing authority's computerised database is protected by the appropriate physical and logical security controls. The effectiveness of these controls is kept under active review.

Ambulance Journeys

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information his Department holds regarding the number of ambulance journeys made in each of the last five years in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* each regional health authority area; in each case, what proportion of these journeys were made in a private ambulance contracted to the health authority concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The available information for England is given in the table. Figures for the London ambulance authority are included with those for South-West Thames. The information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Ambulance services
Number of patients-journeys by regional health authority (Thousands)

Regional health authority and patient-journeys[1]	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987-88*
South East Thames Total	1,125·0	1,128·1	1,054·8	1,026·2	841·5
Journeys by private ambulance	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
South West Thames Total	3,649·1	3,624·4	3,528·2	3,136·4	3,063·6
Journeys by private ambulance	113·4	112·7	110·4	121·6	121·0
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	3·1	3·1	3·1	3·9	3·9
Wessex Total	1,359·9	1,408·0	1,454·5	1,412·5	1,106·9
Journeys by private ambulance	0·9	8·7	8·3	8·8	22·4
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	0·1	0·6	0·6	0·6	2·0
Oxford Total	947·3	914·9	934·9	863·1	826·4
Journeys by private ambulance	4·3	3·4	3·4	3·3	3·6
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	0·5	0·4	0·4	0·4	0·4
South Western Total	1,917·4	1,967·6	1,960·3	1,795·3	1,443·6
Journeys by private ambulance	0·3	0·4	0·3	0·1	0·4
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
West Midlands Total	2,012·9	2,000·3	2,009·3	1,976·1	2,041·7
Journeys by private ambulance	133·5	134·0	102·9	105·2	125·7
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	6·6	6·7	5·1	5·3	6·2
Mersey Total	1,126·8	1,103·8	1,147·5	1,235·8	1,267·4
Journeys by private ambulance	0·0	4·9	0·0	0·0	0·0
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	0·0	0·4	0·0	0·0	0·0
England Total	21,271·1	21,281·7	21,364·2	20,685·8	19,669·5
Journeys by private ambulance	351·0	345·1	296·8	307·4	312·4
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	1·7	1·6	1·4	1·5	1·6
Northern Total	1,610·4	1,567·9	1,600·6	1,622·3	1,568·5
Journeys by private ambulance	0·5	0·6	0·5	0·1	0·1
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Yorkshire Total	1,847·5	1,840·5	1,873·6	1,888·4	1,837·2
Journeys by private ambulance	6·0	3·5	0·9	0·0	0·0
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	0·3	0·2	0·0	0·0	0·0
Trent Total	1,802·0	1,838·3	1,877·7	1,930·1	2,061·9
Journeys by private ambulance	2·3	3·3	2·2	2·2	1·9
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	0·1	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·1
East Anglia Total	953·8	997·4	1,016·7	944·2	877·8
Journeys by private ambulance	3·4	3·0	0·1	0·1	0·0
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	0·4	0·3	0·0	0·0	0·0
North West Thames Total	476·4	469·6	464·2	470·0	508·7
Journeys by private ambulance	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
North East Thames Total	548·0	547·7	559·3	575·0	557·8
Journeys by private ambulance	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
North Western Total	1,994·7	1,864·1	1,882·7	1,801·0	1,666·5
Journeys by private ambulance	79·2	76·7	67·6	66·1	32·4
Journeys by private ambulance as a percentage of total	4·2	4·1	3·6	3·7	1·9

[1]One patient-journey is defined as one patient carried in one direction. A patient taken to a hospital and later in the same day taken home again counts as two patient-journeys.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will extend the range of hearing aids available on the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) on 13 March.

Physical Measurement Technicians

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he intends to take to address the high vacancy rates of physical measurement technicians (audiology) in the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 29 November to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) at column *197*.

Prescription Costs

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the prescription cost per head for each family practitioner committee area, and for each health region for 1988-89 and as estimated for 1989-90, both on a current and standard price basis; and if he will provide exemplifications of per capita allocations to regions and districts on the same current and standard price bases and on the basis of the same resources assuming the same weights as for the weighted capitation system proposed for hospital services and disregarding the effects of temporary residence and cross-boundary dispensing.

Mr. Mellor: We do not yet have available information about the net ingredient cost of drugs per head for FPCs or regions for 1988-89. Estimates of prescription costs for future years are not available below national level. The indicative prescribing budget scheme will not start to operate until 1991. It is too soon to say what the regional allocations will be at that time.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received regarding prescription charges.

Mr. Mellor: During the last month I have received 27 letters about prescription charges from hon. Members. I have also received a further 48 letters from members of the public and interested bodies on the same subject.

Old Red House, Whitby

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that the care and well-being of the residents of the Old Red House private aged persons' home, Bagdale, Whitby are being properly safeguarded following its deregistration.

Mr. Mellor: North Yorkshire county council, which is the local social services authority for Whitby, has confirmed that it is closely monitoring the care and well-being of the residents remaining in the home pending arrangements for their future care.

Elderly People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been done on the proportion of elderly people admitted to hospital who are admitted as a direct result of the adverse effects of medication; and what were the finding of the research.

Mr. Mellor: The Department has commissioned no research on this specific issue but doctors are responsible for considering the risks of known adverse reactions when they write prescriptions, and the published data sheets draw attention to such reactions.

Psychiatry (Old Age)

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many health districts have currently a specialised service for the psychiatry of old age and of those which do not; how many have plans to establish such a service within the next three years;

(2) how many consultants are currently working within the National Health Service in the field of old age psychiatry; and how many more are needed to ensure that every district health authority has sufficient consultants specialising in old age psychiatry on the basis of consultant cover of one session for every 2,000 elderly people.

Mr. Freeman: We do not hold this information centrally. In a joint report published in February this year the Royal Colleges of Psychiatrists and Physicians estimate that there are currently 243 consultants working in old age psychiatry and that 152 district health authorities have specialised services. These figures represent a considerable advance in recent years. Detailed planning and provision of services is a matter for individual health authorities. The appointment of at least one psychogeriatrician in each health district is a key priority in our policy to provide a comprehensive range of services for the elderly mentally ill.

Rail Accidents

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the times at which yellow and red alerts were received at St. George's hospital, Tooting, and the Mayday hospital, Thornton Heath, respectively, subsequent to the recent rail accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: At the Clapham rail accident a yellow alert was given to St. George's hospital, Tooting at 08.23 and a major accident was declared at 08.48. In the incident at Purley a yellow alert was given at 13.50 and a major accident was declared at 14.20. The term red alert is not used by the London ambulance service.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what meetings took place between Ministers in his Department and appointed members of the South West Thames regional health authority concerning the budget of the London ambulance service for the year 1988-89; and what meetings have taken place, or he expects to take place, concerning determination of the budget for the year 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: No such meetings have taken or will take place. The determination of the London ambulance service revenue budget is a matter for the South West Thames regional health authority in consultation with the other three Thames regions.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state the general reason why between 50 and 160 out-patient appointments per week were cancelled in the north-east division of the London ambulance service in January and the first fortnight of February because no ambulance was available; and what steps he or the South West Thames regional health authority intends to take to eliminate such cancellations throughout the area of the London ambulance service.

Mr. Freeman: The principal reason for these cancellations was a shortage of staff. I understand there are currently 43 vacancies—out of a whole time establishment of 248—in the north-east division of the London ambulance service. Every effort is being made to fill the vacancies.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to his reply of Wednesday 1 March, *Official Report*, column *251* concerning the proportion of emergency calls for ambulances diverted to recorded message machines at the headquarters of the London ambulance service, he will publish what figures are available in respect of the use of this service during the month of February, including the proportion of time when calls were diverted to it and an indication of the range of wait for callers before being able to communicate details of emergencies.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not collected routinely and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newham, South concerning the 1989-90 budget of the London ambulance service, *Official Report*, 1 March, column *251*, he will state when discussions with the non-managing Thames regional health authorities will be concluded; what information has been supplied to the other named consultants and by what date they were asked to give their observations; when the South West Thames regional hospital authority will decide on the budget; when he expects to receive its request to him for the sum required; and on what date its estimates will be made public.

Mr. Freeman This is a matter for the South West Thames regional health authority and the hon. Member may wish to contact the regional chairman, Mrs. Julia Cumberlege.

Hospital and Community Health Service

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what has been the level of expenditure in each year since 1978-79 on the hospital and community health services adjusted by the HCHS pay and prices deflator.

Mr. Mellor The information is as follows:

Gross Current Expenditure	*Cash*	*£ million Adjusted using HCHS pay and prices deflator*
1978-79	4,522	10,896
1979-80	5,395	10,790
1980-81	7,097	11,089
1981-82	7,835	11,322
1982-83	8,439	11,450
1983-84	8,882	11,461
1984-85	9,386	11,446
1985-86	9,886	11,469
1986-87	10,623	11,522
1987-88	11,730	11,730

Nursing Homes

Mr. Anthony Coombs To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to review his Department's policy for residents of nursing homes for the elderly presently not covered by the Registered Homes Act 1984.

Mr. Mellor I understand that my hon. Friend has in mind residential care homes rather than nursing homes. The report of the committee chaired by Lady Wagner "Residential Care—A Positive Choice" contained recommendations on the regulation of these homes. We are giving careful consideration to the recommendations in the report before deciding whether any change is desirable in the current arrangements.

Pay and Price Deflator

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the Government's estimate of the hospital and community health service pay and price deflator for 1988-89.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 22 February 1989]:* The deflator is expected to rise by some 10·5 per cent. in 1988-89. A large part of this increase is attributable to review body pay awards, including the 17·9 per cent. award to nurses.

Official Secrets

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the advisory committees coming under his Department and concerned in some way with public health which are covered by the Official Secrets Act whose members are required to sign the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 24 February 1989]:* Not all members of the following committees, which are concerned with various aspects of public health, will have signed the Official Secrets Act declaration, but the provisions of section 2 of that Act would apply in respect of sensitive official information entrusted to them on a confidential basis:

Academic Forum
Administration of Radioactive Substances Advisory Committee
Advisory Committee for Medical Manpower Planning
Advisory Committee on Assessment of Laboratory Standards
Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances
Advisory Committee on Breast Cancer Screening
Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens
Advisory Committee on Distinction Awards
Advisory Committee on Ethics of Gene Modification Therapy in Humans
Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs
Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes
AIDS Services Working Group
British Pharmacopeia Commission (BPC)
BPC—Committee A. Medicinal Chemicals
BPC—Committee B. Medicinal Chemicals

BPC—Committee C. General Chemicals
BPC—Committee D. Steroids
BPC—Committee E. Antibiotics
BPC—Committee F. Pharmacy
BPC—Committee G. Crude Drugs and Galenicals
BPC—Committee H. Biological Materials
BPC—Committee J. Immunologicals
BPC—Committee K. Blood Products
BPC—Committee L. Surgical Dressings
BPC—Committee M. Nomenclature
BPC—Sub Committee N. Medicines and Doses (Veterinary)
Building and Engineering Research and Development Committee
Building Legislation Working Group
Building Notes Consultative Group
Cardiology Liaison Committee
Central Manpower Committee
Chief Scientists Organisation (CSO)—Childcare Research Liaison Group
CSO—Physical Disablement Research Liaison Group
CSO—Procurement Directorate Research Liaison Group
Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising
Committee on Carcinogenicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment
Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials
Committee on Gynaecological Cytology
Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA)
COMA—Committee on Recommended Daily Amounts of Nutrients
COMA—Contamination of Air, Soil and Water
COMA—Panel on Child Nutrition
COMA—Panel on Sugar
COMA—Radiation in the Environment
COMA—Sub Committee on Nutritional Surveillance
Committee on Mutagenicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment.
Committee on Research into Behavioural Aspects of Smoking and Health
Committee on the Review of Medicines
Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM)
CSM—Sub Committee on Adverse Reactions to Vaccines and Immunisations
CSM—Sub Committee on Biologicals
CSM—Sub Committee on Chemistry Pharmacy Standards
CSM—Sub Committee on Safety, Efficacy and Adverse Reactions
Committee on Toxicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment
Dental Advisory Committee
Dental Auxiliaries Committee
Dental Estimates Board
Dental Formulary Sub Committee
Dental Rates Study Group
Elderly Research Liaison Group
Expert Advisory Group on AIDS
Health Advisory Service
Hospital Engineering Technical Support Group
Hospital Infection Working Group
Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health
Information Advisory Group
Joint Monitoring Group for "Achieving a Balance"
Joint Planning Advisory Committee
Legionnaires Disease: Code of Practice Working Party
Maternal Mortality Committee
Medical Advisory Committee
Medical Practices Committee
Medicines Commission
Mental Handicap Research Liaison Group
Microbiology Advisory Committee
National Biological Standards Board UK
National Development Team for People with a Mental Handicap
National Fire Policy Advisory Group
Neurosciences Liaison Committee
Ongoing Review Panel on Diet and Cardiovascular Disease
Panel on Leprosy Opinion
Panel on Novel Foods
Physical Disablement Research Liaison Group
Prescription Pricing Authority
Radiological Advisory Committee
Rural Dispensing Committee
Standing Committee on Postgraduate Medical Education
Standing Dental Advisory Committee
Standing Medical Advisory Committee
Standing Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Committee
Standing Panel on Hazards from Microbial Contamination of Food
Standing Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee
Standing Sub-Committee on Cancer
Supra Regional Services Advisory Group
Training Allowance Advisory Committee
Transplant Advisory Panel
UK Transplant Management Committee
Working Party on Continuing Education of GPs

Listeria

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will instruct clinical staff to ensure that perinatal deaths, still births and miscarriages are examined for the presence of listeria monocytogenes.

Mr. Kenneth Clark *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* My Department has already drawn the attention of the president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists to possible under-reporting of materno-foetal listerial infection. Further advice to doctors was given by the Chief Medical Officer on 16 February 1989.

Abortions

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of abortions performed in Basildon health authority area from April 1968 to the latest available date.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* The total number of abortions performed in a particular area is not released for reasons of confidentiality. However, information on the number of abortions performed upon usual residents of Basildon and Thurrock district health authority (Basildon urban district (including Basildon new town) plus Thurrock urban district 1968-74; Basildon and Thurrock health district 1975-81; Basildon and Thurrock district health authority 1982-87.) from 28 April 1968 to 31 December 1987 was 12,179.

Eye Tests

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage proportion of *(a)* a weekly income of £814·56, and *(b)* a single basic state weekly pension of £41·15 would have to be used in order to pay for an eye test from 1 April.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The question gives insufficient information about the personal circumstances of the individual concerned to allow me to answer. Furthermore, questions as to whether there will be or will not be an eye test charge will be determined by the retailer. It is possible no charge may be made at all.

Food Poisoning

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many cases of food poisoning during 1988 were traced to *(a)* food eaten outside the home, *(b)* chilled prepared meals eaten in the home and *(c)* retail packs of food;

(2) how many outbreaks of food poisoning were reported in 1988; how many were caused by chilled prepared meals; and how many by food eaten in restaurants and so on.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* Provisional data show that there were 472 outbreaks of food poisoning reported to the public health laboratory service in 1988. Information on the number of reported outbreaks associated with the consumption of food in the home or elsewhere is not yet available. Reports to the public health laboratory service do not usually provide information on the way a suspect food was processed or sold.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what scientific evidence he has suggesting that listeria monocytogenes can be eliminated by cook-chill catering that operates within his Department's 1980 guidelines.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* Studies by the Camden Food and Drink Research Association and the agriculture and food research council, Institute of Food Research, Norwich have shown that the heating and reheating temperature recommended in the 1980 guidelines will destroy listeria monocytogenes.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has studied the survey of the microbiological quality of airline meals carried out jointly with the food hygiene laboratory, Colindale and the health departments of the London borough of Hounslow and Spelthorne borough council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* I have not yet received a copy of this survey.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Mathematics and Science

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that sufficient time will be available after the date of the first national curriculum orders being made for mathematics and science and before the start of the autumn term this year in order to permit *(a)* the preparation of in-service training courses for the teachers concerned and *(b)* the subsequent preparation by teachers of suitable schemes of work for their classes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend is today laying the final National Curriculum Orders for mathematics and science. The general nature of the requirements has been known for some time, and a number of LEAs have already prepared in-service training courses. To support such courses, the National Curriculum Council has commissioned subject-specific in-service training materials which will be sent to all schools during the summer term. It is for local education authorities and schools to ensure that the non-teaching time available before the autumn, which may include two extra closure days, is used to best effect in helping teachers to prepare for the introduction of the new requirements.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assumptions have been made by his Department in relation to the availability of non-contact time for primary school teachers in order to prepare suitable schemes of work for the national curriculum in mathematics and science; if he will estimate the typical number of non-contact hours available to a primary school teacher for such work before the start of the autumn term this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Results of the 1987 primary school staffing survey show that teachers in maintained primary schools in England have on average two hours of non-contact time within the average pupil's week of 22½ hours of taught lessons. There is further non-teaching time available within teachers' annual 1,265 hours of directed time for tasks such as preparing or revising schemes of work. In addition to the five annual days available for in-service training, schools may close for two days in 1989 specifically to prepare for the introduction of the national curriculum. There should be plenty of scope over the coming six months for primary teachers to prepare, or revise as necessary, schemes of work to incorporate the national curriculum requirements in mathematics and science.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what number and proportion of primary school teachers expected to be concerned in the implementation of the national curriculum orders for mathematics and science this year have no formal training or qualification above O-level in either mathematics or science; what assessment he has made of particular training needs for such teachers in the preparation of suitable schemes of work for their classes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: In March 1987 there were an estimated 115,400 full-time and 26,100 part-time teachers in maintained nursery and primary schools in England who had no qualification above O-level in mathematics or science and had not attended an in-service course of at least one term's full-time duration or equivalent in the previous five years. These represent 72 per cent. and 78 per cent. respectively of the total number of full-time and part-time teachers in primary schools. However, initial training for primary teachers is designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to teach across the full range of primary subjects. It is for LEAs to assess the training needs of their teachers, including the particular needs of those teaching five-year-olds in September 1989 who will have to implement the national curriculum programmes of study and attainment targets in mathematics and science from that date, and to meet these needs using funds available through the LEA training grants scheme. My right hon. Friend has allowed for two extra closure days for in-service training in 1989, and the National Curriculum Council is preparing subject-specific training materials for use in schools.

University Salaries

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that salaries for academic and academic-related university staffs are adequate to maintain excellence in teaching and research in British universities.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has recently informed the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and

Principals that limited additional funding will be available for pay increases for university staff after the staff's industrial action ceases. It is now for the vice-chancellors to reach a settlement with the Association of University Teachers.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the implications for the working of the formal salary negotiating machinery of the university authorities' unilateral withdrawal from the machinery.

Mr. Jackson: The salary negotiating machinery for university non-clinical academic and academic-related staff is voluntary. Although the university authorities are not at present willing to operate it, I understand that they are in active, informal discussion with the staff representatives.

School Transport (Disabled)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what responsibilities a local education authority has for transport to school in cases where *(a)* the child is disabled, *(b)* both parents are or the sole parent is disabled and *(c)* one parent is disabled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: In assessing a child with special educational needs under the provisions of the Education Act 1981, a local education authority is required to take into account any non-educational provision which may be necessary to enable the child to gain access to the curriculum. This includes the need for transport, which must be provided free to children whose needs require it.

The law governing home to school transport for other children is laid down by section 55 of the Education Act 1944, as amended by section 53 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986. Parents of children who do not qualify for free transport under section 55(1) may ask the LEA to exercise its discretion under section 55(2). Each case is considered on its merits in accordance with the policy of the authority. Section 55(2) applies as much to disabled parents as to other parents.

Veterinary Schools

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the number of veterinary schools in England and Wales and the amount of Government funds given to each in the last financial year.

Mr. Jackson: There are four veterinary schools in England and Wales. Funding for them is not earmarked within the block grant to their parent universities.

Expenditure

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how much money each education authority spent during the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) how much money each education authority spent per pupil for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: The latest available information is for 1986-87 and is given in the table. The data for 1987-88 has been received from most authorities and is in the process of being analysed.

Local education authority	*Primary expenditure (£000)*	*Secondary expenditure (£000)*	*Primary cost per pupil (£)*	*Secondary cost per pupil (£)*
Barking	13,428	14,623	1,010	1,470
Barnet	22,111	27,691	1,060	1,510
Bexley	15,042	21,751	915	1,370
Brent	22,485	23,465	1,105	1,805
Bromley	17,531	24,971	925	1,420
Croydon	22,519	28,750	935	1,535
Ealing	27,336	20,702	1,135	1,650
Enfield	18,180	24,422	890	1,380
Haringey	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Harrow	16,484	15,951	1,020	1,600
Havering	16,804	27,189	905	1,510
Hillingdon	17,248	21,811	1,000	1,520
Hounslow	17,837	20,181	1,065	1,505
Kingston-Upon-Thames	8,248	12,252	915	1,530
Merton	8,075	16,548	950	1,325
Newham	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Redbridge	14,847	20,485	935	1,465
Richmond-Upon-Thames	8,973	9,137	1,000	1,330
Sutton	9,049	14,723	855	1,300
Waltham Forest	18,390	25,719	1,095	1,915
ILEA	228,423	267,983	1,460	2,345
Birmingham	79,083	97,401	835	1,345
Coventry	23,725	33,032	910	1,485
Dudley	21,960	26,361	830	1,350
Sandwell	25,633	31,856	960	1,410
Solihull	14,528	21,290	845	1,280
Walsall	23,304	32,155	970	1,430
Wolverhampton	21,824	26,635	985	1,395
Knowsley	15,064	18,309	960	1,515
Liverpool	42,123	49,740	980	1,445
St. Helens	14,231	20,211	860	1,340
Sefton	19,223	27,700	800	1,275
Wirral	22,856	30,524	815	1,280
Bolton	18,668	25,003	780	1,230

Local education authority	Primary expenditure (£000)	Secondary expenditure (£000)	Primary cost per pupil (£)	Secondary cost per pupil (£)
Bury	11,242	16,852	795	1,340
Manchester	39,971	48,448	1,020	1,660
Oldham	18,396	20,869	870	1,255
Rochdale	15,439	24,643	850	1,460
Salford	17,080	23,034	840	1,385
Stockport	18,581	26,133	805	1,270
Tameside	17,542	21,190	910	1,325
Trafford	13,523	17,584	855	1,315
Wigan	23,111	37,513	860	1,460
Barnsley	16,827	23,015	925	1,325
Doncaster	24,698	30,734	980	1,325
Rotherham	19,806	25,649	890	1,230
Sheffield	42,999	49,878	1,060	1,490
Bradford	33,447	55,704	945	1,235
Calderdale	15,636	19,239	895	1,330
Kirklees	28,315	37,932	875	1,250
Leeds	43,042	72,881	905	1,230
Wakefield	23,300	31,551	955	1,290
Gateshead	16,580	18,724	980	1,360
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne	20,381	28,254	1,020	1,530
North Tyneside	14,348	22,966	995	1,455
South Tyneside	12,650	15,469	965	1,430
Sunderland	23,535	29,347	855	1,305
Isles of Scilly	198	280	1,330	2,205
Avon	61,396	78,703	850	1,310
Bedfordshire	32,068	57,332	875	1,250
Berkshire	47,560	63,167	845	1,280
Buckinghamshire	48,713	48,573	845	1,320
Cambridgeshire	42,736	51,556	815	1,205
Cheshire	64,458	88,656	810	1,235
Cleveland	47,632	60,934	890	1,355
Cornwall	27,981	37,487	795	1,175
Cumbria	35,560	46,706	915	1,315
Derbyshire	65,292	86,618	875	1,305
Devon	55,428	75,465	800	1,225
Dorset	32,151	50,312	870	1,190
Durham	46,919	52,441	920	1,225
East Sussex	34,858	46,952	825	1,235
Essex	97,210	137,617	820	1,255
Gloucestershire	32,901	44,985	835	1,260
Hampshire	98,524	115,162	825	1,220
Hereford and Worcester	36,013	62,091	815	1,180
Hertfordshire	66,576	97,646	870	1,350
Humberside	60,831	92,339	915	1,270
Isle of Wight	4,952	12,168	785	1,150
Kent	84,843	127,039	760	1,145
Lancashire	89,592	120,712	780	1,255
Leicestershire	63,054	91,834	885	1,390
Lincolnshire	35,044	47,236	795	1,185
Norfolk	49,465	55,767	850	1,230
North Yorkshire	42,998	60,308	850	1,240
Northamptonshire	37,617	58,560	815	1,250
Northumberland	16,132	35,690	840	1,230
Nottinghamshire	72,276	100,530	935	1,365
Oxfordshire	32,845	50,752	905	1,350
Shropshire	26,541	39,976	850	1,285
Somerset	25,232	36,771	780	1,195
Staffordshire	69,558	102,039	880	1,255
Suffolk	33,558	58,509	830	1,165
Surrey	59,913	63,151	820	1,260
Warwickshire	36,196	36,347	845	1,220
West Sussex	37,688	52,407	785	1,220
Wiltshire	35,330	46,162	850	1,230

Notes:—These figures are based on LEA expenditure returns to DOE and pupil number returns to DES.

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much the capital allocation was for each education authority for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on 21 December 1988 at columns *287-90*.

Capital Allocation

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much the capital allocation was per head of school population for each education authority for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: Following is a list of figures showing how much the capital allocation was per head of school population for each education authority for the year 1989-90.

Individual authorities' allocations are calculated not pro rata to population, but by assessing their capital expenditure plans, which they supply to the Department each year in a common form, against a consistent and well-publicised set of criteria.

1989-90 Notional schools capital allocation per head of maintained population

LEA	*£*
Barking	11
Barnet	25
Bexley	27
Brent	10
Bromley	19
Croydon	12
Ealing	8
Enfield	30
Haringey	68
Harrow	16
Havering	36
Hillingdon	21
Hounslow	16
Kingston	11
Merton	226
Newham	103
Redbridge	67
Richmond	30
Sutton	30
Waltham	275
ILEA	42
Birmingham	31
Coventry	55
Dudley	49
Sandwell	39
Solihull	21
Walsall	19
Wolverhampton	13
Knowsley	69
Liverpool	7
St. Helens	26
Sefton	39
Wirral	47
Bolton	29
Bury	24
Manchester	71
Oldham	38
Rochdale	62
Salford	107
Stockport	36
Tameside	21
Trafford	94
Wigan	26
Barnsley	7
Doncaster	15
Rotherham	15
Sheffield	26
Bradford	100
Calderdale	77
Kirklees	12
Leeds	61
Wakefield	60
Gateshead	33
Newcastle	38
North Tyneside	54
South Tyneside	134
Sunderland	44
Isles of Scilly	530
Avon	29
Bedfordshire	24
Berkshire	54
Bucks	84
Cambridge	58
Cheshire	22
Cleveland	53
Cornwall	90
Cumbria	71
Derbyshire	61
Devon	106
Dorset	36
Durham	24
East Sussex	99
Essex	65
Gloucester	78
Hampshire	35
Hereford and Worcester	26
Hertford	29
Humberside	53
Isle of Wight	96
Kent	39
Lancashire	65
Leicester	49
Lincoln	37
Norfolk	35
North Yorkshire	22
Northampton	40
Northumberland	19
Notts	21
Oxfordshire	44
Shropshire	79
Somerset	48
Staffs	31
Suffolk	66
Surrey	47
Warwick	21
West Sussex	21
Wiltshire	34

Expenditure

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how much money per pupil each education authority received from the Government for the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) how much money each education authority received from the Government for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested is not available. Whereas specific grant payments for education activities made to each local education authority can be separately identified, the much larger block grant payment is not hypothecated to individual services, and it is not therefore possible in the case of multi-purpose authorities to separate the element of grant paid to support education from that paid to support other services.

Examinations

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of school leavers in each education authority achieved two or more A-level passes in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: The information is given in the table. The figures are presented as a three year average over the academic years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87, to reduce the effects of sampling error in the data relating to a 10 per

cent. sample of school leavers. Sampling error is a particular problem for local education authorities with relatively small numbers of school leavers.

Maintained secondary schools in England: aggregation of school leavers and the proportion gaining two or more A-levels over the academic years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87

Local education authorities	*Numbers of school leavers (thousands)*	*Percentage of school leavers with two or more A-levels*
Barking	6·68	4·6
Barnet	10·35	25·4
Bexley	10·40	11·5
Brent	8·68	9·9
Bromley	10·27	16·4
Croydon	12·88	11·5
Ealing	9·77	10·2
Enfield	10·40	14·2
Haringey	6·05	7·9
Harrow	6·01	18·3
Havering	11·03	11·7
Hillingdon	8·81	10·3
Hounslow	8·31	9·3
Kingston upon Thames	4·65	16·1
Merton	6·13	12·2
Newham	9·08	4·6
Redbridge	8·29	14·1
Richmond upon Thames	4·39	0·0
Sutton	6·22	21·2
Waltham Forest	7·19	5·0
Inner London	73·43	7·4
Birmingham	48·88	7·6
Coventry	14·27	8·5
Dudley	14·52	6·9
Sandwell	14·54	4·7
Solihull	10·82	15·8
Walsall	14·87	10·1
Wolverhampton	12·9	7·2
Knowsley	7·98	4·1
Liverpool	21·10	9·2
St. Helens	8·87	11·8
Sefton	13·77	15·1
Wirral	15·47	12·3
Bolton	12·93	12·5
Bury	8·09	14·3
Manchester	22·23	10·0
Oldham	9·78	6·6
Rochdale	9·38	8·4
Salford	11·03	10·9
Stockport	12·82	13·8
Tameside	11·56	9·3
Trafford	8·63	14·9
Wigan	17·29	9·4
Barnsley	11·28	7·0
Doncaster	13·50	10·0
Rotherham	13·54	9·7
Sheffield	25·64	9·5
Bradford	22·22	9·6
Calderdale	9·01	10·7
Kirklees	18·26	11·0
Leeds	30·57	10·5
Wakefield	16·09	4·4
Gateshead	9·35	8·1
Newcastle upon Tyne	10·32	7·8
North Tyneside	8·85	10·8
South Tyneside	7·14	7·6
Sunderland	14·82	6·8
Avon	37·28	11·9
Bedfordshire	22·42	12·3
Berkshire	29·00	14·4
Buckinghamshire	24·90	16·9
Cambridgeshire	24·31	10·8
Cheshire	44·91	13·3
Cleveland	29·60	12·0
Cornwall	20·70	10·4
Cumbria	21·55	12·2
Derbyshire	43·65	9·1
Devon	38·27	8·8
Dorset	25·27	11·1
Durham	27·86	8·1
East Sussex	22·63	13·8
Essex	66·24	10·9
Gloucestershire	21·82	13·0
Hampshire	66·78	10·3
Hereford and Worcester	27·54	12·7
Hertfordshire	43·45	14·3
Humberside	41·81	10·4
Isle of Wight	4·93	8·7
Kent	65·93	14·2
Lancashire	62·58	7·7
Leicestershire	38·28	13·3
Lincolnshire	24·93	12·1
Norfolk	31·34	8·3
North Yorkshire	29·25	15·7
Northamptonshire	26·16	10·0
Northumberland	12·90	14·6
Nottinghamshire	46·85	9·4
Oxfordshire	22·94	14·1
Shropshire	19·32	11·3
Somerset	17·79	6·3
Staffordshire	48·29	10·8
Suffolk	25·80	10·6
Surrey	37·43	18·9
Warwickshire	21·04	13·4
West Sussex	27·20	15·8
Wiltshire	21·43	8·2

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of school leavers in each education authority achieved five or more GCSE passes or equivalent qualifications, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested is not readily available but I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Magistrates (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the names of the members of the local advisory committee which offers advice on the appointment of magistrates in the Nottingham area.

The Attorney-General: No. Advisory committees have until the end of 1992 to make their membership known. The Nottinghamshire advisory committee has not yet decided to do so.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many retired people depend entirely on state benefits; and how many depend on state benefits for 80 per cent. of their income.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1986, just under 20 per cent. of all pensioner tax units received income only from state benefits; 53 per cent. of pensioner tax units were in receipt of state benefits greater than or equal to 80 per cent. of their gross income.

Source: Family expenditure survey 1986.

1. A pensioner tax unit is a single person of state pension age or over, or a married couple where the man is of state pension age or over.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the value of the state retirement pension in April 1989 if it had been uprated in line with prices since 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The value of the state retirement pension in April 1989, based on annual upratings in line with prices since 1979, would be £41·70 for a single pensioner and £66·80 for a pensioner couple.

Income Support

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much income support or supplementary benefit was paid to people looking after elderly persons in each year since 1974-75, in cash and constant 1988-89 prices, and how many people were paid the benefit in each year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available. The supplementary benefit annual statistical inquiry identified only carers under pension age who cared for severely disabled people aged 16 years or more and who would otherwise have been required to be available for employment. The figures therefore included carers of people under pension age, and excluded carers who were not subject to the condition of availability for employment. The cost and numbers requested, for identified supplementary benefit carers, could be obtained but only at disproportionate cost. Information for income support, which will be available later this year, will not identify carers separately.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central, of 6 March, *Official Report*, column *446*, he will express the number of supplementary benefit/income support claimants for each region as an index figure with 1979 as the base.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows.

Index of the number of claimants receiving supplementary benefit or income support: 1979 to 1988 (using 1979 as the base year)

	Year									
Social security region	[1]*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	[2]*1988*
North Eastern	100	112	134	151	155	164	166	170	167	146
London North	100	112	135	152	158	167	170	174	172	141
London South	100	109	127	144	149	158	162	167	163	133
Wales and South Western	100	108	127	142	145	156	158	161	156	137
Midlands	100	114	142	164	170	179	181	186	181	152
North Western	100	110	132	150	155	163	165	170	167	149
Scotland	100	109	131	149	157	167	170	187	186	169

[1] Figures for 1979 to 1981 are reworked data.

[2] Figures for 1988 are provisional and subject to amendment.

Sources: November/December quarterly count of cases in action, which include a number of cases where benefit payment has ceased but other action is continuing. Full figures set out in the reply on 6 March.

War Pensioners

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of war pensioners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We calculate that there were 258,300 at the end of 1988. This number is made up of 197,800 war disablement pensioners, 57,500 war widows and 3,000 other dependants receiving a war pension.

Family Credit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to advise potential claimants of family credit that child-minding expenses may be deducted from earnings in assessing entitlements; whether existing claimants of family credit have been so advised; and whether his publications will be revised.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no provision in legislation for child-minding expenses to be deducted from earnings in assessing family credit.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he has taken to notify women who would be entitled to invalid care allowance on the basis of the settlement of case CG/15/1987; and whether he proposes to revise his Department's publications.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshaw (Mr. Morris) on 21 December at column *306*. Any follow-up action which may be necessary will need to await the outcome of related cases currently before the social security commissioner and the Court of Appeal, also affecting the entitlement of women over pension age.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to increase mobility allowance next month by an amount close to the current rate of inflation rather than that prevailing in September 1988.

Mr. Scott: No. Price increases from September 1988 to April 1989 will be taken into account at the next benefits uprating. Between November 1979 and April 1988 mobility allowance rose in real terms by 9·4 per cent. The estimated average number of people receiving mobility allowance has increased from 95,000 in 1978-79 to 530,000 in 1988-89.

Expenditure

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what basis he calculates the levels of expenditure in table 15.8 of Cm. 615.

Mr. Scott: The levels of expenditure in table 15·8 were determined by a breakdown of the totals in table 15·1. The

methodology is described in the footnotes. Forecasts throughout chapter 15 are consistent with the economic assumptions described in paragraphs 45-48.

Chief Adjudication Officer

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will publish the fourth annual report of the chief adjudication officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Scott: The report which is being published today provides an authoritative account of the standards of social security adjudication. We welcome the report and the recognition that the replacement of supplementary benefit with income support, as part of our reform of the social security system, has produced encouraging signs for further improvements in the standard of adjudication. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Rating Reform

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by district the income level at which a single person over 25 years of age with no savings would lose entitlement to a rebate from the community charge.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* These figures assume that the claimant is under pension age, is not disabled, is in full-time work and has no children. The tax and national insurance rates current at 9 March 1989 have been used in calculating gross income.

Gross weekly earnings

District council	£
Berwickshire	64·43
Ettrick and Lauderdale	66·04
Roxburgh	66·04
Tweeddale	66·19
Clackmannan	78·39
Falkirk	70·14
Stirling	79·90
Annandale and Eskdale	67·43
Nithsdale	66·26
Stewartry	65·97
Wightown	66·41
Dunfermline	76·88
Kirkclady	77·64
North East Fife	80·95
Aberdeen City	76·73
Banff and Buchan	70·39
Gordon	68·53
Kincardine and Deeside	66·77
Moray	68·24
Badenoch and Strathspey	65·89
Caithness	64·43
Inverness	64·58
Lochaber	66·19
Narin	64·87
Ross and Cromarty	66·48
Skye and Lochalsh	64·43
Sutherland	61·65
East Lothian	89·10
Edinburgh City	91·81
Midlothian	87·59
West Lothian	86·84
Argyll and Bute	72·20
Bearsden and Milngavie	77·49
Clydebank	77·34
Clydesdale	77·94
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	71·90
Cumnock and Doon Valley	72·05
Cunningham	72·34
Dumbarton	77·49
East Kilbride	80·50
Eastwood	75·07
Glasgow City	78·69
Hamilton	76·43
Inverclyde	76·43
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	71·02
Kyle and Carrick	78·99
Monklands	76·73
Motherwell	78·54
Renfrew	77·03
Strathkelvin	77·64
Angus	76·43
Dundee City	81·11
Perth and Kinross	77·34
Islands Council	
Orkney	52·27
Shetland	50·13
Western Isles	54·47

Housing Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what future provisions his Department is making to pay full housing benefit to tenants in receipt of housing benefit in private rented accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The Government have given a firm commitment that housing benefit will continue to be available to help those on low incomes with their reasonable housing costs up to market rent levels.

However, housing benefit is not intended to enable claimants to occupy, at public expense, accommodation which the majority of people could not afford. The Government have therefore announced that they intend to introduce formal limits on benefit for properties at the top of the market, once sufficient information is available about the level of market rents.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his Department will be fully reimbursing all local authority resources paid out in housing benefit to private tenants under the Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* From April 1989, under the arrangements for subsidising local authorities' housing benefit expenditure, full subsidy at the rate of 97 per cent. will be payable, up to the level determined by the rent officer as representing a reasonable market rent, on housing benefit awarded to claimants with deregulated tenancies created under the Housing Act 1988. Benefit above that level will not attract subsidy unless the local authority has paid benefit, above the level of the rent officer's determination, to a person in a vulnerable group, when 50 per cent. subsidy will be paid. For housing benefit claims on deregulated tenancies created before April 1989, until such cases are referred to the rent officer, 97 per cent. subsidy will be payable on benefit awarded on rents up to the subsidy rent threshold for the area and 25 per cent. subsidy above that level. Housing benefit expenditure not met by direct subsidy is reflected in the rate support grant arrangements.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages

8. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the United Kingdom in the latest available year.

Mr. Cope: A total of 8·7 per cent. of the establishments on the wages inspectorate's register, covering 329,591 workers (an estimated 13·1 per cent.) were inspected in 1988. If the hon. Gentleman wishes I will arrange for divisional figures to be published in the *Official Report*.

19. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of the full-time work force earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in Wales.

Mr. Nicholls: There is no such thing as a Council of Europe decency threshold for a minimum acceptable level of earnings.

23. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the west midlands.

Mr. Nicholls: There is no such thing as a Council of Europe decency threshold for a minimum acceptable level of earnings.

27. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time female workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the Wales.

38. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time female workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the United Kingdom.

44. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time female workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in Scotland.

49. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time female workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the west midlands.

67. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time female workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in Great Britain.

73. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time female workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the United Kingdom.

110. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time female workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the northern region.

125. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time female workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* the north-west region.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what percentage, of full-time female workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what percentage, of the full-time workforce earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in Great Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) on 8 March 1989 at columns *569-70*.

28. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the United Kingdom.

53. **Mr. Wareing** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in Great Britain.

54. **Mr. Graham** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in Scotland.

71. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the south-east.

79. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in Wales.

98. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in Greater London.

104. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the east midlands.

106. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in Wales.

114. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in Greater London.

131. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the north-west.

155. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in Scotland.

163. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the northern region.

173. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the north-west.

176. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the east midlands.

182. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what percentage, of full-time male workers earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the northern region.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) on 8 March 1989 at columns *569-70*.

31. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work places were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the United Kingdom.

39. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work places were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the United Kingdom.

70. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work places were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the United Kingdom.

75. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work places were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the east midlands.

92. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work places were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the north-west.

130. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering Yorkshire and Humberside.

137. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering Greater London.

158. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying, for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the northern region.

172. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering Greater London.

174. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the east midlands.

175. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces were visited and how many of them were found to be illegally underpaying for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the north-west.

Mr. Nicholls: Wages inspectorate statistics for Great Britain are not compiled for areas smaller than the inspectorate's nine divisions. The number of workplaces visited in 1988 for the purpose of checking pay and the number where underpayments were found was included in a reply given in the *Official Report* of 1 March at columns *201-26*. The number of workplaces visited in 1988 for advisory purposes was:

	Number
London	10
South East	9
Eastern	10
South West	69
Midlands	103
North West	33
Yorkshire and Humberside	25
Northern	5
Scotland	29

Northern Ireland has a separate wages council system which is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but it is understood that in 1988, 944 workplaces were visited and 112 were found to have underpaid one or more workers.

33. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of the

full-time work force earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the north west.

37. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of the full-time work force earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the United Kingdom.

57. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of the full-time work force earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the United Kingdom.

65. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of the full-time work force earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the south-east.

102. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of the full-time work force earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the west midlands.

111. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many and what percentage of the full-time work force earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the northern region.

136. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what percentage, of the full-time work force earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the west midlands.

180. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what percentage, of the full-time work force earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the latest available year in the north-west.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Members to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) on 8 March 1989 at columns *569-70*.

45. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering the northern region in the latest available year.

46. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed in the most recent year for which figures are available on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering the north-west.

55. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering the United Kingdom in the latest available year.

78. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering the United Kingdom in the latest available year.

97. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering Scotland in the latest available year.

100. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering the west midlands in the latest available year for which figures are available.

101. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering Yorkshire and Humberside in the latest available year.

113. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering the northern region in the latest available year.

1224. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering the north-west in the latest year for which figures are available.

128. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering Scotland in the latest available year.

139. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering Wales in the latest available year.

161. **Mr. Buckley** (Hemsworth): To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering Wales in the latest available year.

177. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average fine imposed on employers found to be illegally underpaying within the wages inspectorate divisions covering the east midlands within the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: Wages inspectorate statistics are not kept for areas smaller than the inspectorate's nine divisions. The average total fine on employers prosecuted for underpayment in 1988 is given for each of the divisions in the following table.

Northern Ireland has a separate wages council system which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. but I understand that in 1988 there were no prosecutions.

Division	*Average fine* £
London	No Prosecutions
South East	200
Eastern	750
South West	150
Midlands	150
North West	215
Yorkshire and Humberside	350
Northern	No Prosecutions
Scotland	No Prosecutions
Wales	[1]100
Great Britain	328

[1] Wales figures are also included in the Inspectorate's North West and South West divisional statistics.

51. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentages of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions in the south-east in the most recent year for which figures are available.

81. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering Scotland.

91. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the United Kingdom in the latest available year.

108. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering East Anglia in the latest available year.

109. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the north-west in the latest available year.

117. **Mr. Foot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering Wales in the latest available year.

121. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the north-west in the latest available year.

126. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering Scotland in the latest year for which figures are available.

153. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the northern region in the latest available year.

166. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the west midlands in the latest available year.

178. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of workplaces and workers were inspected by the wages inspectorate divisions covering Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Nicholls: Wages inspectorate statistics are not compiled for areas smaller than the wages inspectorate's nine divisions. The percentage of workplaces known to the inspectorate which was checked in each division of Great Britain in 1988 was:

	Per cent.
London	6·6
South East	6·2
Eastern	15·1
South West	7·3
Midlands	8·6
North West	7·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	9·5
Northern	8·2
Scotland	9·6
Wales[1]	7·7

[1] Wales figures are also included in the inspectorate's south west and north west divisional statistics.

Northern Ireland has a separate wages council system which is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but it is understood that in 1988, 13·6 per cent. of workplaces known to the inspectorate were checked.

No information is available on the percentage of workers in each wages inspectorate division whose pay was checked because statistical returns of the number of workers employed in establishments covered by wages councils are not collected. However, in 1988 an estimated 2,472,400 workers aged 21 and over were employed in establishments covered by wages councils in Great Britain and checks covered 11 per cent. of that total. In 1987 an estimated 36,065 workers aged 21 and over were employed in establishments covered by wages councils in Northern Ireland and in 1988 checks covered 18 per cent. of that total.

62. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers were found to be illegally underpaying and how many of them were prosecuted in the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering Wales.

68. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers were found to be illegally underpaying and how many of them were prosecuted in the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the United Kingdom.

84. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers were found to be illegally underpaying and how many of them were prosecuted in the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the United Kingdom.

122. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers were found to be illegally underpaying and how many of them were prosecuted in the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the northern region.

154. **Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers were found to be illegally underpaying and how many of them were prosecuted in the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the west midlands.

179. **Mr. Leadbitter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers were found to be

illegally underpaying and how many of them were prosecuted in the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the northern region.

181. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers were found to be illegally underpaying; and how many of them were prosecuted in the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the north-west.

Mr. Nicholls: Wages inspectorate statistics on compliance with wages orders are compiled on the basis of establishments rather than employers and are not kept for areas smaller than a wages inspectorate division. With those provisos, the information requested is given in the following table.

Northern Ireland has a separate wages council system which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but I understand that in 1988 112 establishments were found to be underpaying. There were no prosecutions.

	Establishments found to be underpaying in 1988	*Prosecutions for underpayment in 1988*
London	317	—
South-East	537	1
Eastern	462	2
South-West	1,156	2
Midlands	747	1
North-West	869	2
Yorkshire and Humberside	631	2
Northern	369	—
Scotland	509	—
Great Britain	5,597	10
Wales[1]	446	1

[1] Wales figures are also included in the inspectorate's south-west and north-west divisional statistics.

140. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many West Midlands employers have been prosecuted by his Department's wages inspectorate in the past three years for underpaying wages; how many were found guilty; and what was the average level of fines imposed.

Mr. Nicholls: Wages inspectorate statistics are not kept for areas smaller than the inspectorate's nine divisions. In the three years from 1986 to 1988, two employers in the midlands were prosecuted for offences which included underpayment. Both prosecutions were successful. The average total fine imposed by the courts was £125.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) on 8 March 1989 at column *569-70*.

Employment Training

20. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are undertaking training on employment training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: The number of people on employment training at 24 February 1989 was 157,000. This is a tremendous achievement after only six months of the programme's operation and reflects the great interest shown by unemployed people in getting high-quality training to help them back into a job.

157. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give figures for the current percentage take-up rate under employment training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Information about the take-up rate under employment training is not available. It is not possible to estimate the total number of people in the employment training client group. There are currently over 157,000 on employment training. This is a heartening response by unemployed people who clearly acknowledge that the programme's provision of quality training will be a great help in their efforts to find work.

Labour Statistics

21. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment has fallen since June 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In January 1989 the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom was 1,988,100 compared with 2,857,200 in June 1987 on the same basis, a fall of 869,100. Unemployment is now at its lowest level for eight years.

22. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of young people aged 18 to 24 years unemployed in *(a)* January 1983 and *(b)* January 1989.

Mr. Cope: In January 1989 the number of unemployed claimants aged 18 to 24 years in the United Kingdom was 595,743 compared with 1,004,212 in January 1983—a fall of 408,469. The comparison is slightly affected by the change in compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording.

26. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people in employment aged 24 to 35 years in *(a)* January 1983 and *(b)* January 1989.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated from the 1983 labour force survey (LFS) that in spring 1983 there were 5,042,000 persons aged 25 to 34 in employment in Great Britain. An equivalent estimate for spring 1988, from the preliminary results of the 1988 LFS, is 5,980,000.

29. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the rate of the fall in unemployment in the United Kingdom in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

83. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the fall in unemployment during the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In the 12 months to January 1989 the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom fell by 531,300 on a consistent basis. At 1,988,100 unemployment is now at its lowest level for eight years.

36. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the numbers of people aged 16 to 18 years in employment.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated from the preliminary results of the 1988 labour force survey (LFS) that in spring 1988 there were 1,475,000 persons aged 16 to 18 in employment in Great Britain.

41. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportions of those in employment in the United Kingdom are self-employed; what this figure was 10 years ago; and what is the comparable change for other OECD countries.

Mr. Lee: The table shows, for the United Kingdom and major OECD countries, the proportion of those in civilian employment who were self-employed in 1976 and 1986 and the change in the proportion over the 10-year period. 1986 is the latest year for which the information requested is available for the other OECD countries. In September 1988, the latest date for which United Kingdom figures are available 11·6 per cent. of the civilian work force in employment were self-employed.

Percentage of civilian employment self employed

	1976	*1986*	*Change (percentage points)*
United Kingdom	8·0	10·8	2·8
Canada	8·4	9·2	0·7
USA	8·4	8·5	0·1
Germany	9·6	9·6	0
Japan	17·7	15·6	−2·1
France	17·8	15·8	−2·0
Italy	29·2	24·5	−4·7

43. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment has fallen in Bury, North since July 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In January 1989 the number of unemployed claimants in Bury, North constituency was 2,474 compared with 4,607 in July 1986—a fall of 2,133, or 46·3 per cent. The comparison is affected by seasonal influences as well as by the change in the coverage of the count from September 1988 due to the new benefit regulations affecting those aged under 18.

47. **Mr. Thornton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the percentage fall in unemployment in each of the Liverpool parliamentary constituencies since June 1987.

Mr. Lee: The following information is also available from the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in June 1987 and January 1989 for each of the Liverpool parliamentary constituencies, together with the percentage change over the period. The figures are affected by seasonal influences as well as by the change in the coverage of the count due to new benefit regulations from September 1988 for young people aged under 18.

Constituency	*June 1987*	*January 1989*	*Percentage change*
Liverpool Broadgreen	8,149	6,689	−17·9
Liverpool Garston	7,456	5,812	−22·0
Liverpool Mossley Hill	7,070	5,923	−16·2
Liverpool Riverside	10,764	8,960	−16·8
Liverpool Walton	10,303	8,300	−19·4
Liverpool West Derby	8,795	7,161	−18·6

48. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have become self-employed during the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In the year to September 1988 there was a net increase of 125,000 in the estimated number of self-employed people in Great Britain. It is estimated that nearly 3 million people are now self-employed and the number is still rising. The numbers of self-employed people have risen by over 60 per cent. since 1979 and they now represent almost one in nine of the work force in employment.

52. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the numbers of people in employment in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, the civilian work force in employment in the Yorkshire and Humberside region was 2,148,000. This represents an increase of 179,000 or 9 per cent. since September 1983. The civilian workforce in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

66. **Mr. Dover:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment has fallen over the past year in the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

85. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the rate of the fall in unemployment in the last 12 months in the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In the 12 months to January 1989, the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the north-west fell by 61,100 or 17·5 per cent. on a consistent basis.

69. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently employed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Between March 1983 and September 1988 the work force in employment in Great Britain increased by 2,809,000 to 25,807,000, the highest level on record. This rising trend has now continued for more than five years. The figures have been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, Her Majesty's Forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

76. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were in full-time and part-time employment, where identifiable, in each standard planning region of the United Kingdom in June 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: For the dates specified, the only available information about full and part-time employment in the regions is for female employees in employment. The information is not available for Northern Ireland. The information is as follows:

Female employees in employment regions of Great Britain

Thousands

	Full-time		Part-time	
	June 1979	*September 1988*	*June 1979*	*September 1988*
South-East	1,899	2,210	1,279	1,392
Greater London (included in South-East)	—	1,105	—	496
East Anglia	163	201	122	160
South-West	382	430	295	325
West Midlands	533	541	370	405
East Midlands	376	404	265	309
Yorkshire and Humberside	453	452	362	395
North-West	666	607	471	496
North	298	278	208	237
Wales	250	217	165	185
Scotland	565	529	332	382

82. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment has fallen in the west midlands over the past year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In the 12 months to January 1989, the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the west midlands fell by 65,900 or [illegible] per cent., on a consistent basis.

87. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the rate of the fall in unemployment in the last 12 months in the east midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In the 12 months to January 1989, the level of unemployment seasonally adjusted, in the east midlands fell by 34,300 or 21·9 per cent. on a consistent basis.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people who were classified as long-term unemployed in January 1983 and January 1989.

Mr. Lee: In January 1989 the number of unemployed claimants who had been unemployed for more than 12 months in the United Kingdom, was 821,419 compared with 1,106,271 in January 1983. The comparison is affected by the 1983 Budget measures for certain older men, mostly aged 60 and over, who no longer need to sign on to get their benefits, the change in compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording, and the change in the coverage of the count from September 1988 due to new benefit regulations affecting those young people aged under 18.

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the percentage fall in unemployment in the parliamentary constituencies in the city of Birmingham since June 1987.

Mr. Lee: The following information is also available from the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in June 1987 and January 1989 for each of the Birmingham parliamentary constituencies, together with the percentage change over the period. The figures affected by seasonal influences as well as by the change in the coverage of the count due to new benefit regulations from September 1988 for young people aged under 18.

Constituency	*June 1987*	*January 1989*	*Percentage change*
Birmingham Edgbaston	5,001	3,548	−29·0
Birmingham Erdington	7,359	5,196	−29·4
Birmingham Hall Green	5,314	3,700	−30·4
Birmingham Hodge Hill	7,081	5,152	−27·2
Birmingham Ladywood	8,892	6,606	−25·7
Birmingham Northfield	7,663	5,630	−26·5
Birmingham Perry Barr	7,400	5,301	−28·4
Birmingham Small Heath	9,599	7,344	−23·5
Birmingham Sparkbrook	8,566	6,188	−27·8
Birmingham Yardley	4,721	3,185	−32·5
Birmingham Selly Oak	5,750	4,203	−26·9
Sutton Coldfield	3,243	2,156	−33·5

123. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the level of unemployment now; what was the level in June 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In January 1989 the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the United Kingdom was 1,988,100 compared with 2,857,200 in June 1987 on the same basis, a fall of 869,100. Unemployment is now at its lowest level for eight years.

132. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people included in the unemployment count are early retired people or those in receipt of the carer's allowance not seeking work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Information is not available in the form requested. However, according to preliminary results of the labour force survey for spring 1988, in Great Britain there were some 60,000 claimants in the unemployment count who were not unemployed on the ILO/OECD definition and who gave retirement as their main reason for not seeking work in the previous week.

133. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make an up-to-date statement on the employment situation in West Norfolk.

Mr. Lee: The latest available information from the September 1984 census of employment shows that there were 41,000 employees in employment in the West Norfolk local authority area compared with 39,400 in September 1981, an increase of 4·3 per cent. between the two census dates. Estimates from the 1987 census of employment will become available later this year.

More recent information is available about unemployment. In January 1989 the number of unemployed claimants in the West Norfolk local authority area was 3,148 compared with 4,876 in January 1988, a fall of 1,728 or 35·4 per cent.

134. **Dame Peggy Fenner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of vacancies in Kent.

Mr. Lee: In January 1989 the number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in Kent was 6,937. Vacancies at jobcentres do not represent the total number of vacancies in the economy. Recent research shows, nationally, only about one third of vacancies are notified to jobcentres. This proportion will tend to vary between different areas.

135. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of unemployment, expressed as a percentage, according to the latest available figures for the Sheffield travel-to-work area; and what was the figure 10 years ago.

Mr. Lee: In January 1989 the number of unemployed claimants in the Sheffield travel-to-work area was 31,687 or 11·2 per cent. of employees in employment plus the unemployed. The corresponding figure for the Sheffield 1978 travel-to-work area in January 1979 was 13,771 or 4·6 per cent. The figures are affected by the changes in the boundaries of travel-to-work areas as well as in the coverage of the unemployment count, and are therefore not comparable.

138. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for unemployment in Basildon; and what were the corresponding figures for the same period in each of the last four years.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in Basildon local authority area for each January from 1986 to 1989. The figures are affected by the change in the compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording and by the change in the coverage of the count from September 1988 due to the introduction of new benefit regulations for young people aged under 18.

Unemployment in Basildon local authority area

January	*Number of unemployed claimants*
1986	9,073
1987	8,695
1988	6,287
1989	4,145

144. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people in employment in London.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988, the latest date for which figures are available the civilian work force in employment in Greater London was 4,014,000. This represents an increase of 253,000 or 7 per cent. since September 1983. The civilian work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

149. **Mr. Ashby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of employment in the east midlands.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988, the latest date for which figures are available the civilian work force in employment in the east midlands region was 1,836,000. This represents an increase of 219,000 or 14 per cent. since September 1983. The civilian work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

150. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the rate of unemployment in the north-west in January and February; and what was the rate recorded in January and February 1988.

Mr. Lee: In January 1989 the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the north-west was 9·6 per cent., compared with 11·6 per cent. and 11·4 per cent. on the same basis, in January and February 1988 respectively.

The February 1989 unemployment figures are not available until 16 March.

151. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in which regions of the United Kingdom the rate of unemployment has fallen fastest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In the 12 months to January 1989 the largest falls in the regional seasonally adjusted unemployment rates, were in the west midlands, 2·5 percentage points, and Wales 2·2 percentage points, compared with the United Kingdom average of 1·9 percentage points.

162. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the numbers of long-term unemployed aged 16 to 24 years in *(a)* January 1983 and *(b)* January 1989.

Mr. Lee: In January 1989 the number of unemployed claimants aged 16 to 24 years who had been unemployed for more than 12 months in the United Kingdom was 136,969 compared with 258,470 in January 1983. The comparison is affected by the change in compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over-recording and the change in the coverage of the count from September 1988 due to new benefit regulations for those young people aged under 18.

164. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current employment position in the United Kingdom.

168. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently employed in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Between March 1983 and September 1988 the work force in employment in the United Kingdom increased by 2,813,000 to 26,374,000, the highest level on record. This rising trend has now continued for more than five years. The figures have been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, HM forces and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

169. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women are now working; how many were working in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988 the latest date for which figures are available the female work force in employment in Great Britain was 11,059,000. In September 1986 it was 10,276,000. This represents an increase of 8 per cent.

171. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the level of employment in the south-west of England.

Mr. Lee: In September 1988, the latest date for which figures are available, the civilian work force in employment in the south-west region was 1,982,000. This represents an increase of 224,000 or 13 per cent. since September 1983. Th civilian work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

National Dock Labour Scheme

24. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many registered dock workers have been recruited in the last 12 months by the dock labour scheme port of Tees and Hartlepool.

Mr. Nicholls: In the port of Tees and Hartlepool 12 registered dock workers have been recruited in the last 12 months.

32. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many dockers were employed by dock labour scheme ports in 1979; how many are currently employed in those ports; and if he will estimate similar figures for non-scheme ports.

Mr. Nicholls: Dock labour scheme ports employed 25,770 registered dock workers in 1979, in 1989 they currently employ 9,471. Comparable figures for non-scheme ports are not available.

34. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to seek to amend the dock labour scheme with a view to implementing the free movement of labour provisions of the Single European Act in 1992.

90. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he intends to review the operation of the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government's position on the scheme remains unchanged as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister confirmed in the House on January 19 1989, at columns *481-82*.

58. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the National Association of Port Employers to discuss the future of the dock labour scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to meet the National Association of Port Employers to discuss the future of the dock labour scheme.

61. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the national average age of registered dock workers in dock labour scheme ports.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1987 (the latest available date) the national average age for registered dock workers in dock labour scheme ports was 46·7 years.

63. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received concerning the future of the dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about the future of the dock labour scheme.

74. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the 1988 average wage of registered dock workers in dock labour scheme ports.

Mr. Nicholls: The average earnings of registered dock workers in the last quarter of 1988 was £341·83 per week.

77. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the impact of the dock labour scheme on the creation of real jobs in port areas.

Mr. Nicholls: Where the dock labour scheme has sustained inefficiency in dock work leading to loss of business, and has acted as a disincentive to investment in adjacent areas, there is no doubt that local job prospects have suffered.

89. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many demarcation disputes exist at the present time in relation to registered dock workers claiming work that is currently undertaken by other workers.

Mr. Nicholls: Four cases arising from disputed definitions of dock work under the dock labour scheme are currently under litigation.

95. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what reports he received of the National Dock Labour Board's monthly meetings.

Mr. Nicholls: There is no requirement for the National Dock Labour Board to provide me with reports of its monthly meetings.

99. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the fishing industry in Grimsby or Aberdeen on the future of the dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: I have received a number of representations about the operation of the dock labour scheme on the fishing industry in Grimsby and Aberdeen.

142. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he intends to examine the operations of the dock labour scheme on the River Thames; and whether representations have been made to him about the effect on businesses along the Thames brought about by the operation of the dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has received and noted several representations about the operation of the dock labour scheme on the Thames river.

165. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are now covered by the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The total number of registered dock workers in ports covered by the national dock labour scheme was 9,741 on 28 February 1989.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average daily surplus of labour in dock labour scheme ports during 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1988 the average daily surplus of labour in dock labour scheme ports was 932.

Drug Misuse

25. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate of working hours lost each year from drug misuse.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not possible to estimate with any accuracy the effect of drug misuse on working hours lost. No one knows the full extent of drugs misuse in this country but it is clear that this serious problem affects a significant number of people who are or who otherwise could be in employment.

Wages Councils

30. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence he has that the abolition of wages councils will result directly in employment growth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: There is now a large body of research which establishes that there is a link between the level of pay and jobs and there are studies by academics and others which point to the adverse effects on jobs of statutory minimum rates. Employers also report that the levels at which wages council minima are set influence the amount of employment that they are prepared to offer.

Tourism

35. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to change the grant structure of the tourist boards for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: A wide range of issues is being looked at as part of the tourism review announced last July. The review report is currently under consideration.

59. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current levels of capital investment in the tourist industry.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board's "Tourism Investment Report" shows that the total amount spent on tourism projects in England, with a value of £0·5 million or more, which were completed in 1988 was £605 million. Investment in such projects which were still under construction at 31 December 1988 totalled £2,114 million.

64. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the moratorium on section 4 grants has had any effect on the levels of capital investment in tourism and hospitality developments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The suspension of the section 4 scheme was announced some seven weeks ago and it is too early to assess what effect this has had on the level of capital investment. However, the £13·2 million spent on the section 4 scheme in the current financial year is minuscule compared with total new capital investment in tourism and leisure, estimated to be worth £2·5 billion in major projects in England during the last six months of 1988 and thus the moratorium is unlikely to have had any significant effect.

93. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the prospects for the tourism industry in 1989.

Mr. Lee: Levels of investment and forward bookings show that prospects for the domestic tourism industry in 1989 are excellent. A recent survey carried out by the English tourist board indicates that there has been an upsurge in bookings for holidays in Britain. Operators are reporting increases of up to 50 per cent. on 1988 so far this year and coupled with approximately £2 billion worth of facilities due to come on stream make the prospects for 1989 very promising.

160. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the BTA to discuss the promotion of Britain in the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Both my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I frequently meet the chairman of the British Tourist Authority. There are no plans for a separate meeting to discuss this specific issue.

167. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the British Tourist Association to discuss promotion of tourism from Japan to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I frequently meet the chairman of the British Tourist Authority to discuss aspects of promotion of tourism from overseas and we are both aware of the great potential of the Japanese market. In June I hope to lead a delegation of senior figures in the tourism industry to Japan to explore ways of encouraging more Japanese visitors to Great Britain. This will build on the Government's wider "Opportunity Japan" campaign of which tourism is an integral part.

Lost Working Days

40. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average annual number of working days lost through stoppages for the period of the past nine years; and what was the figure for the preceding nine years.

Mr. Nicholls: The average annual number of working days lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes for the period 1980 to 1988 is provisionally estimated as 7,562,000; the figure for the period 1971 to 1979 was 13,081,000.

148. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the work days lost in *(a)* January 1979 and *(b)* January 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of working days lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes in January 1979 was 2,966,000. The most recently available figure relates to December 1988, for which it is provisionally estimated that 35,000 working days were lost; the January 1989 figures will be published on 16 March in the labour market statistics press notice.

Retirement Policy

42. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he is taking to encourage workers over 60 years to remain in their jobs and not retire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on 14 February 1989 at column *154*.

Trades Union Congress

50. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the general secretary of the Trades Union Congress to discuss vocational qualifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no present plans to do so.

103. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the general

secretary of the Trades Union Congress to discuss the current employment situation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no plans for such a meeting in the immediate future.

Child Labour

105. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers have been prosecuted as a result of investigations by Her Majesty's factory inspectorate and Her Majesty's agriculture inspectorate in each year since 1973 for alleged offences in connection with the employment of children; with what result; and what was *(a)* the highest, *(b)* the average and *(c)* the lowest penalty imposed following a conviction.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to information in the reply to his question by the Secretary of State for Health on 16 February, *Official Report* column *327*, in respect of industrial and agricultural undertakings. Prosecutions of industrial undertakings by the Health and Safety Executive were as a result of investigations by the factory inspectorate, and those of agricultural undertakings as a result of investigations by the agricultural inspectorate.

Benefit Fraud

107. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his campaign to reduce unemployment benefit fraud.

Mr. Lee: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his reply to my hon. Friend's question of 14 February 1989 at column *145* on 15 February the drive against fraudulent benefit claims is being intensified. In the nine months from April 1988 325,000 cases were investigated compared with 286,000 in the same period in 1987. Increased resources have been devoted to fraud detection, particularly in the south-east, and a new inner London fraud team has been established to pursue investigations into the hidden economy.

116. **Sir John Stokes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for savings for 1988 as a result of investigations of fraudulent claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The net benefit saving from my Department's fraud investigation work during 1988 was £65 million.

Local Employer Networks

112. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the establishment of local employer networks.

Mr. Cope: At the end of February 1989, 118 local employer networks were operating throughout Great Britain. Some may form the nucleus of a training and enterprise council. The Government will be encouraging the new councils to make the best use of the expertise of these employer networks.

YTS

118. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest figures for YTS trainees going into work, further education and training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The latest figures show that 86 per cent. of young people completing full YTS training and 78 per cent. of all leavers went into either employment, full-time education or further training.

129. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people currently benefiting from YTS.

Mr. Cope: At the end of January 1989, 413,300 young people were recorded in training on YTS.

146. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people went into employment, full-time education or further training on leaving YTS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The latest figures show that 86 per cent. of young people completing full YTS training and 78 per cent. of all leavers went into either employment, full-time education or further training.

"Employment for the 1990s"

120. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received following the publication of the White Paper, "Employment for the 1990s"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: We have received several hundred representations following publication of the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s", the majority of which have expressed interest in and support for the introduction of training and enterprise councils. The prospectus inviting local groups led by employers to submit proposals for forming training and enterprise councils in their areas was published on 10 March.

Voluntary Sector

143. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people he estimates are employed in the voluntary sector.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available.

Vacancies

145. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many vacancies were notified to jobcentres, and what proportion these constitute of the estimated number of vacancies in the economy in the last months for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: In January 1989 the level of unfilled vacancies, seasonally adjusted, at jobcentres in the United Kingdom was 229,200. A survey in January 1989 showed that only about one third of all vacancies in the economy are notified to jobcentres.

Disabled People

147. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment from which sources he derives information about the number and proportion of disabled people of working age who are unemployed; and what is the latest information provided by these sources.

Mr. Lee: The only count made of unemployed people with disabilities is of those who choose to register for work

at jobcentres and careers offices. The latest figures available show that on 6 January 1989 there were 50,219 unemployed people with disabilities registered for work at jobcentres and careers offices. There is no count made of the total number of people with disabilities of working age.

Job Clubs

152. **Mr. Rhodes James:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job clubs are currently in operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: At 31 January 1989 there were 1,220 job clubs in operation. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on 27 January 1989, *Official Report*, column *810*.

Enterprise Agencies

156. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many enterprise agencies are currently operating in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: We know of 437 local enterprise agencies operating in the United Kingdom. Of these, 396 are approved under provisions of the 1988 Income and Corporation Taxes Act (previously under provisions of the Finance Act 1982), which allows business sector sponsors tax relief on their contributions to such bodies.

Workfare

170. **Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has made a study during the last 12 months of workfare schemes in the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: I have not made a study of workfare schemes in the United States of America during the last 12 months. Some two years ago Professor John Addison of the university of South Carolina completed a study of such schemes as part of a wider research project commissioned by my Department. A summary of his findings were included in the Blaug report on workfare and a summary was published in "Economic Affairs" in May 1988.

Closed Shop

56. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has come to any conclusions on the future of the pre-entry closed shop; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The examination of the operation of the pre-entry closed shop which was announced in our White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" is now nearing completion. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to make a further announcement shortly.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

60. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unemployed people have been helped to start a business during the last 12 months through the enterprise allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: In the year to March 1989, 99,070 unemployed people set up their own businesses with the help of the enterprise allowance scheme. Since the scheme began in 1982 over 421,000 unemployed people have been helped to create their own business.

Restart

72. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on progress in the restart scheme.

Mr. Lee: Since the introduction of the restart programme in July 1986, some 5·4 million interviews have been carried out, of which just under 90 per cent. have resulted in an offer of positive help being made.

The restart programme now offers interviews at six-monthly intervals to everyone who has been out of work for six months or more. In addition, certain clients are now offered follow-up interviews in order to provide further guidance and support.

Since September 1988, the programme has delivered the Government's guarantee to people aged between 18 and 24, who have been unemployed for between six and 12 months, of the offer of a place on employment training, or in a job club or on the enterprise allowance scheme.

86. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many long-term unemployed have been offered help under the restart programme since its inception; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Since 1 July 1986, some 5·4 million interviews have taken place under the restart programme of which just under 90 per cent. have resulted in an offer of positive help being made. There is no record of the number of people who have been interviewed as some will have been interviewed more than once.

Business Starts

80. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many businesses were started during the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: In 1987, the latest year for which figures have been published, the estimated number of new registrations for value added tax was 205,000. The net increase in the number of VAT registered businesses in 1987 was 45,000, or nearly 900 a week on average. The indications are that the rate of increase during 1988 has been faster.

Trade Union Representatives

88. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to ensure that time off rights for trade union representatives will be equal to those enjoyed by safety representatives under the Health and Safety at Work Regulations.

Mr. Lee: Time off rights for trade union representatives will be provided under the Employment Bill, amending the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, which will not affect the provisions for safety representatives in the Health and Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations.

Wages (Northern Region)

Mr. Dixon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workplaces were visited, and how

many of them were found to be illegally underpaying, for the latest available year by the wages inspectorate divisions covering the northern region.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1988 the wages inspectorate visited 1,004 workplaces in the northern region for the purposes of checking workers' pay and found 369 were underpaying one or more worker. However, this cannot be taken as representing the general level of non-compliance with wages council orders because the wages inspectorate targets its checks by visit on those workplaces thought more likely to underpay workers. The wages inspectorate also visited five workplaces in the northern region for advisory purposes.

Dock Labour Boards

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff are employed by the National Dock Labour Board and the 20 local dock labour boards.

Mr. Nicholls: The National Dock Labour Board and the 20 local boards employed a total of 234 staff on 31 December 1988.

Community Insulation Projects

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the introduction of the employment training scheme on the operation of community insulation projects.

Mr. Nicholls: I am aware that some community insulation projects operating under employment training have had difficulty attracting trainees. Community insulation projects have an important role to play in employment training and on 10 February at column *868* my right hon. Friend announced a range of measures specifically aimed at supporting and maintaining the present community insulation project network.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration he has given to funding directly the community insulation programme, along the lines of the funding arrangements of the action for community employment scheme in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the measures I announced on 10 February at column *868*, which reinforce the generous support available for running community insulation projects in Great Britain through employment training. Different employment and training programmes operate in Northern Ireland so different funding arrangements are appropriate there.

Training and Enterprise Councils

96. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his proposals to create training and enterprise councils.

141. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received on his proposals to create training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: On 10 March I published a prospectus inviting local groups of employers to submit proposals for forming training and enterprise councils in their areas. The TECs will represent a fundamental change in the way training and enterprise activities are managed and developed. The idea has captured the imagination of employers throughout the country and we have already had many inquiries. I have invited the first formal applications for development funding by the end of April. I expect the first TECs to be in operation by early next year.

115. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what contributions training and enterprise councils will make to meeting skill shortages; and if he will make a statement.

127. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his proposals to establish training and enterprise councils to deal with skill shortages.

159. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will outline his proposals for employers to direct training for jobs on a local basis through training and enterprise councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Training and enterprise councils offer employers major opportunities to improve the supply of skills and to promote enterprise. They will be well placed to identify key skill needs in their localities. They will manage and develop the training and enterprise programmes previously run by the Employment Department so that they meet local needs more effectively. The TECs will also be able to take new initiatives, in partnership with others, to promote more effective training and small business support, using public and private funds. They will have a key role in helping to stimulate greater investment by employers in training their employees. The TECs will greatly increase employers' ability to mould the training system to meet their needs.

TRANSPORT

Ports (Statistics)

184. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of United Kingdom trade passes through *(a)* dock labour scheme ports and *(b)* non-scheme ports; and what was the comparable figure in 1965.

Mr. Portillo: The percentage of trade tonnage (including oil) passing through dock labour scheme ports and non-scheme ports in Great Britain are given in the table for 1965 and 1987. Northern Ireland is not covered by the dock labour scheme legislation.

United Kingdom Foreign trade through ports in Great Britain
Percentage of tonnage

	Dock labour scheme ports	*Non-scheme ports*
1965	88	12
1987	62	38

Computerised Information (Confidentiality)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that the air

traffic control system is adequately protected from unauthorised entry by computer hackers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is for the Civil Aviation Authority and the Ministry of Defence acting through the management of the national air traffic services to ensure adequate protection.

Vehicles (North Yorkshire)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the numbers of vehicles seeking to travel from the home counties to north Yorkshire and the north in the coming 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department prepares forecasts of national traffic. Where specific trunk road improvements are being assessed, local traffic forecasts are prepared. Projections are not otherwise made for traffic between specific regions.

Motoring Mileage

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate his Department has of the total mileage driven by the average motorist per annum; and how this estimate is arrived at.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am advised that the average motorist drives about 6,000 miles per annum, while the average household car travels 7,700 miles per annum. Mileage per car is higher than mileage per driver because there is more than one driver per car. These estimates are derived from the latest national travel survey carried out in 1985-86.

Drivers (Eyesight)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent random tests to determine whether drivers' eyesight is defective are carried out in England and Wales; with what results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Last month I placed in the Library two transport and road research laboratory reports on eyesight standards for driving—"A Re-analysis of Californian Driver Vision Data" and "A Survey of Visual Acuity of Drivers"—together with a paper entitled "Vision and Driving" prepared by the Department's medical adviser. These documents show clearly that defective eyesight is not a problem in the general driving population as a whole.

We are not aware of any random testing of driver eyesight standards. We know that some police forces carry out occasional surveys of driver eyesight using binocular screening devices.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any proposals to seek to amend the law so as to make it an offence for a person to drive a vehicle while having defective vision, whether known to that person or not; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is an offence under section 91 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 to drive with defective eyesight, whether known or not, to the extent that the driver is unable to meet the number plate test.

It is an offence to refuse to submit to any eyesight test required by a police constable. The maximum penalty is £400, as well as an obligatory two penalty points.

Around 300 people each year are prosecuted for these offences.

Fishermen (Pots)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to require potting fishermen to mark their pots clearly.

Mr. Portillo: The need for the efficient marking of lobster and crab pots will shortly be drawn to the attention of fishermen by the circulation of advice to the local sea fisheries committees, and attempts are also being made to stimulate interest in the subject in the fishing press. It remains the case however that progress can best be made through better communications locally between fishermen, yachtsmen and others concerned.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision is being made for the laying of submarine high voltage cable in the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: The use of the Channel tunnel for purposes such as the passage of electricity cables is a matter in the first place for Eurotunnel's commercial judgment. I understand that it has considered the possibility of entering into arrangements with CEGB, and it seems that overall the disadvantages would outweigh the advantages. There would be considerable technical problems to be overcome, for example in making space available, coping with the heat generated, and avoiding interference with signalling equipment.

M11 Link

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in discussions between his Department's officials and Beazers Ltd. to achieve environmental improvements to the proposed M11 link road through Leyton and Leytonstone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Discussions between officials of the Department of Transport and Beazers Ltd. have taken place against clearly set out criteria that there should be no delay to the road scheme nor any extra risk of cost falling upon my right hon. Friend.

The costs and feasibility of Beazers' tunnelling proposals were agreed. Beazers has been unable to agree financial terms which would meet these criteria. Beazers has now been advised that its proposals could not be incorporated in the scheme without delay to its completion.

Refurbishment Costs

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide precise details of refurbishment/upgrading costs expended over the past five years on the following stations *(a)* Hartland MSRC-to 6 December 1988, *(b)* Ramsey MRSC-to 17 January 1989 and *(c)* Peterhead MRSC-to date.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* Over the five-year periods specified, expenditure on refurbishment/upgrading of the buildings concerned has totalled:

	£
Hartland MRSC	54,634
Ramsey MSRC	4,723
Peterhead MRSC	5,196

Roads (Hampshire)

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish statistics indicating the increase of traffic in Hampshire (i) in the county as a whole and (ii) in the local authority districts of the county for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The Department carries out surveys designed to measure traffic growth only at the national level. For counties, estimates of traffic levels are made annually for major roads (class A and motorways). These levels estimates are subject to wide margins of error and do not provide a reliable basis for measuring year-to-year changes.

For 1987 the level of traffic on major roads in Hampshire is estimated at 7·2 billion vehicle kilometres. No estimates are made of traffic levels for the local authority districts within a county.

London Underground (Security)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total extra amount spent by Her Majesty's Government on police and improved security on the London Underground since the publication of the 1986 report "Crime on the Underground".

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 10 March 1989]:* The Government have made available to London Underground Ltd. £15 million specifically for additional passenger security measures recommended by the 1986 report. In addition the increase in complement of the London Underground division of the British Transport police from 350 to 400 officers will cost an extra £1·5 million in a full year.

Elveden Junction

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his request to Suffolk county council to investigate what action can be taken to improve the A11/B1106 junction at Elveden, if he has received the council's recommendations; and what steps he is now taking to bring about an improvement in road safety at this junction.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 10 March 1989]:* Suffolk county council has recommended that a roundabout be built at this junction. At the Department's request it is now carrying out an economic evaluation of the proposal in relation to any possible longer-term major improvements to this section of the trunk road.

We expect to have the evaluation in a few weeks and shall then be able to give further consideration to the possibilities for improving the junction.

ENVIRONMENT

Nature Reserves

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for the publication of the Nature Conservancy Council's report on the future of its reserves; when he intends to respond to this report; and if he will make a statement on Government policy on the future of Britain's state-owned nature reserves.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 8 February 1989]:* My right hon. Friend proposes to discuss this report with the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council as soon as we have completed our initial examination of it and before making any announcement of the Government's response. At that time I would expect to place a copy of the report in the Libraries of both Houses.

UK 2000

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is *(a)* the Government funding for UK 2000 in 1987-88, 1988-89, with plans for 1989-90 and *(b)* the number of people employed on programmes under the UK 2000 initiative in each of these years.

Mr. Trippier: The Department's grant to UK 2000 in England was £1·381 million in 1987-88 and £1·805 million in 1988-89. In each year UK 2000 matched this grant with private sponsorship. In 1987-88, 10,300 community programme (CP) trainees were employed on projects supported by UK 2000, with 12,500 volunteers also involved. In 1988-89 some 9,000 CP trainees were employed, reducing to under 6,000 trainees following the introduction of employment training, with an estimated 15,000 volunteers also involved.

I have not yet formally offered grant or approved plans for 1989-90. I have however indicated to UK 2000 my intention to continue funding at the same level as in 1988-89, as a declining share of the overall budget for the initiative.

UK 2000 also operates separately in Scotland and Wales, receiving grant from the Scottish and Welsh Offices respectively.

Lowermoor Treatment Works

Mr. Neale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if the water being supplied from the Lowermoor treatment works now meets European Community standards;

(2) if he will publish the latest details of samples taken by the South West water authority in the Lowermoor treatment works distribution area; and if he will make a statement on the proposed programme of sampling intended in the area for the seven months period from 1 March 1989 to 30 September 1989.

Mr. Howard: I understand from the South West water authority that for the week commencing Monday 27 February, 23 samples of water issuing from the Lowermoor treatment works all complied with the standards of the EC drinking water directive. The 89 samples taken during the same week from the distribution system served by the Lowermoor treatment works complied with the EC standards except for one sample from an old property with lead plumbing which exceeded the standard for lead and four samples which exceeded the standard for iron. It is not unusual for the iron standard to be exceeded occasionally in distribution systems with iron mains. Those results which did not comply with a directive standard have been notified to the local environmental health officer.

I am informed that the authority's current sampling programme has a daily target of 10 routine samples. In addition, samples are taken in response to customer requests to investigate problems and to monitor the effects of mains cleaning operations. This level of sampling will be maintained until the authority, North Cornwall district council, and Cornwall and Isles of Scilly health authority are satisfied that it can be reduced.

Rural Housing

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what consideration there has been of rural housing policy as part of his Ministry's annual review of alternative land use.

Mr. Chope: Evidence on land use change in the countryside is collected regularly by my Department and by the Ministry of Agriculture, and taken into account in policy formulation. It is too early to assess the implications for land use of the announcements about rural housing which my right hon. Friend made last month.

BISF Houses, Bilborough

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the meetings which have taken place between his officials and *(a)* building societies and *(b)* Nottingham city council, on the question of mortgages for BISF houses in Bilborough, Nottingham, since he met a delegation of residents in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have written to the hon. Member.

BNF (Nuclear Fuel Cycle Production Plants)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) *Official Report*, column *493*, 20 February, he will set out the policy considerations underlying his decision not to conduct an environmental audit of British Nuclear Fuels plc's nuclear fuel cycle production plants.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no reason to believe that these plants release nationally significant amounts of carbon dioxide or chlorofluorocarbons.

Hazardous Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting between EEC Environment Ministers and African Environment Ministers held in Dakar in January to discuss the international trade and regulation of hazardous waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The conference on hazardous wastes held in Dakar on 26 and 27 January this year issued a communiqué requesting the Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity, in collaboration with, among others, the executive director of the United Nations environment programme, to assist African countries to establish appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and control of movement of nuclear and industrial wastes in Africa and calling on all countries to participate in the diplomatic conference expected to be held in Basle later this month under the auspices of the United Nations environment programme to negotiate a global convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress in the United Nations on the development of an international convention to regulate hazardous and toxic waste disposal.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A diplomatic conference is expected to convene in Basle later this month for the purpose of adopting and signing the global convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes.

Housing (Hampshire)

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many units of accommodation have been started and completed by the private sector in each local government district in Hampshire in each year since 1979;

(2) how many units of accommodation have been started and completed by the public sector in each local government district in Hampshire in each year since 1979.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The reported annual housebuilding figures for public and private sectors since 1980 appear in "Housebuilding in England by Local Authority Areas: 1980 to 1987". Figures for 1979 were published in "Local Housing Statistics" issue 59 and figures for the first half of 1988 were published in "Local Housing Statistics" issue 87. Copies of these are in the Library.

Brundtland Report

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans Her Majesty's Government have to review progress at all levels in respect of their achieving the goals set by the Brundtland report; and when they expect to publish their first review.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The United Kingdom is one of the few countries around the world to have produced a detailed response setting out the steps being taken to follow up the Brundtland report. The Government believe that the most effective way to promote the call in the report for policies of sustainable development to be adopted on a global scale is through concerted action by the international community as a whole. Our recent conference on saving the ozone layer was one practical and highly successful demonstration of this.

The United Kingdom is taking a leading role in international organisations such as the United Nations and OECD to ensure that sustainable development is integrated into all their activities. We have also recently commissioned Professor David Pearce of London university to review current work on the tools needed for measuring progress towards sustainable development.

Low Frequency Transmissions

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding the effects of extremely low frequency electric and magnetic radiation on plant, animal and human life.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has no information regarding the effects of extremely low frequency electric and magnetic radiation on plant, animal and human life. The National Radiological Protection Board is under a statutory duty to inform and advise Government, and others, on any hazards which may arise.

Sewage Works Discharge Consents

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many relaxations in sewage works discharge consents are currently being allowed in each water authority or water company area; and, of this number, how many are temporary and how many permanent.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* Authorities may apply for time-limited variations to discharge consents in cases where they plan to complete improvement schemes by March 1992. In addition, some small works may also be eligible for longer-term variations in those limited number of cases where it can be demonstrated that investment to meet current consent requirements would produce negligible environmental benefits. In all cases, HMIP will consider applications on their merits before granting revised consent conditions. At this stage, I cannot say how many applications will be made or granted—either in total or for any water authority.

Capper Pass Works, North Humberside

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the reasons for the delay in the publication of the HMIP report on the subject of the emission of radiation from the Capper Pass works in north Humberside, which his Department stated it expected to receive in November 1988, *Official Report,* 1 November 1988, column *564.*

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The first part of the HMIP report on emissions from the Capper Pass works on north Humberside was completed in November. Completion of the second part, concerning non-radioactive emissions was unfortunately interrupted by an injury to the inspector who was dealing with it. This was overcome and the two parts of the report assembled into a single report. I have already indicated that I hope to place this single report in the Library of the House shortly.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to complete his consideration of the consultations concerning the General Development Order 1988 in respect of clay pigeon shooting.

Mr. Chope: Within the next few weeks.

Green Belt

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy on major retail development in the green belt.

Mr. Howard: Major retail development proposals have no place in the green belt. The Government's commitment to upholding this policy is demonstrated by my right hon. Friend's dismissal in February of proposals for a major shopping and leisure complex at Bricket wood near St. Albans, and by his dismissal today of similar proposals at Hewitts farm near Orpington. Both sites are in the metropolitan green belt. In both these cases my right hon. Friend has ordered the prospective developer to pay the cost incurred by the local planning authority at the public inquiries held to consider these proposals.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the volume of chlorofluorocarbons which are at present in use in refrigeration units and other domestic and industrial equipment in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no estimate of the volume of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) at present in use. The Montreal protocol, and the European legislation which implements it, restrict the overall supply of CFCs. The European Community Environment Council, in response to a United Kingdom initiative, has called for the protocol to be strengthened so as to reduce supply by 85 per cent. as soon as possible and to eliminate it altogether by the end of the century. This will increasingly encourage the recycling of existing material wherever possible.

Power Boats

Sir Anthony Meyer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many accidents involving injury have been reported during the past five years involving powered boats travelling close inshore off bathing beaches.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

There have been about 700 incidents in total each year involving powered pleasure boats, but records are not kept of those occurring close to bathing beaches.

Carbon Dioxide

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress made by the biogeochemical ocean flux study in assessing the use of coccolithophores to fix carbon dioxide.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

Studies have shown that the natural abundance of coccolithophores could increase under conditions of increasing carbon dioxide. Studies are under way on the suitability of these organisms as food for zooplankton and protozoa. Coccolithophores are only one component of ocean life taking up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; the biogeochemical ocean flux study's 1989 cruises will measure these processes.

Climatic Change (Study)

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom contribution to the joint global ocean flux study investigating the role of oceans in global climate change.

Mr. Jackson: I have been asked to reply.

The biogeochemical ocean flux study (BOFS) of the Natural Environment Research Council provides the United Kingdom component of the joint global ocean flux

study (JGOFS). The BOFS involves 60 scientists and 14 laboratories, and expenditure of at least £3 million in 1989-90. The United Kingdom is also represented on the joint global ocean flux study international scientific committee.

Water Charges

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the chairmen of the private water companies whom he has called in to see him as a result of their announcing increases in water charges of more than 10 per cent. for the year 1989-90; what response they gave to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[pursuant to his reply 23 February 1989, c. 733]:* The Water Companies Association indicated in its statement of 5 February that statutory water companies were likely to raise their charges this year by 30 per cent. or more. In some quarters, increases of 50 per cent. or more were anticipated. I have now met almost all the chairmen of the companies to discuss their proposals. The Department's financial advisers, Deloitte Haskins and Sells, have also scrutinised the companies' proposals and the reasons for the increases.

Some companies already had fixed their charges and were unable to reduce them. However, following the meetings that I have had with them, most companies proposed lower increases and the majority seen by Deloitte have agreed to reduce their proposals further. I now anticipate that the average increase in charges for the statutory water companies will be about 22 per cent. Since Deloittes began its scrutiny, consumers have, therefore, been saved at least £16 million in increased charges.

The Government have always made it clear that water charges will have to rise to meet the higher quality standards which are being demanded of the water industry. The preparation of asset management plans, as part of the new regulatory framework being established by the Water Bill, has also identified in a number of cases serious backlogs of maintenance of underground assets, which mean that companies will have to spend substantially more to maintain existing levels of service. In reviewing the companies' charging proposals, Deloittes sought in particular to identify the increase which could be attributable to these factors; it also sought to avoid recommending any action which would be imprudent when set against the likely sustained higher levels of capital expenditure in future.

The extent to which investment is needed to meet existing requirements and maintain standards indicates underinvestment in many of the statutory water companies which shows just how inadequate the existing system of regulation has been. Such sharp increases in one year should not have been necessary and some of the increases which companies have announced are higher than these considerations alone would justify. Under existing statutory controls, the Government have no power to reverse these decisions.

We shall scrutinise this year's increases in charges very carefully in the light of the new system for controlling these charges which we are introducing in the Water Bill. Where price rises this year cannot be justified, appropriate adjustments will be made to the price ceilings which we set.

Aluminium

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of aluminium in water supplies taken at regular intervals by each of the local authorities in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside; and how often the samples taken are in excess of the recommended safety levels.

Mr. Moynihan: The available information is listed:

It is not the practice of many local authorities to carry out extensive monitoring of public water supplies. Water undertakers monitor their water supplies regularly.

Supplies taken by the North West water authority in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside have shown that the aluminium standard of the EC drinking water directive is regularly exceeded in parts of the following local authority areas:

Sefton (Southport).
Stockport (excluding Reddish, Heaton Mersey).
Bolton (excluding Westhoughton, Lostock, Heaton Moor).
Tameside (Ashton, Stalybridge, Dukinfield, Mossley)
Oldham (excluding Royton and Chadderton).
Lancaster (Lancaster City and parishes of Slyne with Hest and Bolton-le-Sands).

The levels of aluminium detected in these supplies have not been judged to constitute a health risk.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 15 March 1989

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Turkey

Mr. James Lamond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise at the first meeting of the conference on the human dimension in Paris the treatment of political prisoners in Ankara central prison by the Turkish Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is open to participants at the Paris human dimension conference to take up any matter of concern to them. It is too early to say precisely which issues Britain will raise.

Decade of Disabled Persons

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support his Department is giving to the United Nations global project to promote the decade of disabled persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Department of Health is the lead Department on domestic issues relating to this project. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has, through the Overseas Development Administration, funded a three-month consultancy at the United Nations office in Vienna to identify projects and funds for the world programme of action for disabled persons.

Civil Servants (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community; and what is the gross annual cost of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg in connection with this work.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is a total of 56 staff in the diplomatic and aid wings whose work is related wholly or mainly to the EC, including clerical and secretarial staff. The annual cost of official travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg on EC work is approximately £34,000.

Brazil

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the official visit to London of the Secretary General of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in March.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend and I, as well as senior officials in the FCO, including the ODA, and my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade, had very useful discussions with Mr. Flecha de Lima during his visit last week. We covered a wide range of international issues including environmental problems, notably the future of the Amazon rainforests. We drew Mr. Flecha de Lima's attention to the strong concern felt in Britain on this issue, but stressed that our overall approach was to work with the Brazilian Government.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Civil Servants (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Attorney-General what is the number of civil servants *(a)* in his office and *(b)* in the Lord Chancellor's Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community; and what is the gross annual cost of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg in connection with this work.

The Attorney-General: The number of civil servants whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community is as follows:

Law Officers' Department, nine; Lord Chancellor's Department three.

The estimated gross annual cost of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg for the current financial year is:

	£
Law Officers' Department	6,004
Lord Chancellor's Department	8,423

"Codebreaker Extraordinary"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General if he proposes to take any steps in the Australian courts to seek to prevent the publication of the book known as "Codebreaker Extraordinary" by retired captain Eric Nave.

The Attorney-General: No.

TRANSPORT

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set a date by which no new car may be sold in the United Kingdom if it is incapable of using unleaded petrol.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Regulations made in September last year require all new model types from 1 October 1989, and virtually all existing model types from 1 October 1990, to be capable of running on unleaded petrol. Special arrangements for the less than 2 per cent. of new cars which would need major engineering changes will expire on 1 October 1993.

M4 Elevated Section

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he is giving to the longer-term case for repairing, improving or expanding the capacity of the M4 elevated section on the approach to central London; what forecasts have been prepared of increased traffic volume resulting from the continued expansion of traffic to and from Heathrow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Consultants were appointed last year to develop a strategy for management of the motorway and trunk road network within the M4/A4 corridor from London to Heathrow. The aim is to improve the reliability of journey times by making the best use of the existing system. A report on this study is expected during the summer of next year. It will incorporate all relevant traffic forecasts, including those relating to Heathrow.

Vehicle Licensing (Computerisation)

Miss. Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the present position concerning the computerisation of the vehicle licensing system.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Vehicles licensed for use on the public road in Great Britain have to be registered on the computer at the driver and vehicle licensing centre. Computerisation there began in 1974 with new vehicles and was gradually extended to older vehicles as they were relicensed or re-registered. Since November 1983 registration marks of older vehicles not on the computer record have only been added in exceptional circumstances. These vehicles are usually given alternative numbers whose history cannot be disputed.

Computer Safety

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the security of on-line computer files in his Department is regularly checked for breaches by unauthorised outside access.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. Procedures too are reviewed regularly.

Sealink Harbours Ltd. (Special Constables)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Essex as to (i) the powers of and (ii) the nature of the warrant card required to be carried by special constables employed by Sealink Harbours Ltd. at Parkeston quay and as to which police authority such constables are accountable.

Mr. Portillo: These special constables are employed by Protective Security Systems Ltd. under exclusive contract to Sealink and do not come under the county police authority. The local harbour legislation incorporates a common provision under which persons nominated by the harbour undertaking may be sworn in as special constables for its premises and one mile beyond them. Sealink has stated that these staff will not be used outside port limits, save in emergency and in support of Essex police. They have photocards, issued by Sealink, identifying them as special constables.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to which police authority special constables employed by Sealink Harbours Ltd. are accountable in cases where members of the public have recourse to the Police Complaints Commission in connection with the actions of any such constable.

Mr. Portillo: Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 authorities other than police authorities which maintain a body of constables may, with the Home Secretary's approval, make agreements with the Police Complaints Authority, establishing police complaints and discipline procedures similar to those laid down in that Act. There is no such agreement at present between the authority and Sealink, which introduced its new security arrangements on 1 February 1989.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Essex as to whether the special constables employed by Sealink Harbours Ltd. have been trained at district training centres in order that they are able to comply with the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and other legislation to which constables employed in the regular police forces are subject.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that before these staff were sworn in as special constables they took a three-week training course, to which the Essex police contributed, and had to pass a written examination. The security manager and two of his staff formerly belonged to Essex police.

Traffic Lights

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider introducing different shaped traffic lights so as to be discernible to colour-blind motorists and pedestrians.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The present designs provide for colour blind people by standardising the positions and sequence of the red, amber and green lamps on traffic light signals and on the positions of the red and green people symbols on traffic light signals controlling pedestrians.

Rail Freight

Mr. Walters: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to encourage greater use of the railways for the haulage of heavy goods to alleviate the environmental damage caused by heavy commercial lorries.

Mr. Portillo: Grants are available under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 to assist the transport of goods by rail if the environmental benefits of keeping lorries off sensitive roads can be secured at reasonable costs and if the correct commercial decision, in the absence of grant, would be to use road. Since 1974 the Government have awarded 189 such grants totalling £64 million and we estimate that, as a result, about 3 million lorry journeys are removed from unsuitable roads every year.

M1 (Traffic Lights)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why temporary traffic lights were in operation on Saturday 4 March and Monday 6 March on the island at junction 25 of the M1 motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The temporary traffic signals were installed to cater for increased traffic flow resulting from the temporary closure of the southbound exit slip road at M1 junction 28 for reconstruction works from 4 to 10 March. The signals were installed to prevent queues forming back on to the M1 carriageway. At junction 25 the lights were in continuous operation from 4 to 6 March and then at peak periods only as agreed with the police.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

"Standards in Education 1987-88"

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what arrangements he has made for the distribution of the annual report of Her Majesty's senior chief inspector of schools "Standards in Education 1987-88", to those within the education service; and whether copies are to be sent to every school;

(2) what was the cost of printing the annual report of Her Majesty's senior chief inspector of schools "Standards in Education 1987-88"; and how many copies were printed.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Ten thousand copies of the senior chief inspector's annual report were printed at a total cost of £2,340. The report has been sent to all chief education officers, to major national bodies within the education service, and to a number of other interested parties. The report has never been sent automatically to every school, but any institution or individual asking for a copy of the report will be sent one.

Deaf-blind People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what steps he proposes to take to increase the number of qualified teachers of deaf-blind people;

(2) what steps he has taken to improve the education of deaf-blind people; and how many qualified teachers for deaf-blind people there are in Britain;

(3) what discussions he has had with SENSE, the organisation for deaf-blind people; and if he will meet its officials to discuss funding;

(4) if he will conduct a special survey of the educational requirements of deaf-blind adults and children to evaluate their needs and to enable him to make adequate provisions.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 9 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) at column *604*. Officials of the Department have met representatives of SENSE on a number of occasions. They were particularly helpful in assisting the Department prepare its statement on the educational needs of deaf-blind children, a copy of which I have sent to the hon. Member. This is relevant to the points he raises.

The funding of provision of services for the deaf-blind is the responsibility of local authorities. The statement does not envisage that the development of services for the deaf-blind should involve significant additional expenditure. However, the Department intends to follow up progress on local education authorities' consideration of the Department's statement.

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the cost at 1988-89 prices of ending parental contributions in respect of student grants.

Mr. Jackson: Approximately £340 million.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the cost at 1988-89 prices of restoring students to their 1979 grant level.

Mr. Jackson: The cost of restoring the student maintenance grant in the current academic year to its 1978-79 level would be approximately £125 million.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the cost at 1988-89 prices of restoring the level of student transport costs to their 1979 level.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 28 November 1988 at column *78*.

Educational Maintenance Awards

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the cost at 1988-89 prices, of introducing educational maintenance awards for 16 and 17-year-olds in full-time education in schools and colleges at *(a)* the same rates as income support for young people and *(b)* the same rates as training allowances paid to 16 and 17-year-olds on YTS.

Mr. Jackson: After deducting child benefit and existing maintenance payments from LEAs, the annual cost of paying maintenance allowances to all 16 and 17-year-olds currently in full-time education in schools and colleges, is estimated to be as follows:

	£ million
(a) If the allowances are paid at the same rate as income support	320
(b) If the allowances are paid at the same rate as YTS allowances	675

Notes:

1. These figures are based on the number of 16 and 17-year-olds in full time education in 1986-87, the latest year for which figures are available.
2. The figure at *(a)* is based on the 1988-89 income support level of £19·40 for 16 and 17-year-olds, less child benefit at the 1988-89 rate of £7·25.
3. The figure at *(b)* is based on the 1988-89 YTS allowances of £29·50 per week for 16-year-olds and £35 for 17-year-olds, less child benefit at the rate of £7·25 per week.
4. Both figures assume no change in the 1986-87 level of local authority spending on maintenance payments for 16 and 17-year-olds, which has been converted for the present purpose to 1988-89 prices using the GDP deflator.

Student Fees

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the extra cost in 1988-89 prices of full fee remission for all home students, in respect of part-time degree courses in *(a)* universities, *(b)* polytechnics and other colleges and *(c)* the open university.

Mr. Jackson: Estimates of the extra costs are about £1 million for the universities in Great Britain, £4 million for the polytechnics and colleges in England and £15 million for the open university.

Polytechnics and Colleges (Grant)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total Government grant both to the polytechnics and other colleges in each of the last 10 years; and if he will express each annual change and the total change since 1979, in real terms with 1979-80 = 100.

Mr. Jackson: Block grant to local authorities is not hypothecated to particular services or institutions.

The total allocations from the advanced further education pool plus capital expenditure by local authorities on polytechnics and colleges in England each year since 1979-80, *(a)* in cash terms, and *(b)* indexed in real terms as measured by the gross domestic product deflator, are:

Financial years	*(a) Cash £ million*	*(b) Index*
1979-80	465	100
1980-81	493	89
1981-82	519	86
1982-83	614	95
1983-84	634	94
1984-85	657	92
1985-86	703	94
1986-87	748	97
1987-88	810	99
1988-89	887	102

Students (Expenditure)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total Government expenditure *(a)* per student for all students in full-time higher education, *(b)* per university student and *(c)* per student in polytechnics and other colleges in each of the last 10 years; and if he will express each annual change in real terms with 1979-80 = 100.

Mr. Jackson: The available data are as listed. The figures show the expenditure at 1986-87 prices per full-time equivalent student in universities, in polytechnics, and in higher education at other maintained establishments. The 1986-87 real terms figures have been indexed using 1979-80 as the base year.

Expenditure[1] per full-time equivalent student[2] at 1986-87 prices indexed to 1979-80

	Financial Year							
	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Universities (Great Britain)								
real terms	5,126	5,533	5,355	5,502	5,542	5,484	5,349	5,276
indexed (1979-80 = 100)	100	108	104	107	108	107	104	103
Polytechnics[3] (England)								
real terms	4,179	4,207	4,001	3,777	3,421	3,300	3,255	3,325
indexed (1979-80 = 100)	100	101	96	90	82	79	78	80
OMEs (HE) (England)								
real terms	3,451	3,588	3,493	3,376	3,444	3,398	3,121	3,170
indexed (1979-80 = 100)	100	104	101	98	100	98	90	92

[1] The figures for universities are for Great Britain and are based on recurrent expenditure financed by UGC grants and tuition fee income for home and overseas students. The figures for polytechnics and OMEs are for England and are net recurrent institutional expenditure per full-time equivalent student. This includes direct and indirect costs of providing tuition but excludes financing cost of capital expenditure, student support and central administration costs. As the relevant expenditures are differently defined it is not possible to give an overall cost per student.

[2] The numbers of full-time and part-time students have been expressed as full-time equivalents. It is not possible to separate out the costs of full-time students.

[3] The figures for polytechnics include a small proportion of FE work.

UGC (Grant)

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total Government grant to the University Grants Committee in each of the last 10 years; and if he will express each annual change and the total change since 1979, in real terms with 1979-80 = 100.

Mr. Jackson: Total recurrent and capital grants made to the universities on the advice of the University Grants Committee were set out in my reply to the hon. Member's question on 10 February at column *844*. The corresponding real terms figures, as measured by the gross domestic product deflator, are:

Financial years	*Index*
1979-80	100
1980-81	108
1981-82	101
1982-83	113
1983-84	111
1984-85	109
1985-86	106
1986-87	107
1987-88	111
1988-89	113

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was *(a)* the capital expenditure funded by the University Grants Committee and *(b)* the same figures for capital expenditure on polytechnics and other colleges, for each of the last 10 years, expressing each annual change in real terms with 1979-80 = 10.

Mr. Jackson: The table shows capital grants made to the universities on the advice of the University Grants Committee and gross capital expenditure on further and higher education by local authorities, together with capital grants to voluntary and direct grant colleges, expressed as indicated in real terms as measured by the gross domestic product deflator.

Financial years	*Universities (Great Britain) Index*	*Polytechnics and other colleges (England) Index*
1979-80	100	100
1980-81	94	109
1981-82	90	98
1982-83	87	115
1983-84	81	110
1984-85	79	115

Financial years	Universities (Great Britain)	Polytechnics and other colleges (England)
	Index	Index
1985-86	83	116
1986-87	89	123
1987-88	84	86
1988-89	86	n/a

Teachers (Incentive Allowances)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information is available to his Department concerning the numbers of incentive allowances paid to teachers in primary, secondary and special schools in or shortly after October 1988, including in particular the numbers of allowances paid on discretionary grounds; whether the numbers of each type of allowance paid in 1987-88 closely matched the numbers advised by his Department as being available to be paid; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish a table showing, for each type of incentive allowance payable to teachers in primary, secondary and special schools in September 1988, the total number of allowances available to be paid by employers as advised by his Department and the proportion of these which were available to be paid on discretionary grounds; if he will distinguish between allowances already allocated to individuals and those newly available to be paid on discretionary grounds; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will publish a table showing the required minimum payments of incentive allowances to teachers in primary, secondary and special schools in October 1987 according to type, value and number of the allowances payable *(a)* by reason of a teacher's transfer to the new main salary scale, *(b)* by reason of the minimum requirements for rate A and B allowances in larger schools and special schools, and *(c)* by reason of other requirements; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will publish a table showing, for each type of incentive allowance payable to teachers in primary, secondary and special schools in October 1987, the total number of allowances available to be paid by employers as advised by his Department and the proportion of these which were available to be paid on discretionary grounds; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what information is available to his Department concerning the numbers of incentive allowances paid to teachers in primary, secondary and special schools in or shortly after September 1988, including the numbers of allowances paid on discretionary grounds; whether the numbers of each type of allowance paid in 1988-89 closely matched the numbers advised by his Department as being available to be paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Circulars 8/87 and 3/88 set out the approximate number of incentive allowances the Government wished to see awarded in October 1987 and September 1990 respectively. These were as follows:

	October 1987[1]	
	Primary	*Secondary*
A	14,000	11,000
B	[2]16,000	[2]53,000
C	—	—
D	—	28,500[2]
E	—	6,500[2]
Total	30,000	99,000
	September 1988	
A	24,000	19,000
B	16,300	43,300
C	1,300	8,000
D	—	27,000
E	—	8,000
Total	41,600	105,300

[1] All main-scale teachers in special schools received at least a B allowance from October 1987.
[2] These allowances were awarded automatically to teachers on scale 3, scale 4 or the senior teacher scale at 30 September 1987.

The overall limits on the number of incentive allowances to be awarded in schools of a particular size in October 1987 were set out in annex A to the school teachers' pay and conditions document 1987, a copy of which is in the Library. A minimum of 2 per cent. of teachers were to receive A allowances in schools of group size 6 or above, and a minimum of 12 per cent. were normally to receive B allowances in schools of group size 7 or above.

Circular 8/87 envisaged that by September 1990 there would be 55,000 allowance holders in primary schools and 110,000 in secondary schools. Following the recommendations of the first report of the interim advisory committee on school teachers' pay and conditions the planned introduction of A allowances was accelerated. Circular 3/88 envisaged that there would be an extra 6,000 A allowances above previous plans in September 1988.

LEAs have the discretion to pay incentive allowances, within certain limits, to any teacher being paid on the main scale who satisfies one or more the criteria laid down in the school teachers' pay and conditions document. They do so in the light of local needs and priorities. It is unlikely that the numbers of teachers holding incentive allowances at any one time will coincide precisely with the Government's plans.

The only information presently available is contained in a survey undertaken by the local authority conditions of service advisory board in September 1988. This showed that 61 LEAs had together awarded about 77,000 allowances to full-time and part-time regular teachers. The distribution among the 61 LEAs was as follows:

	Primary	*Secondary*	*Special*
September 1988			
A	6,878	6,343	—
B	9,922	30,305	7,504
C	318	2,772	960
D	148	16,152	149
E	19	3,939	55
Total	17,285	59,511	8,668

Retired Teachers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will make it his policy to review the abatement provisions concerning school teachers' pensions in order to remove any financial disincentive for part-time work in the maintained sector after retirement; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what numbers of retired or prematurely retired school teachers are known to his Department to be working either part-time or full-time in maintained schools; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will describe the abatement provisions concerning teachers' pensions in the case that a retired or prematurely retired school teacher takes up part-time employment in a maintained school; when these provisions were last reviewed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The general principle which applies across all the public service superannuation schemes is that a re-employed pensioner should not be better off as a result of being in receipt of a pension in addition to remuneration from further service than if he or she had not retired. Where the combined pay and pension are greater than the earnings on which the pension was based, the pension is reduced by the excess.

Detailed information on re-employed teachers is not available. I understand, however, that in the year ending 31 March 1988, 302 teachers re-employed full-time and 660 teachers re-employed in a part-time capacity were considered by the Paymaster General's office under the abatement provisions.

The policy of abatement in all public service schemes is currently being reviewed. I shall write to the hon. Member to let him know the outcome in due course.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to encourage the possible part-time or full-time employment of retired teachers in the maintained sector; what contribution such part-time or full-time employment can make towards filling the shortages of teachers identified by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The employment and deployment of teachers is a matter for local education authorities and schools. As part of our action programme to remedy teacher shortages we advise authorities to assess their recruitment needs and to develop a strategy for staffing their schools. The re-employment of retired teachers may in some circumstances form part of such a strategy.

London Docklands

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department is taking to assist training in London docklands with a view to ensuring that jobs go to local people.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

The Government's training programmes are designed to ensure that local people are equipped with the skills to meet the growing needs of employers.

Under employment training specific steps taken to improve the targeting of training and job opportunities in Docklands include:

- compacts with employers and training providers which give priority consideration to local people;
- a customised training and priority hiring programme with construction companies to help local long-term unemployed people into jobs;
- a partnership project with Jarvis plc to integrate English as a second language and construction training to improve job opportunities for the local Vietnamese community.

Funding has also been provided for the development of compacts between employers and schools covering the docklands area. If successful they will help to provide new job and training opportunities for local school leavers.

In addition local collaborative action is assisting local small businesses to identify skill needs and develop enterprise opportunities.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Civil Servants (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community; and what is the gross annual cost of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg in connection with this work.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of social security staff dealing wholly or mainly with matters relating to the European Community is 88. This figure includes 79 staff at Newcastle central office dealing with payment of benefits/pensions to beneficiaries resident in other EC countries.

In addition, there are four members of staff in the legal branch shared with the Department of Health who deal exclusively with EC matters.

A small number of these staff attend EC meetings abroad when necessary but I regret that records of costs incurred for travel and subsistence are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Other staff may also be involved in EC work from time to time.

Child Benefit

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the level of expenditure on child benefit in cash and constant 1988-89 prices in each year since 1978.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Child benefit expenditure (£ million)

Financial year	*Cash*	*1988-89 prices*
[1]1978-79	1,776	3,872
1979-80	2,787	5,199
1980-81	2,944	4,637
1981-82	3,372	4,835
1982-83	3,660	4,898
1983-84	3,988	5,104
1984-85	4,276	5,209
1985-86	4,468	5,164
1986-87	4,513	5,048
1987-88	4,598	4,885
[2]1988-89	4,522	4,522

[1] Child benefit not fully phased in until April 1979.
[2] Estimated outturn.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Service College

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service (1) if he will ask the Civil Service college to plan a programme of seminars to be available to those hon. Members elected for the first time at the next general election;

(2) if he will take steps to discover on what topics sufficient demand exists among hon. Members to arrange briefing seminars at the Civil Service college;

(3) what proposals he has to encourage hon. Members to attend Civil Service college courses.

Mr. Luce: The Civil Service college held briefing seminars on the work of the Civil Service on 2 and 23 March 1988 for hon. Members who first entered the House at the beginning of this Parliament. I hope that these will be repeated after the next general election. I attach great importance to the contribution that the college can make for the benefit of hon. Members, and I am actively considering with officials how this can best be developed further.

Civil Service (Political Activity)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many staff within the Civil Service in the category politically restricted, as defined by the Civil Service pay and conditions code, have permission to engage in local political activity.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* A survey of the major employing departments in 1987 showed that, between 28 September 1984 and 1 October 1987, 52 staff in the restricted group requested and were granted permission to engage in local political activity.

THE ARTS

Sponsorship (Nottingham)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the level of sponsorship for the arts in Nottingham, North.

Mr. Luce: Figures for Nottingham, North are not available. However, latest figures for the business sponsorship incentive scheme in the east midlands as a whole show that 31 businesses have supported the arts, generating £237,000.

Arts Funding

Mr. Jack: To ask the Minister for the Arts what was the level of Government and private sector funding for the arts in 1979; and what he estimates this will be in 1989, at current values.

Mr. Luce: Central Government funding for the arts in 1979-80 was £154 million. The provision made for 1989-90 is £439 million. There are no comprehensive figures for private funding of arts activities, which comprises their revenue and trading income together with contributions and support from individuals and organisations of all kinds.

The Government's policy is to create the conditions in which the arts can develop by attracting additional funds from private sources, and I welcome the evidence of its success. Thus, since its introduction in 1984, the business sponsorship incentive scheme has brought £22·75 million new money into the arts and attracted 931 new sponsors. Similarly, the receipts of the national museums and galleries from trading and other activities have risen from some £3 million in 1979-80 to an estimated £27 million in 1989-90.

Ballet

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his Department's policy regarding the promotion of ballet in the regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to the Adjournment debate on Wednesday 8 March 1989, *Official Report*, columns 1007-14.

Industrial Museums

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is his Department's policy with regard to the support of working industrial museums.

Mr. Luce: My Department supports non-national museums through the Museums and Galleries Commission and area museum councils.

Queen Street Mill, Burnley

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make an official visit to Queen street mill, Burnley, to discuss the case for urgent funding.

Mr. Luce: I have at present no plans to visit Burnley. I understand that the north-west museum and art gallery service, which is funded by the Museums and Galleries Commission and which provides advice and selective financial assistance to museums, is in contact with Burnley borough council about the mill.

Management Consultants (Fees)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts what were the total fees paid out by the Office of Arts and Libraries to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer, 13 March 1989]:* The Office of Arts and Libraries was established in July 1983. No management consultants have been employed.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Cordless Telephones

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he proposes to have enforced in Northern Ireland similar action as is taken in Great Britain by the Department of Trade and Industry in respect of illegal cordless telephones on sale to the public.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

The Wireless Telegraphy (Cordless Telephone Apparatus (Restriction) Order (SI No. 774)) makes it unlawful to import, sell, manufacture or have in one's custody cordless telephone apparatus not meeting the Department's specification. The order applies and is enforced in Northern Ireland as in Great Britain.

SCOTLAND

Information Campaigns

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give his Department's expected expenditure in cash terms on information campaigns in 1989-90 which is covered by class XVI Scotland Supply Estimates in 1988-89 and the comparable figure he expects to spend in 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind: Proposed provision for expenditure by the Scottish Office on information campaigns in 1989-90 is £2·9 million. The estimated expenditure for 1988-89 is £2·1 million.

Low Frequency Transmissions

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the effects of extremely low frequency electric and magnetic radiation on plant, animal and human life.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The National Radiological Protection Board is currently reviewing the results of extensive work on possible effects on human and animal health of electromagnetic radiation. The Government will consider the board's advice when it becomes available.

Housing Associations

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what capital allocations were made to housing associations in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole for (i) new building and (ii) renovation in each year since 1979;

(2) what capital allocations to housing associations in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole will be made for (i) new building and (ii) renovation in 1989; and what capital allocations are planned for 1990 and 1991.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Such information is not held by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State, in making his annual allocation to the Housing Corporation in Scotland for housing association purposes, requires the corporation to operate within a development programme approved by him each year. This programme is on the basis of specified categories of need. Subsequent allocations to particular associations and particular areas, and decisions on the means of provision are then the responsibility of the Housing Corporation.

Similar procedures will operate for future years when Scottish Homes will take over from the Housing Corporation, responsibility for the funding of housing associations in Scotland.

Labour Statistics

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole; and if he will give the equivalent figures for 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of unemployed claimants for these areas on 12 January 1989 (the latest date for which information is available) are provided in the table, together with corresponding figures for January 1979. (Unemployment statistics for Greenock and Port Glasgow parliamentary constituency prior to June 1983 are not available and due to changes in the coverage and compilation of the count the latest unemployment figures and those available for 1979 are not directly comparable.)

	January 1989	*January 1979*
Greenock and Port Glasgow Parliamentary Constituency	6,619	n/a
Strathclyde Region	146,556	106,910
Scotland	269,043	190,300

n/a = not available.

This information is available in the Library.

Skiing

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to provide a national ski-ing development policy for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government published national planning guidelines for skiing development in 1984. These guidelines set the framework within which we would expect to see development take place and continue to form the basis of Government policy for the development of skiing and for considering individual development proposals.

Legal Profession

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the Green Paper on the Legal profession in Scotland to be published.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend's consultation paper "The Legal Profession in Scotland" was published on 13 March. Copies have been placed in the Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Rape in Marriage

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will bring forward legislation to outlaw rape in marriage.

Mr. John Patten: In its 1984 report on sexual offences, the criminal law revision committee set out the arguments for and against extending the offence of rape to all married couples. By a narrow majority the committee decided not to recommend such an extension, although it did unanimously favour extending the offence to couples who were no longer cohabiting if a satisfactory definition could be found. The principal arguments which swayed the committee against recommending extending the offence to married couples generally were that within marriage the act would be of different character, there would be grave difficulties in investigation and prosecution, and a husband who had intercourse with his wife without her consent could be charged with other offences.

The Government recognises the difficulties in this matter and have no present plans for legislation.

Computer Safety

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what precautions his Department has taken to safeguard sensitive material transmitted by computer from being accessed or obtained by third parties;

(2) whether the security of computer files on Home Department issues is regularly checked for breaches by internal or external unauthorised access;

(3) what is his Department's policy on the implication for security of continued departmental computerisation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A large number of computer systems operate within the Department. The security counter-measures appropriate to each system are considered at the design stage in the light of the assessed risk, and are kept under continuing review. It would not be in the interests of security to disclose the nature and extent of those measures.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has on whether computerised border control and passport control records are susceptible to electronic invasion;

(2) what measures he has taken to prevent breaches of computerised border and passport control records by electronic invasion.

Mr. Renton: The security of the immigration and nationality department's computerised information systems is considered at an early stage in the design of new systems, and the security measures taken are reviewed in the light of changing threats to existing systems. It would not be in the interests of security to disclose the nature and extent of those measures.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department following illegal extraction of files from the police computer, what steps he has taken to increase protection to ensure that no future penetration occurs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am satisfied that the monitoring and auditing systems for users of the police national computer are adequate. Additional measures are, however, being considered in planning the replacement police national computer system due to be introduced next year.

Crime (Dorset)

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the percentage detection rate for crimes in Dorset for each of the last two years;

(2) what was the total number of reported crimes in Dorset for each of the last two years.

Mr. John Patten: The information is published annually, and most recently in tables 2.4 and 2.18 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1987", Cmd. 498. It is planned to publish recorded crime figures for 1988 later this month in a statistical bulletin, and clear-up rates for 1988 will be included in the annual Command Paper in the autumn.

Rugby Matches (Policing)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will obtain from the chief constables of Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire and Cumbria, a list of the charges made for the policing of first and second division rugby league matches.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that the charges (exclusive of VAT) to individual rugby league clubs in the areas mentioned from the beginning of the current season to Saturday, 25 February 1989 have been as follows:

Police Force and Club	*Cost £ (excluding VAT)*
North Yorkshire	
York	908·00
South Yorkshire	
Doncaster	—
Sheffield Eagles	149·04
West Yorkshire	
Batley	—
Bradford Northern	5,671·58
Bramley	—
Castleford	5,593·03
Dewsbury	—
Featherstone Rovers	4,500·01
Halifax	5,767·74
Hunslet	1,851·26
Keighley	967·60
Leeds	17,274·27
Wakefield	7,108·02
Cheshire	
Warrington	5,993·48
Widnes	5,993·48
Cumbria	
Barrow	1,966·50
Carlisle	2,070·00
Whitehaven	1,499·60
Workington	749·80

Notes:
1. No police presence is required at some grounds.
2. There are no first or second division rugby league clubs in Lancashire.

Police (Sex Discrimination)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has for each of the last four years for each police force of the number of women police officers who have submitted formal grievances because they consider they have suffered from sexist behaviour or language.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mentally Disturbed Prisoners

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 8 March, *Official Report* columns 540-41, how many of those who committed suicide in the prison department establishments referred to therein were known to have had a history of mental disturbance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not available, but it is known that 30 per cent. of inmates who committed suicide in prison department establishments in 1987 had undergone psychiatric assessment or treatment before coming into custody.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the criteria that the immigration service is instructed to use in order to determine whether a Member of Parliament is putting forward compelling reasons when requesting a deferral of removal in order to make representations;

(2) what checks are made of the consistency with which the immigration service is applying the criteria to determine whether or not a Member of Parliament shall be allowed to intervene in a port refusal case;

(3) how many individuals have been refused entry to Britain since the new guidelines on Members' representations became effective; and in how many of these refusals an hon. Member, lawyer or advice agency, sought to intervene;

(4) how many times hon. Members have sought to intervene in port refusals since the introduction of new guidelines for hon. Members' representations; and in how many cases removal directions have been delayed in order that representations could be made.

Mr. Renton: The criteria are exemplified in paragraph 10 of the guidelines introduced on 3 January and sent to right hon. and hon. Members under cover of my letter of 14 December. Instructions to immigration officers emphasise that the examples of circumstances given in the guidelines are not exclusive but are illustrative of the sort of circumstances which would justify deferment of removal. Under the guidelines a right hon. or hon. Member may contact my Private Office (or, out of working hours, the Home Office duty officer) after speaking to the relevant port, in any case where he believes that the immigration service has wrongly refused to defer removal on the basis of exceptional and compelling circumstances. In the first two months of 1989 some 2,700 persons were initially refused entry at the major ports and airports. Comprehensive figures for interventions are not centrally available, but during the first eight weeks of operation of the new guidelines, I understand that at the major ports and airports some 160 calls were received asking for deferments, and removal was deferred in about 14 cases.

Tamils

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Tamils *(a)* have applied for political asylum in the United Kingdom, *(b)* are on temporary admission, *(c)* have been granted exceptional leave to remain and *(d)* have been returned to Sri Lanka in the last 15 months.

Mr. Renton: No distinction is made in statistical records between Tamils and other Sri Lankans. During the 15 months up to 30 September 1988, which is the most recent date for which these statistics are available, 341 Sri Lankans. applied for asylum in the United Kingdom. During the same period 257 Sri Lankans were granted exceptional leave to remain. There are no central records of numbers temporarily admitted, but at any one time only a small minority of those with outstanding asylum applications are detained. Removals and deportations of failed asylum seekers are not normally recorded separately. However, it is known that 45 Sri Lankans who sought asylum at ports have been removed since 1 January 1988. Additionally in the same period 26 Sri Lankans have been removed as illegal entrants and seven have been deported: most of these applied for asylum and were refused, after consideration of their applications.

Annual information, by nationality, on applications for asylum and decisions taken is published in a statistical bulletin. The 1988 bulletin will be published during the summer of 1989. Information on passengers refused entry and removed, on illegal entry and on deportation is published annually in "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom". The 1988 volume will also be published in the summer.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there has been any monitoring by Her Majesty's Government of the safety of Tamils forcibly returned to Sri Lanka since the beginning of 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. Asylum applicants are returned to their own country only after it has been decided that they are not refugees under the 1951 convention and that it would not be right to grant them exceptional leave. In such circumstances, as with any person in breach of immigration control whose departure we enforce, their safety becomes a matter for their own Government.

Prison Discipline

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to implement changes in the prison disciplinary system.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has laid before the House revised prison rules and revised young offender institution rules which will implement from 1 April important reforms in the disciplinary systems governing the conduct of prisoners.

The rules introduce a new code of offences which will be simpler and clearer than the present code. New offences have been created to deal specifically with serious offences such as hostage-taking, barricading and arson. At the same time, the offences of making a false and malicious allegation against an officer and repeatedly making groundless complaints have been abolished. The maximum punishment on a single charge which is available to boards of visitors has been reduced from 180 days' loss of remission to 120 days in adult establishments, and will be 90 days for young offenders. The maximum loss of remission on consecutive punishments arising from a single incident will be 180 days and 135 days respectively. The procedures for referring more serious charges to the board of visitors have been simplified. An extensive programme of training in the new rules is being carried through, and the recent issue of a completely revised guidance manual on the conduct of adjudications will also assist boards of visitors and governors in carrying out this vital function. The manual will be available in a published edition shortly and is in any event made accessible to all prisoners. In addition, the prison Standing Order governing adjudications is being revised and will also be published.

I believe that these changes represent a substantial improvement to the prison disciplinary system.

HEALTH

Tobacco Industry (Meetings)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many meetings he, his Ministers and his Department's officials have had with representatives of the tobacco industry since 1 January 1988; and if he will list the dates, venues and purpose of each meeting.

Mr. Mellor: The table lists the meetings which Ministers have had with representatives of the tobacco industry or individual tobacco companies. Officials have had several meetings with representatives of individual tobacco companies and expert medical and scientific advisers which are covered by commercial confidentiality. I am not therefore at liberty to disclose details of these meetings. Officials have contact from time to time with representatives of the tobacco industry, notably as a consequence of the work of the committee for monitoring agreements on tobacco advertising and sponsorship.

Date	*Venue*	*Purpose*
12 February 1988	Department of Health	Meeting with the Tobacco Advisory Council on general matters relating to smoking
25 April 1988	Department of Health	Meeting with Svenska Tobaks to discuss the proposed ban on certain oral tobacco products
6 July 1988	Department of Health	Meeting with United States Tobacco International to discuss proposed ban on certain oral tobacco products.
27 September 1988	Department of Health	Meeting with United States Tobacco International to discuss proposed ban on certain oral tobacco products.
15 December 1988	Department of Health	Meeting with representatives of the tobacco industry to discuss draft EC tobacco directives.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much public money has been directed towards research into the sudden infant death syndrome or related projects in each year since 1979, expressed *(a)* in cash terms, *(b)* in real terms on the 1979 amount and *(c)* as a percentage increase or decrease on the previous year.

Mr. Freeman: The following readily available information about research into sudden infant death syndrome and related projects refers to projects funded by the Medical Research Council, the main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research.

	Actual expenditure £	*Expenditure in 1979-80 prices* £	*Percentage change*[1]
1979-80	79,130	79,130	—
1980-81	133,608	112,806	+42·56
1981-82	207,610	159,569	+41·45
1982-83	206,600	148,211	−7·12
1983-84	243,861	167,328	+12·90
1984-85	241,912	157,996	−5·58
1985-86	282,948	175,329	+10·97
1986-87	476,059	285,457	+62·81
1987-88	405,182	230,772	−19·16

[1] Percentage change of expenditure in 1979-80 prices over previous year.

Stomach Cancer

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the incidence of stomach cancer in *(a)* each of the districts of the Mersey region and *(b)* the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: This information is shown in the table. The latest available data are for 1984.

Number of newly registered cases of malignant neoplasm of the stomach[1], Mersey Regional Health Authority, its component Districts and United Kingdom, 1984.

Area	*Number*	*Rate per 10,000 population*
United Kingdom	12,749	2·26
Mersey RHA	589	2·43
Chester DHA	43	2·43
Crewe DHA	53	2·17
Halton DHA	28	1·97
Macclesfield DHA	30	1·70
Warrington DHA	50	2·82
Liverpool DHA	144	2·90
St. Helens and Knowsley DHA	83	2·32
Southport and Formby DHA	29	2·49
South Sefton DHA	47	2·58
Wirral DHA	82	2·29

[1] International Classification of Diseases code 151.

Air Conditioning and Hot Water Systems

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance or directions he gives to health authorities and hospital managers about the taking of regular bacteriological tests on air conditioning and hot water systems.

Mr. Freeman: In 1987, guidance based on expert advice recommended against routine sampling to detect the presence of Legionella pneumophila in both wet-spray cooling systems and hot and cold water services, unless it was suspected that they were the source of hospital-acquired infection. The application of this guidance to wet-spray cooling systems is currently under review.

Hospital Building

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to review the capital works programme for hospital building within the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: I am content to leave the review of the programme to the health authorities responsible for its management in the knowledge that our increased capital allocations will permit investment in the modernisation of the National Health Service to be sustained at record levels. Capital expenditure on the hospital and community health services in 1989-90 is planned to reach £1·2 billion, an increase in real terms of 41 per cent. over the 1978-79 level.

Hospitals (Charity Appeals)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of equipment is raised for National Health Service hospitals by charity appeals.

Mr. Freeman: I regret that information on the percentage of National Health Service hospitals equipment expenditure met from funds raised by charity appeals is not available.

Genito-urinary Clinics

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent action he has taken to encourage Waltham Forest district health authority to provide a genito-urinary clinic.

Mr. Freeman: Planning of health services within a particular area is a matter for the health authority concerned, which is best able to judge the priorities in the light of local needs and circumstances.

Deaf-blind People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many (i) deaf-blind adults and (ii) deaf-blind children there are in Britain; and how long it is since the last survey was made.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of adults and children in England who were registered with local authorities as blind with an additional handicap of deafness are recorded in "Registered Blind and Partially Sighted Persons at 31 March 1986—England". A copy of this publication is in the Library. The most recent collection of these statistics related to 31 March 1988 and will be published in due course.

Registration of disability is a voluntary process. The numbers of deaf-blind adults and children in the population are believed to be considerably greater than the numbers who register but no reliable estimate is available.

Young Persons (Remands)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will arrange urgently for appropriate accommodation to be provided for the 15-year-old who has twice been remanded to an adult prison from Crewe juvenile court; and what secure accommodation is available for young people in the north-west.

Mr. Mellor: The provision of appropriate accommodation for children in care is the statutory responsibility of local authorities. I understand that Cheshire county council has been unable to find a secure vacancy in a community home for the boy referred to, although it continues to make urgent inquiries.

There are currently 294 approved secure places provided by local authorities in England, to which all local authorities have access. Local authorities in the north-west provide 65 of these places.

ENVIRONMENT

Elephant Ivory

71. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ban all imports of elephant ivory.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Imports of ivory are controlled under EC Regulation 3626/82 which implements CITES in the Community. The European Commission has suggested measures to encourage African states to comply with the existing strict controls and to develop management programmes. These proposals were welcomed by the Council of Ministers on 2 March.

Water Pollution

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list (i) all the bodies concerned with research on pollution in water and (ii) the research projects funded or sponsored by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Howard: A list of the bodies known to the Department to be concerned with research on pollution in water has been placed in the Library of each House together with a list of research projects that the Department is funding or sponsoring, excluding research on radioactive waste disposal and drinking water quality. I do not have the information on research projects for other Government Departments.

Tobacco Companies (Sports Sponsorship)

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the current annual total of sponsorship of sports by tobacco companies; if he will list these individually and in relation to other commercial sponsorship; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The total expenditure on sports sponsorship by tobacco companies in 1987-88, the latest year for which figures are available, was £5,911,000. No information is held centrally on expenditure by individual companies. The Sports Council estimates that in 1987 sports sponsorship by non-tobacco companies was some £158 million.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make it his policy to write off the loan debt of the present water authorities in England prior to implementation of the Water Bill.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has no powers at present to write off any of the debts of the water authorities.

Water Quality

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the present levels of cleanliness of Southampton Water and the Solent, respectively; and how those levels match up to European Economic Community standards.

Mr. Howard: The relevant standards are those set in Directive 79/923/EEC, on the quality of water for shellfish, and in Directive 76/160/EEC on the quality of bathing water. There are five designated shellfish waters in Southampton Water and the Solent. All meet the directive's standards.

I announced on 21 February 1989 at column 572 the results of the 1988 survey of bathing water in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. The results for identified bathing waters in the Southampton Water and Solent area are:

	Result
Bracklesham Bay	Pass
West Wittering	Pass
West of Eastoke	Pass
West Hayling	Pass

	Result
Eastney	Fail
Southsea	Fail
Stokes Bay	Pass
Lee-on-Solent	Pass
Calshot	Fail
Lepe	Pass
Highcliffe	Pass
Compton Bay	Pass
Totland Bay	Pass
Colwell Bay	Fail
Gurnard	Fail
Cowes	Fail
Ryde	Fail
Seagrove	Fail
St. Helens	Fail
Bembridge	Fail

The Southern water authority plans to spend about £30 million over the next few years on major schemes to improve bathing waters in this area.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the present level of cleanliness of the principal rivers in Hampshire; and to what extent they meet European Economic Community standards.

Mr. Howard: The principal rivers in Hampshire are classified as good quality (class 1A or 1B) for virtually all their length. These are the highest quality classifications, indicating waters which are suitable for potable supply, generally support game fisheries and have high amenity value.

Significant stretches of these rivers and their main tributaries, are designated under EEC Directive 78/659/EEC on the quality of freshwater needed to support fish life. All are reported to be meeting the directive's standards.

Land Disposal Policy

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government with regard to the disposal of operational land surplus to requirements other than by public tender by the regional water authorities, the Central Electricity Generating Board, and the British Railways Board, respectively; and in what circumstances each of these categories of body may dispose of such land without the publication of either the purchase price or name of the purchaser;

(2) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government concerning the publication of the names or organisations or individuals who are successful in public tenders for land, goods, or premises being sold by central Government, local Government, and statutory bodies, respectively.

Mr. Chope: All public bodies are expected to offer surplus land and property for sale as soon as practicable. The method of sale may differ between Departments, local authorities and other bodies, depending on the nature of the asset to be sold, any relevant legal requirements, the application of the Crichel Down rules, the need to obtain the best price reasonably obtainable and other market and commercial factors.

It is for individual public bodies to decide what information to make available about individual land transactions, having regard to any legal requirements, and to any constraints which may apply by reason of commercial confidentiality or security.

Water Supply Tariffs

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those tariff increases for water supply from 1 April so far announced by the statutory water companies; and if he will make a statement about any action proposed by him in respect of these increases.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning on 14 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel).

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what part the Property Services Agency has played in promoting energy efficiency on the Government estate.

Mr. Chope: Energy efficiency is given a high priority by the PSA on sound environmental grounds and because it saves public expenditure. PSA, working in close co-operation with other Government Departments, promotes energy-saving measures for most Government buildings. Through its network of energy conservation officers the agency is able to provide Departments with a complete energy management service.

Since 1972 average savings of over 25 per cent.—over £900 million at current prices—have been achieved. Current savings are over 5 per cent. per annum in real terms on the Government's total energy bill (1987-88) of over £250 million.

Tenants' Choice

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to implement the tenants' choice provisions in part IV of the Housing Act 1988.

Mr. Trippier: Regulations have today been laid before Parliament to implement the tenants' choice scheme on 5 April. Tenants who wish to know more about choosing a new landlord are being invited, by means of advertisements in several national newspapers, to contact the Housing Corporation for an explanatory booklet about the scheme, and for any further advice, information or assistance they may need.

Water Privatisation

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there will be special share offer arrangements for the employees of the privatised water authorities.

Mr. Howard: The Government welcome the opportunity which privatisation of the water industry will bring for employees of the new water plcs to take a stake in the future of their companies. There will therefore be special share offer arrangements, which will include: free shares, further free shares to match those bought by employees, and possibly shares at a discount. Plc employees will also be given priority in the allocation of shares in the offer.

The exact details of the benefits to be made available in this way will be decided nearer the time. There will be

special arrangements for employees of the water authorities who move to the new plcs and will not therefore apply to employees of the water authorities who move to the National Rivers Authority, the body which will be set up to exercise regulatory functions in relation to the water industry.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the National Rivers Authority powers to borrow in order to finance its flood defence work.

Mr. Ridley: I am happy today to announce our decision that the National Rivers Authority should have borrowing powers in relation to its flood defence functions. This decision recognises the importance which is widely attached to the availability of borrowing powers to cope with the need for unexpected expenditure. It meets this concern and demonstrates the Government's firm commitment to ensure that the NRA has all the powers it needs to operate effectively.

Accordingly, we have today tabled an amendment to the Water Bill that will enable the NRA to undertake not only temporary borrowing, for which the Bill already provides, but long-term borrowing for its flood defence functions. We do not expect that these powers will need to be used very often, and their use will be restricted to situations where the NRA is faced with expenditure for which it had been impossible to plan.

With the addition of these powers the National Rivers Authority's Flood defence committees will have all the powers it needs to continue its vital work as effectively as it has in the past.

Power Boats

Sir Anthony Meyer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will hold consultations with local authorities on measures which might be taken to reduce the danger to swimmers from power boats travelling close inshore off bathing beaches;

(2) if he will introduce regulations to provide for the marking of areas off bathing beaches where power boats are prohibited.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

Local authorities already have powers to make byelaws to make provision for the safety of the public in these circumstances; and I consider that they are best placed to determine what measures should be taken.

Water (Nitrate Levels)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which water abstraction plants for domestic use in the Yorkshire and Severn Trent regions are complying with EEC limits on the nitrate levels in water supply; which are not; and on what dates each of the plants which are not complying will comply with the limits.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The EC drinking water directive nitrate standard applies to water as supplied to the consumer, not to water as it leaves the abstraction plant as this takes no account of subsequent blending with other water. The standard is therefore, measured in relation to water supply areas rather than abstraction plants.

All water supply areas in Yorkshire water authority comply with the EC directive nitrate standard. In the Severn-Trent water authority area the following supplies do not comply but should do so by the date shown.

	Date
Parts of Leamington, Kenilworth, Warwick and Stratford district councils	1989
Parts of Stourbridge (supply used only at times of peak demand)	end 1989
Malvern Hills/Wyre Forest district council area	1989
Parts of Wrekin DC area	1989
Parts of Lichfield DC area, Sutton Coldfield (Birmingham Metropolitan) area, North Warwickshire and Walsall metropolitan area[1]	1993-94
Parts of Worksop and Mansfield Woodhouse (Bassetlaw and Mansfield DC areas)	1991
Parts of South Shropshire DC area	1990
Parts of Newark district council area	1989

[1] These supplies are made by the South Staffordshire waterworks company.

Sewage Treatment Works

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each water authority area in England the number of sewage treatment works which discharge effluent below the required standard.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 20 December 1988 at column *194*.

The figures for 1988 are not yet available, but indications are that they will show a further improvement.

Civil Servants (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community; and what is the gross annual cost of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg in connection with this work.

Mr. Ridley At present, some 60 officials in my Department spend more than half of their time on work related to the European Community. Information about travel and accommodation costs relating to official visits to Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg is not kept centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

DEFENCE

Low-level flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what classes of buildings are excluded as permissible simulated targets in the instructions to pilots concerning the types of ground features which can be selected during low-level training flights.

Mr. Neubert: I have nothing further to add to my reply to the hon. Member on 30 January 1989, at columns 33 and 34.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any evidence that environmental restraints in low-flying training have been a contributory factor in recent low-flying accidents.

Mr. Neubert: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of the inquiry into a low-flying incident over Llanilar, Dyfed, on 25 August 1988.

Mr. Neubert: As far as my Department is aware, there has been no report of an incident over Llanilar, Dyfed on 25 August 1988.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy of 1 July 1988, *Official Report*, column *400*, if he will now declasify the instructions to Royal Air Force station commanders covering the investigation of complaints about low flying from members of the public.

Mr. Neubert: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what maximum permitted distance between initial point and simulated target is laid down in the regulations governing the conduct of low-level attack training sorties.

Mr. Neubert: None.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures pilots are instructed to take to alleviate noise disturbance when low flying at up to 550 knots in the run-up to simulated targets.

Mr. Neubert: Pilots engaged in low-flying training are instructed to keep any period of flight above the normal maximum cruising speeds to the minimum consistent with essential training requirements.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations and dates of periods of Royal Air Force police covert monitoring of low flying since 25 September 1987.

Mr. Neubert: Covert monitoring of low-flying activity since 25 September 1987 has been conducted at the following locations over the periods stated:

1988

14-18 March, Amble
25-28 April, Quedgeley and Hardwicke
26-27 April, Braunston
7 June, Farndon
14-16 June, Crediton
21-23 June, Kidwelly
22 June, Tumble
27-29 June, Stonehouse
28-30 June, Keswick
12 July, Hexham
12 July, Holme on Spalding Moor
18-21 July, Builth Wells
26-27 July, Machynlleth
23-25 August, Morpeth
6-8 September, Halesworth
11-13 October, Melrose
18-20 October, Milford Haven
Late October/early November, Redburn
15-17 November, Newark/Farndon

1989

6-9 February, Upper Chute
21-22 February, Market Bosworth

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the occasions since 1979 when Royal Air Force police covert monitoring of low flying has detected breaches of low-flying regulations.

Mr. Neubert: The detailed information requested is not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate effort. Surveys do however indicate that pilots have a healthy respect for the low-flying regulations.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the aircraft handling reasons for United States Air Force F111 aircraft being permitted to fly at 480 knots in the low-flying system, as stated in his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy of 16 November 1987, *Official Report*, column *451*.

Mr. Neubert: Because of the aerodynamic characteristics of the F111 aircraft, its handling properties are enhanced at a speed of 480 knots compared with a speed of 450 knots.

Tornado Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those accidents to Tornado aircraft in which failure or malfunction of the fly-by-wire system was a contributory factor.

Mr. Neubert: There is no evidence that any such RAF Tornado accidents have occurred.

Helicopters (Flying Practice)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those areas of the United Kingdom which are cleared for use by military helicopters practising flying underneath high voltage power lines.

Mr. Neubert: All aspects of this training activity, including the areas used, are currently under review.

Consumers (Consultation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements there are for consulting consumers in the work and decisions of his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: I will write to the hon. Member.

Computer Safety

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the security of his Department's computer files is regularly checked for breaches by computer hackers.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Where such access would constitute a security breach, yes.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what action is taken in his Department to guard against intrusive information technology practices by unauthorised internal or external electronic intruders;

(2) what steps he has taken to ensure that information transferred within and without his Department via computer is safe from internal or external interference;

(3) what steps his Department has undertaken to guard against the unauthorised access of sensitive defence information files stored on computer.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In the interest of national security, the nature and extent of the security counter-measures used to protect Ministry of Defence computer systems from authorised access cannot be revealed.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the potential effects of unauthorised access via computer of information held by his Department on the nation's security.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The potential effect of unauthorised access to the Ministry of Defence's information is indicated by the security classifications given to such material, viz:

TOP SECRET
Information and material the unauthorised disclosure of which would cause EXCEPTIONALLY GRAVE DAMAGE to the nation.

SECRET
Information and material the unauthorised disclosure of which would cause SERIOUS INJURY to the interests of the nation.

CONFIDENTIAL
Information and material the unauthorised disclosure of which would be PREJUDICIAL to the interests of the nation.

RESTRICTED
Information and material the unauthorised disclosure of which would be UNDESIRABLE in the interests of the nation.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to prevent the extraction of sensitive international defence material by computer, in the light of the recent problems uncovered in West Germany.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It will not be clear whether any change in Ministry of Defence security policy is necessary following recent events in West Germany until our investigations are complete.

Confidential Information

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the steps taken by the United Kingdom's allies to protect confidential defence information.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence security authorities have all the information necessary to determine that the security policies of the United Kingdom's allies are comparable and compatible with Ministry of Defence security policy where the handling of Ministry of Defence material is involved.

Equal Pay

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the policy of his Department with regard to equal pay for equivalent work in the three armed services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The pay levels of service personnel are recommended by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body based on a system of job evaluation and comparability with civilian jobs of a similar weight. Job evaluation makes no distinction between service men and service women. However, service men's pay contains a 10 per cent. enhancement (the X factor) to compensate for the overall balance of advantage and disadvantage of service life, while service women receive an X factor of 9 per cent. because they are not liable for direct combat duties.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the stockpile of chemical warfare agents held by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Soviet Union has the largest and most sophisticated chemical warfare capability in the world. Our estimate is that the Soviet stockpile of chemical warfare agents is several times larger than the 50,000 tonnes which it claims.

Civil Servants (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community; and what is the gross annual cost of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg in connection with this work.

Mr. Sainsbury: None. Costs of travel and accommodation are not kept in a form that separately identifies EC-related work.

PRIME MINISTER

Press Freedom

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what reply she has sent to the recent letter sent to her by PEN American centre in respect of press freedom and individual rights in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no record of receiving such a letter.

Ministerial Advisers

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Prime Minister what is the annual total level of expenditure on special advisers attached to Ministers.

The Prime Minister: The current annual salary cost is approximately £935,000.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Manufactured Trade Deficit

73. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his projections for the deficit in manufactured trade for 1989.

Mr. Major: The Financial Statement and Budget Report for 1989-90 shows a forecast deficit in manufactured trade in 1989 of £15½ billion.

Trade Deficit

74. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he now expects the trade deficit in 1989 to be.

Mr. Major: The Financial Statement and Budget Report for 1989-90 shows a forecast deficit for visible trade in 1989 of £21½ billion.

Trade Balance

75. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects Britain's trade balance to be in surplus.

Mr. Major: The Financial Statement and Budget Report for 1989-90 published on 14 March 1989 provides forecasts of the visible trade balance for 1989 and the current acount balance for 1989 and the first half of 1990. Forecasts for later years are not published.

EC Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Communities Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Brooke: The ECOFIN Council met in Brussels on 13 March. I represented the United Kingdom. The Council discussed the Commission's first quarterly examination of the economic situation in the Community.

The Council heard a presentation from the Commission on the 10th anniversary of the European monetary system. Ministers discussed preparations for the spring meetings of the IMF and IBRD to be held in April in Washington. Ministers took note of the latest United States suggestions for strengthening the debt strategy and reaffirmed that the key to the resolution of debt problems is the implementation of economic policy reform in the debtor countries.

The Council discussed the European Court of Auditors report for 1987; I emphasised the importance of the court's work in helping to get better value for money and in combating fraud. The Council approved the recommendation to the European Parliament on discharge of the 1987 accounts.

The Council endorsed a declaration on fraud which foreshadowed new or revised proposals in a number of areas, notably export refunds and intervention storage; and which promised an annual report by the Commission on fraud and an early discussion of key issues chaired by the head of the Commission's anti-fraud unit. The Council will return to the subject of fraud in the near future.

Share Ownership

Mr. Watts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the level of share ownership in Great Britain.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A joint Treasury/stock exchange survey carried out in January and February of this year shows that:

9 million people, or 20 per cent. of the adult population, now own shares, the same as one year ago, and compared to seven per cent. in 1979;

13 per cent. hold shares in privatised companies, and five per cent. own only privatised shares;

3 per cent. hold shares in the company for which they work;

Share ownership is widely spread; two-thirds of British shareholders come from outside the ranks of managers and the professionals; similarly, almost two-thirds come from outside the south-east.

I am placing copies of the results of the survey in the Libraries of both Houses.

Press and PR

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, in the press and public relations office of the Treasury; and what is the proposed complement for 1989-90.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The number of press and public relations staff employed in the Treasury on 1 March 1989 was 10 and the budgeted provision was 10; the budgeted provision for 1989-90 is 10.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Treasury on *(a)* TV advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The estimated expenditure for 1988-89 is £51,500, none of which is likely to be on television or radio advertising; the 1989-90 budget is £50,000, none of which is likely to be on television or radio advertising.

Staff Statistics

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Treasury; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The information is as follows:

Staff in statistical divisions[1]

	Staff in Post 1 March 1989	*Budgeted Complement 1988-89*	*Budgeted Complement 1989-90*
Unified Grade 5[2]	2	2	2
Unified Grade 7[2]	8	8	8
SEO	4	4	4
HEO	5	5	5
Senior Assistant Statistician/ Assistant Statistician	4	4	4
EO	10	11	11
AO/AA	13	13	13
Total	46	47	47

[1] Defined as divisions headed by grade 5 chief statistician and employed mainly on statistical work. There are other statistician posts in HM Treasury which are not included in the above figures.
[2] At the senior levels of the service, where management forms a major component of most jobs, there are service-wide common pay and grading arrangements. These unified grades 1 to 7 are known as the open structure and cover grades from permanent secretary level to grade 7 level. Within the unified grades there are no formal barriers to movement between the former occupational groups, e.g. scientists, administrators, statisticians; each post should be filled by the person best equipped in terms of skills, ability and experience.

National Debt

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the reasons for the rise in the national debt from £186 billion at 31 March 1987 to £197 billion at 31 March 1988, in the light of the repayment of public sector debt in the same period of £3·6 billion.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The national debt is conventionally defined as the nominal

liabilities of the national loans fund. Unlike the public sector net debt, it does not include borrowing by local authorities, nor does it net off assets such as the foreign exchange reserves.

The main reason why the liabilities of the national loans fund increased in 1987-88, despite the public sector debt repayment, was because sterling was drawn from the national loans fund to finance a substantial rise in the gold and foreign exchange reserves. There are, however, a great many differences between the two concepts, and a full explanation is given on pages 530-537 of the November 1988 *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin*.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Chlorine Bleaching

Ms. Walley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date he intends to publish his report on the investigations he has carried out within his areas of responsibility into chlorine bleached packaging, dioxins and food.

Mr. Ryder: My Ministry's food science laboratory has just completed its preliminary research into the migration of dioxins from food packaging material and the results are now being evaluated.

Pests

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library a copy of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service research and development report, "Mammal and Bird Pests, 1985."

Mr. Ryder: The 1985 ADAS research and development report on mammal and bird pests is on pages 67-76 of the 1985 research and development report of ADAS. I am arranging for copies to be deposited in the Library as soon as possible.

Hens' Eggs (Imports)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current level of import of hens' eggs; and if he will identify the main source of such imports by country and volume.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest monthly data from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise show that 39,910 boxes of hens' eggs (containing 360 eggs per box) were imported into the United Kingdom in January 1989. Of these 23,733 boxes came from the Netherlands, 7,478 boxes from the Federal Republic of Germany, 4,542 boxes from Denmark and 2,700 boxes from France.

Food Irradiation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans Her Majesty's Government have (i) to allow to be sold and (ii) to require labelling for consumers, foods and food ingredients which have been treated with ionising radiation: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health on 21 February at column *600*.

Civil Servants (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of civil servants in his Ministry whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community; and what is the gross annual cost of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg in connection with this work.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The work undertaken by my Department as a consequence of the United Kingdom's membership of the European Community cannot easily be distinguished from other work. It is not possible, therefore, to give precise information on the number of staff whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the EC. However, we estimate that between one quarter and one third of the Department's manpower, including common service and support staff, are concerned directly or indirectly with duties arising out of EC membership. At 31 January 1989 this amounted approximately to between 2,500 amd 3,400 staff.

The gross cost of travel and subsistence by Ministers and officials attending meetings of institutions of the European Community in 1987-88, the latest financial year for which figures are available, was:

	£
Travel and allied charges	480,058
Subsistence	291,313
	771,371

The bulk of travel costs is recoverable from Community funds. it is not possible to identify costs relating specifically to meetings held in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, or those on EC matters not held under the auspices of the Community.

The 950 staff of the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce are entirely engaged on work related to the European Community. The gross cost in 1987-88 of foreign travel and subsistence, almost all of which relates to meetings of institutions of the European Community, was £42,612.

Tuberculosis (Deer)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) when he will introduce a scheme to make tuberculosis a notifiable disease so far as farmed deer are concerned;

(2) when he expects to be able to announce details of a scheme providing for the notification, compulsory slaughter, and full cash compensation for farmed deer infected with tuberculosis.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I intend to introduce measures shortly to make TB in deer a notifiable disease. The question of a compulsory slaughter with compensation scheme is being considered in the light of the response to the recent consultation letter seeking views on the possibility of an industry-funded arrangement.

Internal Drainage Boards

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the names of those internal drainage boards which are not covered by the

constitutional and electoral arrangements contained in schedule 2 to the Land Drainage Act 1976, by virtue of the fact that they were constituted before 1930; and what steps have been taken to apply schedule 2 electoral arrangements to these boards.

Mr. Ryder: The following internal drainage boards are not considered to be covered by the constitutional and electoral arrangements in schedule 2 to the Land Drainage Act 1976:

Othery, Middlezoy and Westonzoyland
Lower Axe
Lower Brue
Stockland
Upper Axe
Upper Brue
West Sedgemoor
Bridgwater and Pawlett
Cannington and Wembdon
King Sedgemoor and Carey Valley
Langport

Information was last provided in 1985. Since then, one internal drainage board has been abolished and another, Wilberfoss and Thornton Level, is currently being reconstituted.

Dairy Quotas

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to amend the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friend, the Minister, laid before Parliament on 10 March the Dairy Produce Regulations 1989, which replace similar regulations made in 1986 and amended in 1988 and earlier this year.

The new regulations introduce changes to the quota transfer rules, including new procedures for the appointment of arbitrators in cases of dispute. They take into account changes in European Community legislation which affect the calculation of liability to supplementary levy. A number of redundant provisions, most of them relating to the allocations of new quota rights, have not been re-enacted. Other changes have been made to clarify the meaning of certain provisions in the light of experience.

Cook-chill Food

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received on the marketing of cooked-chilled food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have been asked to reply.

My Department has received various representations on the marketing of cook-chill foods and, as I told the House on 21 February at columns 873-74, we are considering the making of regulations.

EMPLOYMENT

Skills Shortage

72. **Mr Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what long-term plans he has to counteract the skills shortage in the south east of England.

Mr. Nicholls: The steps taken by the Government to tackle skills shortage in all regions are set out in the training section of the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s" published in December.

Training Places (Ardrossan-Saltcoats)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training places were allocated to the Ardrossan-Saltcoats area; how many have been filled; and if any change in the number of allocated places is proposed.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available in the form requested. In the Training Agency's Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway area office, of which the Ardrossan-Saltcoats area forms a part, there are currently 4,088 places available. Of these 2,526 were filled at 3 March. After just six months this is a very satisfactory take-up of employment training by unemployed people who are clearly attracted to a high quality programme. There are no plans to reduce the number of places in the Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway area.

National Dock Labour Scheme

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will bring forward proposals to repeal those provisions of the national dock labour scheme which provide for registered port employers to be fined or imprisoned unless they use registered dock labour on cargo-handling work.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government's position on the scheme remains unchanged, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister confirmed in the House on 19 January 1989, *Official Report*, columns 481-82.

Over-50s (Employment)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to meet the director general of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss the employment of workers aged over 50 years by British industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to do so, but I am arranging to meet the appropriate CBI employer panel in the near future to discuss the issue of employment of older workers. It is both irresponsible and unfair to discriminate without justification on grounds of age. I am encouraged that the Confederation of British Industry is seeking to draw to all employers' attention the implications of current demographic trends, and in particular the decline in numbers of young people.

Job Clubs, Bristol

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to encourage the introduction of more job clubs in the Bristol travel-to-work area.

Mr. Lee: As announced in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on 27 January 1989, *Official Report*, column *810*, the job club network is being streamlined to take account of the present unemployment picture. The employment service is currently assessing the

number of job clubs needed in the Bristol travel-to-work area and a decision is expected soon. More effective use of existing facilities, rather than additional job clubs, will be a key feature of the assessment. However, it is planned to substantially increase the number of participants in job clubs in the Avon area from around 1,300 members in 1988-89 to around 2,500 in 1989-90.

Child Care Facilities

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, in the light of his projection in the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s", that home working is likely to increase, what child care provision he is anticipating to cater for the needs of homeworkers with children in the under-fives age group.

Mr. Nicholls: Questions relating to day care provision for the under-fives are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Tourism

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he intends to publish the report commissioned from P A Management Consultants on tourism in England and the role of the British Tourist Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: There are no plans to publish the report, which is still under consideration. An announcement will be made in due course.

Public Service Broadcasts

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make make a statement on the likely implications on public service broadcasts emanating from his Department of the White Paper, "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition Choice and Quality."

Mr. Cope: There is no reason to suppose that the proposals in the White Paper will alter the present arrangements whereby public service messages are broadcast by the BBC. It will be for the new channel 3 and 5 licensees to consider whether they will broadcast such messages. The arrangements for paid Government advertising on television and commercial radio will not be affected by the proposals.

Deaf-blind People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to find suitable jobs which can be carried out by deaf-blind people.

Mr. Lee: Deaf-blind people have access to the full range of employment and training services provided by or through my Department, including the specialist services for people with disabilities. These include specialist assessment rehabilitation and placing provision for people with visual handicaps, training within employment training tailored to individual need, the special aids to employment scheme (which makes available the wide range of technical aids relevant to the needs of people with visual or hearing impairments), and the sheltered employment programme, which subsidises the employment of people with severe disabilities in sheltered workshops or in sheltered placements with employers.

Civil Servants (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community; and what is the gross annual cost of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg in connection with this work.

Mr. Cope: The number of civil servants in my Department whose main task is work wholly or mainly related to the European Economic Community is 33, including clerical and secretarial staff. Of these, 24 staff are concerned with the administration of United Kingdom applications for grants from the European social fund. The gross annual cost in the year to 10 March 1989 of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg in connection with this work is £14,233.

Textile Industry (West Yorkshire)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of people employed in the West Yorkshire wool textile industry for each year from 1975 to 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The available information from censuses of employment is given in the table. Because of changes in the standard industrial classification and in the compilation of county data, the most recent September 1989 and 1984 estimates are not strictly comparable with those for earlier years. More up-to-date estimates from the September 1987 census of employment will become available later this year.

Employees in employment in the woollen and worsted industry in west Yorkshire

Thousand

June[1]	
1975	59·4
1976	54·8
1977	54·7
1978	52·2
September[2]	
1984	32·8
	25·6

[1] Jobcentre based information: 1968 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC), Minimum List Heading 414.
[2] Ward based information (ward boundaries as at September 1981): 1980 SIC, Activity Heading 4310.
Note: Jobcentre and ward based aggregates are not strictly comparable. The former are based on an amalgamation of jobcentre areas, which may not be coterminous with the county boundary. There are also differences in the industry classification, 1968 SIC differs from the 1980 SIC, for instance, in including the manufacturing of pressed and woven felt and baize.

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* Expenditure in the Department of Employment group, including the Training Agency and the employment service, in each year from 1984-85 to 1987-88 on management consultancy was as follows:

	£ thousands
1984-85	365
1985-86	365
1986-87	1,032
1987-88	653

The estimate outturn for the current year (1988-89) is around £950,000.

Information for the period from 1979-80 to 1983-84 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Earnings

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what percentage, of full-time female workers in Derbyshire earned less than the Council of Europe's decency threshold in the figures for the latest available year.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Glasgow, Ruthergen (Mr. McAvoy) on 8 March 1989 at columns *569-70*.

Statistical Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in the Manpower Services Commission; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90;

(2) if he will give the latest figures for the number of staff presently employed, and the full complement of staff including vacant posts, by grade, in the statistical divisions in his Department; if he will differentiate between staff in statistical posts and staff in administrative posts; and if he will give the staffing complements by grade, and differentiated between statistical and administrative posts, proposed for 1989-90.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* Staff of what was the Manpower Services Commission are now in the Training Agency and employment service of my Department. The information requested on staff presently employed is given in the table. The staffing levels for 1989-90 are not expected to be significantly different from current levels.

Department of Employment—Staff in Statistical Divisions

Grade	*Staff complement*	*Staff-in-post January 1989*
Statistical Grades		
Head of Statistics	1·0	1·0
Chief Statistician	5·0	5·0
Statistician	27·8	27·6
Senior Assistant Statistician	11·0	11·0
Assistant Statistician	11·0	11·0
Total Statistical Grades	55·8	55·6
Administrative Grades		
Grade 6	1·0	1·0
Grade 7	2·0	2·0
Senior Executive Officer	10·0	10·0
Higher Executive Officer	27·9	27·5
Executive Officer	65·5	63·0
Administrative Officer	122·8	110·6
Administrative Assistant	45·8	26·7
Senior Personal Secretary	1·0	1·0
Personal Secretary	6·0	6·0
Total Administrative Grades	282·0	247·8
Other Staff		
Economist	2·0	2·0
Senior Economic Assistant	3·0	3·0
Economic Assistant	1·0	—
Senior Research Officer	3·0	2·0
Assistant Librarian	1·0	1·0
Total Other Grades	10·0	8·0
Total All Posts	337·8	303·4

Employment Training

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) dated 17 January, *Official Report*, column *172*, information on the numbers in employment training schemes in inner city areas has yet been made available.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of people on employment training at 3 March was 164,000; of these, 42 per cent. or about 70,000 were in training in inner city areas.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what his Department treats as a reasonable amount for trainees on an ET scheme to spend on weekly travel from their home to their place of training.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 10 March 1989]:* ET trainees are expected to meet the first £5 of their weekly travel costs. Costs in excess of £5 a week are reimbursed in full.

ENERGY

Ministerial Statements

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to be answerable in Parliament for statements made outside Parliament by Ministers in his Department on matters for which his Department has responsibility.

Mr. Parkinson: Ministers in charge of Departments are answerable to Parliament for statements made by Ministers in their Departments on matters for which they have responsibility.

Public Service Broadcasts

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the likely implications on public service broadcasts emanating from his Department of the White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition Choice and Quality".

Mr. Parkinson: There is no reason to suppose that the proposals in the White Paper will alter the present arrangements whereby public service messages are broadcast by the BBC. It will be for the new Channel 3 and

5 licensees to consider whether they will broadcast such messages. The arrangements for paid Government advertising on television will not be affected by the proposals.

Civil Servants (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community; and what is the gross annual cost of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg in connection with this work.

Mr. Parkinson: There are 12 civil servants engaged wholly or mainly on EEC work and the cost of travel and subsistence for 1988 was about £6,000, most of which is reimbursed by the Commission.

Dungeness B

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the cost of constructing Dungeness B power station; what is its percentage of availability for each year since completion; what is the total amount spent on maintenance and repairs since completion; and what is the current availability of the station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is an operational matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Reactor Welds (Bradwell)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will call for a report from Her Majesty's chief inspector of nuclear installations on his decision with respect to the use of ultrasonic methods to inspect reactor welds at Bradwell nuclear power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Inspections of the pressure circuit are part of the normal examinations carried out at each regular biennial inspection as required under the site licence. The Health and Safety Executive has accepted the Central Electricity Generating Board's proposal for a combination of ultrasonic and visual inspections as part of the programme of work during the shutdown of Bradwell for its biennial inspection.

The nuclear installations inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive will review the results of the inspections as they proceed. The nuclear installations inspectorate's consent will be required before the reactor can be restarted.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Office

13. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last had discussions with Sir Bryan Nicholson of the Post Office; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Forth: I meet the Post Office chairman regularly, and last did so on 1 March. We discussed a range of matters of current interest.

Mobile Telecommunications

19. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the potential for expansion in the market for mobile telecommunications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We see considerable potential. My announcement to the House on 26 January about personal telecommunications set out the steps we are taking to enable that potential to be realised.

Car Batteries

20. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on import penetration of car batteries.

Mr. Atkins: Information on car batteries alone is not available. For automotive batteries in total, it is estimated that in the first three quarters of 1988, import penetration was approximately 30 per cent.

Enterprise Initiative

21. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many businesses have participated in the Government's enterprise initiative scheme.

Mr. Forth: I am pleased to say that over 85,000 firms have "taken the initiative" by seeking detailed information about the self-help package of assistance available under the enterprise initiative.

Inner City Task Forces

22. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the leaders of the inner city task forces; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Newton: I last met task force leaders as a group at their half-yearly meeting in Liverpool on Friday 9 December. Our discussions ranged over a variety of matters, including the importance of developing the capacity of local groups and community organisations to build on task forces' work after the departure of the task forces themselves. I have subsequently met on other occasions the task force leaders in Preston, Rochdale, Doncaster, Hartlepool, Leeds and Middlesbrough.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

23. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) on 12 December at column *400*.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if it remains the negotiating position of the European Economic Community, after the breakdown of the mid-term review of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, Uruguay round, that the principal of selectivity should be introduced into article XIX of the general agreement on tariffs and trade.

Mr. Forth: The European Community is committed to seeking an improved safeguards clause under article XIX of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, which would permit effective action to be taken subject to agreed tests and disciplines. We consider this will help strengthen the general agreement on tariffs and trade and may facilitate the process of trade liberalisation by providing a more reliable "safety-valve". One of the key issues in the negotiations will be whether safeguard action can be taken selectively. It is the Community's view that this possibility exists. However the Community has not expressed a firm position on this issue in the current multi-lateral trade negotiations, believing it to be important that all options should remain open for discussion at this stage of the negotiations if a comprehensive solution is to be found.

Electrical Goods

24. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current balance of trade position in electronics and electrical goods.

Mr. Forth: In 1988, exports of electronic and electrical goods amounted to £11·4 billion while imports were £15·3 billion, leaving a crude trade deficit of £3·9 billion.

Hearing Aids

25. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what study his Department has conducted into the number of people buying hearing aids privately.

Mr. Forth: None. Such surveys are not carried out by this Department but I understand that the number of hearing aids privately dispensed each year is approximately 80,000.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many representations he has received concerning the conduct of private hearing aid dispensers.

Mr. Forth: My Department has received three representations concerning the conduct of private hearing aid dispensers in the last year.

Trade Deficit

26. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will initiate an inquiry into the causes of the size of the United Kingdom's trade deficit with the European Economic Community in relation to that of the rest of the world; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to do so.

58. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster with which European Economic Community members Britain's trade is in deficit.

Mr. Newton: In the 12 months to January the United Kingdom was in deficit on visible trade with Belgium/Luxembourg, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal.

Single Market

27. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent representations he has received about preparations for the single market in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: We constantly receive an encouragingly high number of representations from all sectors of British business. All have warmly welcomed the continuing high priority which the Government are giving to completing the single market and the steps that we are taking to encourage British business to take action to prepare for the challenge ahead.

49. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent estimate his Department has made of the effects of 1992 on the manufacturing sector.

Mr. Atkins: The single European market will present opportunities and challenges for a wide range of United Kingdom business sectors. Realising the potential gains to any one sector of the economy will depend on the flexibility of United Kingdom firms in that sector in responding to the removal of the barriers.

59. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent estimates his Department have made on the effects of 1992 on Britain's regions.

Mr. Atkins: The completion of the single market means greater freedom of trade, and many studies have demonstrated the benefits of that. The single market will bring opportunities for business in all parts of the country. We are seeking to ensure that business in every region takes the necessary action to respond effectively to the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Overseas Assets

28. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current net value of British companies' overseas assets.

Mr. Forth: The latest available estimate relates to the end of 1987. The book value of direct investment abroad by United Kingdom companies at the end of 1987 was estimated to be £91 billion. The book value of foreign direct investment in the United Kingdom was estimated to be £53 billion and the net book value of overseas direct investment at the end of 1987 was estimated to be £38 billion.

Copyright

29. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the Government's plans to ensure that the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 are not vitiated by the European Economic Community in legislation arising out of the European Economic Community Commission's Green Paper "Copyright and the Challenge of New Technology."

Mr. Forth: The provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 were adopted after careful consideration with all affected parties. Consultations are continuing on matters arising from the Commission's Green Paper. We shall therefore be well placed to represent the interests of the United Kingdom in negotiations on any proposals for Community legislation in this area.

Barlow Clowes

30. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made towards

obtaining reimbursement for those affected by the British-based and Gibraltar-based elements of the Barlow Clowes organisation; what initiatives have been taken by his Department in the last six months; what initiatives he will now take to seek a speedier resolution of outstanding problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: On the matter of reimbursement for investors in Barlow Clowes, I understand that an interim payment of 75p in the pound was made to a minority of investors in the United Kingdom fund (Barlow Clowes Gilt Managers) before Christmas. The remaining investors in the United Kingdom fund received an interim payment of 25p in the pound in January. The position for investors in the Gibraltar fund (Barlow Clowes International) is not as promising but I understand that the liquidators hope to make a small interim payment to those investors as soon as possible this year.

Developments have also been taking place on the roles played by some of the other parties involved in this case. My right hon. and noble Friend has invited a number of regulatory bodies to examine Sir Godfray Le Quesne's report and see whether there were matters for them to consider. The Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers' Regulatory Association has undertaken its own investigations and recommended that disciplinary action be taken against 19 of its members involved with the case, of which three have been suspended. Those suspended are the Investments and Pensions Advisory Service Ltd. and D. C. Wilson and Gordon Pettie Advisory Services. The Investments and Pensions Advisory Service is in liquidation following a winding up petition by the Securities and Investments board and D. C. Wilson has gone into voluntary liquidation.

On 4 January the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales announced that a committee of inquiry was being set up under the joint disciplinary scheme to look into the role of the auditors involved in this case.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration is looking into complaints that he has received about the handling of the Barlow Clowes case by my Department. The timing of the Commissioner's work is a matter for him, but my Department is co-operating with him and we shall consider carefully any report that he may make.

Manufacturing Investment

31. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the latest figure for the level of manufacturing investment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: In 1988 manufacturing investment, including leased asset and at 1985 prices on the provisional estimate, amounted to £11 billion, nearly 10 per cent. higher than in 1987. In his Financial Statement and Budget Report, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer forecast further strong growth in business investment. This is supported by the Department of Trade and Industry's latest investment intentions survey and that conducted by the CBI.

64. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects manufacturing investment to return to its 1979 level.

Mr. Atkins: Manufacturing investment in real terms in 1988 on the provisional estimate was close to its 1979 level and 10 per cent. higher than in 1987. In his Financial Statement and Budget Report, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer forecast further strong growth in business investment. This is supported by the Department of Trade and Industry's latest investment intentions survey and that conducted by the CBI.

Trade Figures

32. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has held recent discussions with his European Economic Community counterparts in the Council of Ministers on problems associated with different trade figures in the United Kingdom and other member states and on comparative statistics and measurements in these various figures.

Mr. Newton: No. There will be discussions in the Council of Ministers later this year on a proposal for an EC Council regulation on the statistics of trading between member states after 1992. If my hon. Friend has a particular problem in mind perhaps he would write to me.

1992 Campaign

33. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the achievements of his 1992 campaign.

Mr. Forth: Since the campaign was launched the DTI has handled around 200,000 requests for further information. Now over 90 per cent. of firms throughout the country recognise the significance of the single market challenge and around 50 per cent. of British business is taking action or considering steps to prepare for the single market.

Cellular Radio

34. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps his Department has taken to relieve congestion in the cellular radio network.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has already announced the extension of the availability of 400 radio channels, until now reserved for Ministry of Defence use save in central London, out to the area embraced by the M25 and five miles beyond.

Hearing Aid Council

35. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last reviewed the Hearing Aid Council's code of practice.

Mr. Forth: The Hearing Aid Council Act does not require or permit the Secretary of State to review the council's code of practice. The Act requires the Secretary of State to approve the code proposed by the council and any amendments that it proposes to it. The Secretary of State can make his approval conditional upon certain modifications.

Action for Cities

36. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many offers of assistance have resulted from the action for cities presentations.

Mr. Newton: More than 400 of the firms represented at the seven action for cities working breakfasts held during 1988 expressed an interest in supporting the Government's inner city initiatives.

CBI

37. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the Confederation of British Industry; and what matters were discussed.

50. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met the Confederation of British Industry; and what was discussed.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster last met the CBI on 24 November 1988 when he spoke at its conference on "Business Opportunities in Urban Regeneration".

Imports

38. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the Government have any proposals to reduce imports by stimulating greater United Kingdom production in specific sectors.

Mr. Atkins: Is it not for government to tell industry what to produce or how much. The greatest encouragement to buy British is the availability of competitive British goods and services. My Department's policies are geared to helping businesses achieve this.

1992 Hotline

39. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many calls have been received to date by his Department's 1992 hotline.

Mr. Forth: Our 1992 hotline has received over 117,000 calls since it opened on 18 March 1988.

Alnwick and Amble

40. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent representations he has received about assistance from the United Kingdom or European funds for the Alnwick and Amble area.

Mr. Atkins: I have received representations in favour of the Alnwick and Amble travel-to-work-area's claims to assistance from the Community's reformed structural funds. I had already put a case on behalf of the area to the European Commission. The Commission announced on 8 March its intention of designating Alnwick and Amble travel-to-work-area for assistance under the funds' new objective 2.

EC Regional Development Fund

41. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the value of grants allocated to England from the European regional development fund since its inception.

Mr. Atkins: A total of £1,602 million.

Interest Rates

42. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate of the cost to manufacturing industry of the rise in base rates since April 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is not available for manufacturing industry separately. The hon. Member should bear in mind, however, that a one percentage point increase in interest rates, even if sustained for a full year, costs companies far less than a one percentage point increase in pay settlements.

61. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his latest estimate of the annual cost to industry of recent rises in interest rates.

Mr. Atkins: The cost to industrial and commercial companies in the year to date of the changes in bank base rates, compared with the cost if they had remained the same as a year ago, is estimated to be about £0·8 billion. The hon. Member should bear in mind, however, that a one percentage point increase in interest rates, even if sustained for a full year, costs companies far less than a one percentage point increase in pay settlements.

62. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received on the effects of current interest rates on industry.

Mr. Atkins: I have received a number of representations from business about the effects of interest rates on cash flow and investment. Investment intentions remain strong, however, and the representations show overwhelming support for firm action to curb inflation.

Inward Investment

43. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his estimate of how many jobs have been created by inward investment since 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: According to the figures known to the Invest in Britain Bureau, since 1983 the following number of jobs have been created:

Year	*Number*
1983	15,546
1984	27,102
1985	26,331
1986	17,749
1987	21,301
[1]1988	18,307

[1] For the first three quarters only.

Industrial Research

44. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the current level of long-term industrial research being undertaken in the United Kingdom for which his Department has responsibility.

Mr. Forth: Statistics on expenditure on long term industrial research undertaken by United Kingdom industry are not available. However expenditure on basic research and applied research performed by United Kingdom industry was some £154 million and £1,100 million, respectively, in 1985. DTI expenditure on Frascati R and D for 1988-89, including support for industrial R and D, is estimated to be £274 million (excluding civil aviation launch aid). In line with the policy of moving away from support for near market industrial R and D, most of this expenditure will be on longer-term R and D.

Overseas Companies

45. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many overseas companies set up operations in Britain in 1988.

Mr. Forth: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) on 15 February at columns *245-46*.

Liquidations

46. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many companies went into liquidation during 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: There were 9,823 company insolvencies in Great Britain in 1988. This was about 17 per cent. lower than the corresponding figure of 11,895 in 1987.

Trade Surpluses

47. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in which sectors of manufacturing Britain had a trade surplus in 1979; and in which Britain had a surplus in 1988.

Mr. Atkins: In 1979 the United Kingdom had a crude trade surplus in manufacturing trade in the following classes of the standard industrial classification:

Class 24 Non-metallic mineral products
Class 25 Chemicals
Class 26 Man-made fibres
Class 31 Metal goods
Class 32 Mechanical engineering
Class 34 Electrical and electronic engineering
Class 36 Other transport equipment
Class 48 Processing of rubber and plastics

In 1987, the last year for which data is available, industries with a trade surplus were:

Class 24 Non-metallic mineral products
Class 25 Chemicals
Class 32 Mechanical engineering
Class 36 Other transport equipment

Company Liquidity

48. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his latest estimate of company liquidity; and when it was last lower.

Mr. Forth: The liquidity ratio for all large industrial and commercial companies is estimated by the Department's survey to be 76 per cent. at the end of the fourth quarter of 1988 on a seasonally adjusted basis. This is the lowest figure since the end of the third quarter of 1982.

Consumers

51. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to increase the rights of consumers.

56. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if his Department plans any new initiatives in consumer protection; and if he will make a statement.

66. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has plans to bring forward legislation affecting consumer rights.

Mr. Forth: We plan to introduce regulations under part III of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 (which came into force on 1 March) governing price indications at bureaux de change and the resale of electricity and gas by landlords. Proposals will shortly be made to implement two EC directives which require the selling and, where appropriate, the unit prices of foodstuffs and non-food products to be displayed.

We intend to amend the law on the sale and supply of goods following the Law Commissions' report and plan to amend the Consumer Credit Act and related legislation as set out in the recent White Paper "Releasing Enterprise" (CM512). We shall also introduce revised regulations on pyramid selling.

55. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of the principal consumer bodies; and what was the content of the discussions.

Mr. Forth: I visited the Welsh Consumer Council on 27 October 1988, the Consumers Association on 6 February 1989 and the National Consumer Council on 7 March 1989. On each occasion a number of current issues relevant to consumers were discussed. I also intend to visit the Scottish Consumer Council on 19 May.

Over the past six months I have also met the chairman of the National Industry Consumer/Consultative Councils to discuss matters within their areas of interest.

Regional Preferential Assistance

52. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the percentage change in real terms in regional preferential assistance since 1978-79.

Mr. Atkins: Expenditure in real terms on regional preferential assistance in Great Britain in 1987-88 was 56 per cent. lower than in 1978-79. Much of the reduction has arisen from steps taken to improve cost effectiveness in terms of creating jobs at a lower public expenditure cost.

Civil Research and Development

53. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries the proportion of gross domestic product spent by Government on civil research and development has fallen since 1983.

Mr. Forth: Of the twenty OECD member countries showing figures for 1983 and 1986, Australia, Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom recorded a fall in Government funding of civil research and development as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Consumer Affairs

54. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next proposes to meet the European Commissioner with responsibility for consumer affairs; and what matters he will raise.

Mr. Forth: I hope to meet Commissioner Van Miert again at the Council of Consumer Ministers which is provisionally planned for 1 June. The Spanish Presidency have yet to finalise the agenda for the Council.

Consumer Protection

57. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met his European Economic Community counterparts to discuss consumer protection; and what was the content of the discussions.

Mr. Forth: Neither my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster nor I, has yet had occasion to meet EC Community counterparts to discuss consumer protection. However, I have had general discussions on consumer issues with Commissioner Van Miert, and I hope to meet my Community colleagues at the Council of Consumer Ministers which the Spanish Presidency have provisionally planned for 1 June. I also hope to meet my French counterpart, Madame Neiertz, later this year for bilateral discussions.

Trade Deficit

60. **Mr. Sean Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries are running a smaller trade deficit as a percentage of gross domestic product than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: OECD estimates for 1988 suggest that 12 countries ran deficits on their visible trade. In relation to their GDP, the following countries' deficits were smaller than that of the United Kingdom.

Italy, France, Norway, Switzerland, the United States, Austria and Iceland.

Trade Statistics

63. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if any changes are planned in the collection of trade statistics in preparation for 1992.

Mr. Forth: I have nothing to add to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on 21 February at column *546*.

Manufacturing Productivity

65. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in which position Britain lies in an Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development league table for manufacturing productivity.

Mr. Atkins: No reliable comparison exists for absolute levels of productivity between different countries. But available figures do show that in the 1980s the United Kingdom has had the fastest rate of growth of manufacturing productivity of all the major industrialised countries.

Information Technology

67. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects Britain to have a trade surplus in information technology.

Mr. Forth: I do not know what the pattern of trade in information technology will be in the years ahead. That is something which will be determined primarily by industry and commerce.

Regional Policy

68. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he plans to announce any new initiatives to benefit Britain's regions.

Mr. Atkins: An effective range of measures designed to encourage enterprise and economic growth in all parts of the country is available from DTI under the enterprise initiative, with higher levels of assistance available to firms in the assisted areas and urban programme areas. Firms in assisted areas also benefit from assistance under the regional initiative.

Macdonald Report

69. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received on the Macdonald report on communications infrastructure.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has received a number of formal and informal comments on the communications steering group report "The Infrastructure for Tomorrow", sometimes referred to as the Macdonald report. The report was published in December as a contribution to the discussions on the United Kingdom's communications infrastructure needs.

Competitiveness

70. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent representations he has received from industry on matters affecting competitiveness.

Mr. Atkins: Most contacts which my Department has with industry and commerce involve matters having a bearing on United Kingdom competitiveness.

Hardwood Imports

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he proposes to take to prohibit imports of hardwoods obtained from rain forests.

Mr. Alan Clark: The subject is one of considerable and growing concern and I have had valuable and constructive discussions with Dr. Freezdilah, executive director of the International Tropical Timber Organisation, and emphasised to him that further measures, on a Community-wide basis, can not be excluded indefinitely if no progress is evident in the general field of conservation.

Butane Gas Sales

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many retailers have been sent *(a)* his Department's guidance pack on the law in respect of the sale of butane gas canisters to minors and *(b)* his Department's warning notices on bulk packs of gas refills; what proportion of retailers selling these items this represents; and what response he has had on this matter.

Mr. Forth: The guidance packs for retailers, which give advice on how to recognise sniffers and refuse to sell solvent-based products to them, are funded by the Government and distributed by Re-Solv, the anti-solvent abuse charity, through trading standards departments of local authorities, and through the police. The intention is that all retailers should have a copy. There are some 290,000 retail establishments in the United Kingdom, and 300,000 guidance packs have been produced. Re-Solv has also devised a warning notice to retailers, for suppliers to put in bulk packs of butane lighter refills, and my Department has written to all known suppliers asking them to use them. The cost to suppliers is £9 per 1,000 notices.

M.F.B. Russell and Co. Ltd.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, what documents relating to M. F. B. Russell and Co. Ltd. are currently in his safe-keeping.

Mr. Atkins: Following the making of a winding-up order against M. B. P. Russell and Co. Ltd. by the court the official receiver, who is an officer of my Department and of the court, recovered certain of the company's books and papers. Persons required under section 131 of the Insolvency Act 1986 to make out and submit a statement of the company's affairs may have access to these by arrangement and they may be inspected by creditors and contributories pursuant to a court order under section 155 of the Insolvency Act 1986.

Bananas

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the quantity of bananas imported in the most recent year for which figures are available into Britain from the Windward Isles; and what information he has on the percentage this is of the total banana exports of the Windward Isles.

Mr. Forth: The United Kingdom imported 128·7 thousand tonnes of fresh bananas originating from the Windward Isles in 1987. Information is not available on the percentage of total banana exports from the Windward Isles which this represents.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster from which countries bananas are imported into Britain; and if he will make a statement about banana imports after 1992.

Mr. Forth: In 1987, imports of fresh bananas originating from Jamaica, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Belize and Surinam accounted for over 70 per cent. of United Kingdom total imports. A list showing all countries from which the United Kingdom imported bananas has been placed in the Library.

Projections of trade levels are not available.

Regional Development Organisation

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what level of financial support he is offering to the Regional Development Organisation in England for 1989-90.

Mr. Newton: I have offered the five English regional development organisations £3·005 million in grant aid for their inward investment promotion activities for 1989-90, over £214,700 more than in 1988-89. I have allocated the grant aid as follows:

	Up to £
Northern Development Company (in the North East)	981,750
Yorkshire and Humberside Development Association	660,000
INWARD Ltd. (in the North West)	541,000
West Midlands Industrial Development Association	400,000
Devon and Cornwall Development Bureau	422,000

In addition the Northern Development Company has also been offered grant aid of up to £200,000 for its wider activities aimed at the regeneration of the region.

Rolls-Royce

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when his Department expects to make an announcement about Rolls-Royce's launch aid applications.

Mr. Atkins: After extensive discussions with my Department Rolls-Royce has decided to withdraw its application for launch aid for the development of the RB211-524J and 524L engines. The company considers that it will be able to finance the development from its own financial resources and from contributions from risk and revenue sharing partners. I wish the company every success with the launch of these engines.

Industry Council

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the Industry Council held on 6 March.

Mr. Newton: The Council, at which I represented the United Kingdom, agreed a common position on the financing of steel social measures and considered the use of the ECU in ECSC matters. The Commission made a statement on the restructuring of the Italian steel industry.

The Council also agreed a new SPRINT programme for technology transfer, and discussed the further promotion of European standards for high definition television (HDTV). Informal discussion also took place on the Communities shipbuilding and textile industries, and on small and medium sized enterprises.

Self-Employed Commercial Agents

Dr. Blackburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement regarding the implementation of the European Community directive on self-employed commercial agents.

Mr. Atkins: Our present intention is that the directive should be implemented by regulations under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972. The regulations do not need to come into force before 1 January 1994 and will not be made before 1992.

Where the directive allows member states discretion our present conclusions in the light of consultations are as follows:

(a) Agents will be entitled to commission where they have an exclusive right to a specific geographical area or group of customers.

(b) On the termination of an agency contract, the agent will be entitled to compensation for damage in line with United Kingdom practice and not an "indemnity".

(c) The regulations will exclude from their scope those for whom acting as a commercial agent is a secondary business activity or for whom it is the sole business activity but still a secondary pursuit.

(d) There will be no requirement for agency contracts to be recorded in writing except where one party to the contract requests it.

(e) The maximum period of notice will be three months for a contract that has run three years or more.

(f) The principal will be required to notify the agent concerned within a reasonable period of his acceptance, refusal or non execution of a transaction, and also that goods have been delivered to the customer.

Nearer the time of making the implementing regulations, there will be further consultation as appropriate on the details.

British Film Fund Agency

Dr. Blackburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what sum of money was passed to the Secretary of State on dissolution of British Film Fund Agency; and to what purpose the money will be used.

Mr. Atkins: The residual moneys amounted to £6,377·27. This sum is being passed to the National Film and Television school for investment in a loan scheme designed to support the development of commercial film projects by recent graduates of the school.

Aerospace Industry

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the value to the north-west of England's economy of the aerospace industry.

Mr. Atkins: The gross value added (at factor cost) by the aerospace equipment manufacturing and repairing industry in the north west (standard region) as at 1986 was £693·3 million.

Credit Brokers

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to change the scope of the consumer credit licensing requirements contained in the Consumer Credit Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) on 26 October 1988 at column *299*.

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what has been the average annual cost of administering the licence system for credit brokers for each of the past five years for which figures are available; how many licences have been issued in each of those years; and what proportion of the cost has been borne by applicants for such licences;

(2) how many licences for credit brokers have been *(a)* refused and *(b)* revoked during each of the past five years for which figures are available; and what is the current charge to an applicant for a licence to trade as a credit broker.

Mr. Atkins: The day-to-day operation of the consumer credit licensing system is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading and I shall ask him to write to my hon. Friend.

Balance of Trade (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current balance of trade in textiles *(a)* as a whole and *(b)* with other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Atkins: The crude balance of trade in textiles (defined by standard international trade classification, revision 3, division 65) for 1988, shows deficits of £1,700 million for total trade and of £1,340 million with the EEC.

Gas

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *190*, if he has estimated how long it will be before effective competition is introduced into the gas supply market in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* Implementation of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's recommendations will encourage the development of competition in gas supply. In addition the MMC recommended that, towards the end of the five years initial period for the price schedule, the Director General should review its continued appropriateness taking into account the extent to which effective competition has by then emerged, or is likely to emerge, in the supply of gas in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *190*, if he will make a statement about the effect that the action taken, following the publication of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on gas prices, will have in the short and medium term upon the overall price of firm gas charged by British Gas to large industrial consumers.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* It will lead to similar customers being charged at the same rate. In the short term, this may mean a reduction in price for some, an increase in price for others. In the medium term, there should be a reduction in the average price paid.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to which markets large industrial users of firm gas operate in *(a)* Europe and *(b)* the world, other than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* I do not have information on export markets categorised according to their suppliers' energy use.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he accepts the conclusion of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission that high United Kingdom gas prices are a cause for real concern, Cm. 500, paragraph 8.24; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* We have made clear that we accept the conclusion of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission that British Gas's pricing policy has operated against the public interest in various ways including higher charges for those customers less well-placed to use alternative fuels or to obtain alternative fuels on favourable terms. Therefore we have acted on the MMC's recommendation on British Gas's pricing and contract policies in the supply of gas to large users.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will make a statement about the conclusion of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, Cm. 500, paragraph 8.23, that British Gas prices for firm gas are up to 80 per cent. higher than elsewhere in the European Community; and in what way the action taken will remove such a price differential in the short or medium term;

(2) if he will make a statement about the conclusion of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission that since the latter part of 1985 prices for firm gas have fallen by 12 per cent. in the United Kingdom compared to between 30 per

cent. and 48 per cent. in other European Community countries, Cm. 500, paragraph 8.22; and in what way the action taken will prevent such price reduction differential reccurring in the short or medium term.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* The Secretary of State welcomed the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and initiated action to implement its specific recommendations on pricing and contract conditions. These will bring transparency to gas prices for large users in the United Kingdom and thus encourage the development of competition in gas supply. With regard to other European Community countries, the European Commission is proposing legal action to require greater transparency in energy pricing, particularly for large industrial users.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *190*, what information he has as to whether British Gas supplies firm gas to large industrial consumers in the United Kingdom on terms which are more or less favourable than those available to similar consumers in the other main gas consuming countries of the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement about the effect that the action taken will have in the short and medium term upon such terms.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* I refer my hon. Friend to tables 4 to 6 of the OFGAS study "The EEC Industrial Gas Market". The immediate effect of the action taken will be to ensure the same price for large users with similar consumption in the United Kingdom as is the case in most of the main gas consuming countries of the European Community. In the medium term, there should be a reduction in the average price paid by large users in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, (1) pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column 190, what information he has as to whether British Gas pricing policies in relation to firm gas have distorted competition since the latter part of 1985 between major industrial consumers in the United Kingdom on the one hand and those operating in the other main gas consuming countries of the European Economic Community on the other hand; and with what effect;

(2) whether he has received any evidence that the difference in price for firm gas between the United Kingdom and the other main gas consuming countries of the European Economic Community has had an adverse effect on the competitiveness of United Kingdom companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the results of the survey of British Gas contract customers given in appendix 5.2 of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on Gas (CM 500).

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 16 March 1989

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Treasury Counsel

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide for the latest available 12-month period *(a)* the number of Treasury counsel, *(b)* the amount of total public money received by the Treasury counsel, *(c)* the number of cases dealt with by the Treasury counsel and *(d)* the amount of public money received by Treasury counsel in respect of criminal matters; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is as follows:

(a) 14.

(b) The total sum paid to Treasury counsel by Departments for which I have responsibility, in the current financial year, is £1,442,569.

(c) This cannot be established save at disproportionate cost.

(d) £1,259,703.

DEFENCE

Medical Discharge

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual expenditure by his Department on providing rehabilitation services for service men who are seriously injured and discharged from the services on medical grounds.

Mr. Neubert: Information on the cost of service rehabilitation facilities is not available in the specific detail requested.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will institute counselling and other services of assistance for service men who are discharged as medically unfit from the services within three months of the date of the medical board recommendation to that effect.

Mr. Neubert: A full range of counselling and other services of assistance are already available, as a matter of routine, for service men who are discharged as medically unfit from the services.

Courts Martial

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps are taken to ensure that adequate and proper soundproofed accommodation is provided for courts martial to be conducted at operational Royal Air Force bases.

Mr. Neubert: Royal Air Force regulations require stations to provide a suitable room (of unspecified dimensions) to house the courts martial and additional rooms adjacent for robing facilities for the court officials. The room chosen will vary from station to station dependent upon availability; no sound attenuation is laid down as a requirement. To minimise disruption and inconvenience to the court, stations restrict the level and area of flying activity during the courts martial whenever possible. In cases where disruption is unavoidable, an alternative location is provided when this is practical.

MARILYN

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to mount a recruitment campaign for the regular Army through the medium of television as a result of the MARILYN studies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: We are planning a three-week television advertising campaign towards the end of this month promoting both the Regular Army and the TA, called "Today's Army".

Bombing Range

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Taunton on 1 March, *Official Report*, column *220*, he will state how the prohibition referred to therein affects aircraft using the practice bombing range in the Bristol channel in the vicinity of Hinkley Point.

Mr. Neubert: The prohibition extends to military aircraft using the Lilstock practice bombing range.

Defence Non-Nuclear Research Establishment

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will report progress on the proposal to establish the defence non-nuclear research establishment as an executive agency.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has accepted that change is needed in the way defence research is organised in order to obtain better value for money for our expenditure on defence research and project support. It is considered that this could be best achieved through a sharper relationship between the customers for and suppliers of defence research and by better focused and strengthened internal management in the establishments.

It has therefore been decided to establish the four main non-nuclear research establishments: the Admiralty research establishment, the Royal aerospace establishment, the Royal armament research and development establishment and the Royal Signals and radar establishment as a single organisation with the intention that they should become an executive agency under the Government's next steps policy. Other parts of MOD may also be included following current studies.

There will be full consultation with trades unions. In addition, steps are being taken to select and appoint, by open competition, a chief executive (designate), who will be responsible for day-to-day management of the organisation and for developing a comprehensive management plan for the proposed agency in response to MOD requirements. In parallel, an implementation team is being set up in MOD charged with overall co-ordination of the project. Final decisions to proceed and on the status

of the agency within the public sector will be taken in the light of this further work, with the aim of establishing the agency in the spring of 1991.

PRIME MINISTER

Flecknoe

Q40. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Flecknoe, near Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Debt Burden

Q148. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what action the Government are taking to reduce the debt burden on poor countries.

The Prime Minister: Following my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's initiative, agreement was reached at the Toronto summit for concessional rescheduling through the Paris club for the poorest and most heavily indebted countries which are following approved adjustment programmes. The United Kingdom and others will reduce interest rates to prevent debt compounding. The United Kingdom has also written off £1 billion of old aid loans, of which nearly £300 million were for sub-Saharan Africa. We have also agreed to subsidise loans to the poorest countries of up to about £750 million through a special IMF facility, the enhanced structural adjustment facility, of £4·5 billion. This makes us the largest single contributor to the interest subsidy account.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy that each Government Department will undertake to accept and implement any safety recommendation of the Piper Alpha inquiry relevant to their responsibilities.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has already told Parliament that if the Piper Alpha public inquiry can recommend improvements to the present offshore safety regime these will be accepted.

Engagements

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 March.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 March.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 March.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 March.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 16 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, including one with the Hungarian Foreign Minister. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

WALES

Departmental Management Information System

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which company was awarded the contract for Welsh Office management information service system; what is the value of the contract awarded in August 1986; how much has so far been paid to the contractors; when the contract will be concluded; and what are the reasons for the delay in completion.

Mr. Peter Walker: A contract for the supply of computer hardware and software together with computerised statistical, financial and management systems was awarded to IBM (UK) Ltd. in August 1986. The value of the contract, over 10 years, is £1·6 million. Approximately £1 million has been paid to the contractor in accordance with the terms of the contract for goods and services which have been delivered to and accepted by my Department. The contractor was unable to deliver all the components specified in the contract to the original timetable because of technical difficulties, but it is now expected that the contract will be completely fulfilled by the end of September 1989.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1988-89 by the Welsh Office on *(a)* TV advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the 1989-90 budget for each of these categories of spending.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* Spending in 1988-89 is expected to be (a) TV advertising £42,307, (b) radio advertising nil, (c) newspaper advertising £71,000 and (d) other promotional material £870,000.

Detailed decisions on the 1989-90 budget by media have not yet been taken but the expected overall expenditure on publicity will be in the region of £1·75 million.

Housing Capital Allocations

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the housing capital allocations for each Welsh district council since 1979 and at constant prices.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The information requested is shown in the tables. Allocations for 1988-89 are provisional. The allocations for 1979-80 and 1980-81 are not strictly comparable with subsequent years as a new system for local authority finance was introduced in 1981-82.

Local authority housing capital allocations 1979-80 to 1988-89 (cash prices)

Local authority	*1979-80 £000*	*1980-81 £000*	*1981-82 £000*	*1982-83 £000*	*1983-84 £000*	*1984-85 £000*	*1985-86 £000*	*1986-87 £000*	*1987-88 £000*	*1988-89 £000*
Alyn and Deeside	1,820	2,540	2,520	2,873	2,922	2,234	2,102	2,148	1,925	1,797
Colwyn	1,990	1,590	1,610	2,342	2,483	2,089	2,046	1,671	1,798	1,662
Delyn	1,280	1,020	1,350	1,681	2,025	1,459	1,225	1,585	1,424	1,576
Glyndwr	1,650	1,610	1,000	1,581	2,345	1,521	1,377	1,311	1,237	1,409
Rhuddlan	690	710	850	1,273	1,189	951	831	858	1,479	2,426
Wrexham Maelor	2,860	3,410	3,230	3,616	3,833	3,746	3,589	5,021	5,526	4,075
Carmarthen	2,240	1,820	2,030	3,823	8,160	3,571	2,898	3,469	3,545	2,531
Ceredigion	2,150	2,080	1,740	3,635	4,478	2,790	2,124	2,502	2,383	2,091
Dinefwr	1,240	1,140	850	1,278	2,334	1,414	924	1,051	1,260	1,446
Llanelli	2,980	2,470	1,950	3,104	3,745	2,737	2,310	2,225	2,428	2,679
Preseli	1,780	1,310	1,740	1,783	3,526	2,862	1,870	1,956	1,842	2,372
South Pembrokeshire	1,710	1,340	1,140	2,365	3,804	2,323	1,694	1,550	3,417	2,472
Blaenau Gwent	8,000	6,500	4,010	10,172	10,236	6,238	5,114	8,515	11,023	6,606
Islwyn	3,470	3,020	2,280	4,685	5,215	4,499	4,699	7,854	6,876	6,183
Monmouth	1,820	1,460	1,850	2,917	4,643	3,599	3,336	3,218	3,081	1,973
Newport	7,430	7,100	6,500	10,956	9,137	6,554	6,084	7,153	6,378	5,848
Torfaen	4,610	3,890	2,890	4,370	4,370	4,002	3,740	5,012	5,112	4,540
Aberconwy	1,700	1,550	1,420	1,708	2,006	1,635	1,308	1,308	1,330	1,301
Arfon	1,980	2,770	2,500	2,936	3,469	2,940	2,107	2,034	2,165	2,698
Dwyfor	820	740	770	1,119	3,032	1,800	605	1,127	1,100	1,314
Meirionnydd	1,220	930	1,020	1,289	3,282	1,352	886	886	920	1,212
Ynys Mon	2,750	2,330	1,370	2,471	5,260	2,350	2,457	3,109	3,528	2,785
Cynon Valley	3,180	2,690	2,430	2,830	4,323	3,090	2,472	3,545	4,829	5,717
Merthyr Tydfil	4,700	3,610	2,704	2,885	3,993	2,521	2,119	3,742	3,821	3,762
Ogwr	6,950	5,080	4,530	6,197	5,870	5,011	4,181	4,117	5,633	4,397
Rhondda	6,900	6,180	4,310	5,546	12,030	7,468	5,972	9,218	10,814	14,463
Rhymney Valley	5,260	5,150	3,650	6,211	5,465	4,412	4,750	7,143	8,564	8,263
Taff Ely	5,540	5,060	5,830	7,020	8,886	4,999	4,253	4,801	6,182	4,643
Brecknock	1,010	980	1,110	1,283	2,851	1,321	1,663	2,087	1,876	584
Montgomeryshire	1,130	1,070	950	1,292	3,393	1,548	1,344	1,503	1,425	1,624
Radnor	420	780	640	1,376	1,593	976	791	925	921	777
Cardiff	13,630	11,730	10,690	13,607	17,835	12,557	12,055	16,000	16,300	13,974
Vale of Glamorgan	2,930	3,350	3,200	4,812	5,333	3,080	2,664	3,229	3,509	3,193
Port Talbot	1,430	1,490	1,800	1,842	1,982	1,586	1,347	2,563	3,069	2,915
Lliw Valley	4,270	3,580	2,760	4,078	3,992	3,220	2,596	2,995	2,963	2,562
Neath	2,030	1,730	1,720	4,118	3,892	2,064	2,151	2,688	3,217	2,515
Swansea	5,670	6,210	6,674	10,760	11,365	9,073	7,460	9,008	8,426	7,623
Total Districts	121,240	110,020	97,618	145,834	184,297	125,592	109,144	139,127	151,326	138,008

Local authority housing capital allocations 1979-80 to 1988-89 (1988-89 prices)

Local authority	*1979-80 £000*	*1980-81 £000*	*1981-82 £000*	*1982-83 £000*	*1983-84 £000*	*1984-85 £000*	*1985-86 £000*	*1986-87 £000*	*1987-88 £000*	*1988-89 £000*
Alyn and Deeside	3,395	4,001	3,613	3,845	3,740	2,722	2,428	2,402	2,045	1,797
Colwyn	3,712	2,504	2,308	3,134	3,178	2,545	2,363	1,869	1,910	1,662
Delyn	2,388	1,607	1,936	2,250	2,592	1,777	1,415	1,773	1,513	1,576
Glyndwr	3,078	2,536	1,434	2,116	3,001	1,853	1,590	1,466	1,314	1,409
Rhuddlan	1,287	1,118	1,219	1,704	1,522	1,159	960	960	1,571	2,426
Wrexham Maelor	5,335	5,371	4,631	4,839	4,906	4,564	4,145	5,616	5,871	4,075
Carmarthen	4,179	2,867	2,911	5,116	10,444	4,350	3,347	3,880	3,767	2,531
Ceredigion	4,011	3,276	2,495	4,864	5,731	3,399	2,453	2,798	2,532	2,091
Dinefwr	2,313	1,796	1,219	1,710	2,987	1,723	1,067	1,175	1,339	1,446
Llanelli	5,559	3,890	2,796	4,154	4,793	3,334	2,668	2,489	2,580	2,679
Preseli	3,321	2,063	2,495	2,386	4,513	3,487	2,160	2,188	1,957	2,372
South Pembrokeshire	3,190	2,111	1,635	3,165	4,869	2,830	1,957	1,734	3,631	2,472
Blaenau Gwent	14,924	10,238	5,750	13,612	13,101	7,600	5,907	9,524	11,712	6,606
Islwyn	6,473	4,757	3,269	6,269	6,675	5,481	5,427	8,784	7,306	6,183
Monmouth	3,395	2,300	2,653	3,904	5,943	4,385	3,853	3,599	3,274	1,973
Newport	13,861	11,183	9,320	14,661	11,694	7,985	7,027	8,000	6,777	5,848
Torfaen	8,600	6,127	4,144	5,848	5,593	4,876	4,320	5,606	4,432	4,540
Aberconwy	3,171	2,441	2,036	2,286	2,567	1,992	1,511	1,463	1,413	1,301
Arfon	3,694	4,363	3,584	3,929	4,440	3,582	2,434	2,275	2,300	2,698
Dwyfor	1,530	1,166	1,104	1,497	3,881	2,193	699	1,260	1,169	1,314
Meirionnydd	2,276	1,465	1,462	1,725	4,201	1,647	1,023	991	978	1,212
Ynys Mon	5,130	3,670	1,964	3,307	6,732	2,863	2,838	3,477	3,749	2,785
Cynon Valley	5,932	4,237	3,484	3,787	5,533	3,764	2,855	3,965	5,131	5,717
Merthyr Tydfil	8,768	5,686	3,877	3,861	5,111	3,071	2,447	4,185	4,060	3,762
Ogwr	12,965	8,001	6,495	8,293	7,513	6,105	4,829	4,605	5,985	4,397
Rhondda	12,872	9,734	6,180	7,422	15,397	9,098	6,898	10,310	11,490	14,463
Rhymney Valley	9,813	8,111	5,233	8,312	6,995	5,375	5,486	7,989	9,099	8,263
Taff Ely	10,335	7,970	8,359	9,394	11,373	6,090	4,912	5,370	6,568	4,643
Brecknock	1,884	1,544	1,592	1,717	3,649	1,609	1,921	2,334	1,993	584
Montgomeryshire	2,108	1,685	1,362	1,729	4,343	1,886	1,552	1,681	1,514	1,624
Radnor	784	1,229	918	1,841	2,039	1,189	914	1,035	979	777

Local authority	1979-80 £000	1980-81 £000	1981-82 £000	1982-83 £000	1983-84 £000	1984-85 £000	1985-86 £000	1986-87 £000	1987-88 £000	1988-89 £000
Cardiff	25,427	18,475	15,327	18,209	22,827	15,298	13,923	17,895	17,319	13,974
Vale of Glamorgan	5,466	5,276	4,588	6,439	6,826	3,752	3,077	3,611	3,728	3,193
Port Talbot	2,668	2,347	2,581	2,465	2,537	1,932	1,556	2,867	3,261	2,915
Lliw Valley	7,966	5,639	3,957	5,457	5,109	3,923	2,998	3,350	3,148	2,562
Neath	3,787	2,725	2,466	5,511	4,981	2,515	2,484	3,006	3,418	2,515
Swansea	10,577	9,781	9,569	14,399	14,546	11,053	8,616	10,075	8,953	7,623
TOTAL DISTRICTS	226,174	173,282	139,964	195,154	235,883	153,005	126,060	155,606	160,784	138,008

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table, taking 1979 as 100, of investment in real terms in manufacturing *(a)* in the north-east and *(b)* for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Atkins: No regional breakdown of manufacturing investment for 1987 and 1988 is yet available. The required information for the period 1979 to 1986 is shown in the following table:

Manufacturing investment[1] in the north-east[2], and in the United Kingdom in constant (1980) prices, as a percentage of the 1979 level

	North-east	United Kingdom
1979	100	100
1980	66	84
1981	42	65
1982	41	61
1983	41	64
1984	47	77
1985	58	83
1986	50	78

[1] Excluding expenditure on assets leased from the financial industries.

[2] The north-east is not a standard region of the United Kingdom but can be defined as the north less Cumbria. It comprises Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

Since 1986, manufacturing investment in the country as a whole has risen sharply; and is predicted to continue rising.

Dolls' Houses (Synthetic Food)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if his Department treats the EEC directive to make illegal the inclusion of items of synthetic food in dolls' houses as falling to be considered by majority vote under the Single European Act; and what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on this issue;

(2) when the directive was submitted by the EEC Commission to make illegal the inclusion of items of synthetic food in dolls' houses; if the proposal is part of the measures to complete the internal market; and in what form Parliament will be asked to consider the proposals.

Mr. Forth: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 14 March at column *128* to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), in which I said that I was proposing to exempt from the proposed Food Imitations (Safety) Regulations imitation food supplied for use in dolls' houses or model scenes or settings.

Professional Services (Advertising)

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the reports of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on restrictions on advertising in the supply of the services of medical practitioners, professionally regulated osteopaths and civil engineering consultants are to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The three reports on advertising restrictions in the professions are published today. The findings of the commission with regard to each one are as follows:

Services of medical practitioners

The commission was asked to investigate and report on the advertising restrictions observed by registered medical practitioners and their effect on the public interest.

The commission finds that observance of the guidance of both the GMC and BMA governing advertising by specialists to members of the public does not operate against the public interest, except in so far as it prevents associations of specialists from responding to direct requests for information from members of the public.

The commission finds that observance of the GMC guidance (in the version currently circulated to members) and the similar BMA guidance restricting advertising by specialists to other doctors, operates against the public interest. During the inquiry the GMC amended its guidance to allow specialists to contact their colleagues as they see fit. The commission considers that these changes remove the adverse effects of this part of the GMC guidance.

The commission notes that during the inquiry the GMC relaxed, but did not entirely remove, restrictions on the ability of doctors or their professional associations to communicate with other bodies or professionals in circumstances where they are not offering medical treatment to patients. The commission finds observance of the remaining restrictions on such contacts imposed by the GMC and BMA operates against the public interest.

The commission finds that observance of those parts of the GMC and BMA guidance which restrict advertising by general practitioners to members of the public operates against the public interest. The commission also finds that one part of the guidance offered by the Royal College of General Practitioners, namely that general practitioners should ensure that their practice leaflets are acceptable to local colleagues, operates against the public interest.

The commission considers that the broad principles that should govern advertising by doctors are that advertising by them should not be of a character that could reasonably be regarded as likely to bring the profession into disrepute and that their advertising should not be such as to abuse the trust of patients or potential patients or exploit their lack of knowledge. It suggests that these principles might be reflected in guidelines for GPs' advertising, that the content of advertisements should be limited to factual information, should be legal, decent, honest and truthful and should not disparage other

doctors or make claims of superiority; that no advertisement should include explicit or implicit claims to cure particular complaints and that GPs should not use "cold calling" or other means of trying to target individual members of the public and should not advertise so frequently as to cause a nuisance to potential patients or put them under pressure.

The Government welcome the conclusions and recommendations of the report and today my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has asked the Director General of Fair Trading to seek, under section 88 of the Fair Trading Act, undertakings from each of the General Medical Council, British Medical Association and Royal College of General Practitioners that it will revise its guidance on advertising, along the lines proposed by the commission and in a form to be agreed with the director general, within six months.

My right hon. and noble Friend has no doubt that the GMC, as the statutory body charged with advising doctors on standards of professional conduct, will implement swiftly the MMC's public interest findings and that the BMA and RCGP will follow a similar line. He does not therefore intend at present to use the order-making powers which are available in respect of these latter bodies.

Services of professionally regulated osteopaths

The commission was asked to investigate and report on the advertising rules observed by regulated osteopaths and the effects of their restriction on the public interest.

There are 12 bodies representing osteopaths with rules that govern advertising by their members. The members of one body, the British Osteopathic Association, are nearly all registerd medical practitioners and as such are bound by the rules of the General Medical Council, which are the subject of the report already discussed. The commission finds the observance of the rules of all the other 11 bodies is against the public interest. The commission has recommended that the rules of those bodies should be no longer observed. The commission has suggested that the 11 bodies should consider the adoption of rules avoiding the detrimental effects identified. The commission considers that the broad principles underlying any new rules should be in accordance with the principles of the British code of advertising practice, should contain nothing which would reasonably be regarded as likely to bring the profession into disrepute, and should not be such as to abuse the trust of potential patients or exploit their lack of knowledge.

The Government welcome the conclusions and recommendations of the report and accordingly my right hon. and noble Friend has asked the Director General of Fair Trading to seek, under section 88 of the Fair Trading Act, undertakings from each of the bodies specified in paragraphs 7.34 and 7.35 of the commission's report that it will within a period of six months revise its rules according to the principles set out in the report and in a form to be agreed with the director general.

If any of the bodies fail to agree to amend their rules in accordance with the public interest findings of the commission there are order-making powers under the Fair Trading Act which may be brought to bear.

Civil engineering consultancy services

The commission was asked to investigate and report on the advertising rules observed by consulting civil engineers and the effects of their restrictions on the public interest.

The commission was primarily concerned with two sets of rules; those of the Institute of Civil Engineers and those of the Association of Consulting Engineers.

The commission finds that observance of the ICE rules by consulting civil engineers is not against the public interest. The commission is concerned, however, that some members of ICE appear to believe that the ICE rules are more restrictive than the interpretation it was given, and the commission has suggested that ICE should take steps to clarify the situation.

The commission finds that the observance of the present ACE rules by its consulting civil engineer members is against the public interest.

The commission considers that ACE should amend its rules to avoid the detrimental effects identified. The broad principles underlying any new rules should be that consulting civil engineers are free to advertise in accordance with the principles of the British code of advertising practice but that such advertising should contain nothing which would reasonably be regarded as likely to bring the profession into disrepute. The commission was told by ACE that its council would shortly be putting revised rules to the membership for approval.

The Government welcome the conclusions and recommendations of the report. My right hon. and noble Friend has asked the Director General of Fair Trading to seek undertakings, under section 88 of the Fair Trading Act, from the ACE that, within six months, it will revise its rules and guidance on advertising in a form to be agreed with the director general on the principles stated in paragraph 7.35 of the report.

Given the proposals which ACE put to the commission, my right hon. and noble Friend believes that the order-making powers which are available under the Act are not appropriate at this time.

My right hon. and noble Friend has also invited the Director General of Fair Trading to discuss with ICE's council how the interpretation of its rules may be better publicised.

Renaval Programme (Plymouth)

Dame Janet Fookes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has for Plymouth to benefit from the Renaval programme for grants to shipbuilding and shiprepair areas.

Mr. Newton: I am sending to the Commission before Easter an application for support for Plymouth amounting to £13·25 million over three years under the Renaval programme, which is financed from the European regional development fund and is intended to mitigate the effects of closures and reductions in employment in shipbuilding/repair areas. Subject to the Commission's approval, the funding will be used in particular to introduce my Department's regional enterprise grants to the area and to support infrastructure projects to develop industrial sites and tourism.

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Mans: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any further progress has been made on the disposal of the subsidiaries of British Shipbuilders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have agreed with British Shipbuilders that it may dispose of the assets and goodwill of its subsidiary British Shipbuilders Training Ltd to a management team. This will retain a valuable training resource at Govan on the Clyde which is already closely involved with the youth training scheme and will be increasingly involved with the employment training programme.

I have also agreed with British Shipbuilders that it may open negotiations with William Steward (Holdings) Ltd as preferred bidder for the disposal of its pipework and electrical supply subsidiary Sunderland Forge Services Ltd. Finally, British Shipbuilders' preferred bidder for its design and computing subsidiary Marine Design Consultants Ltd based at Sunderland and Dundee has withdrawn. I have agreed with the corporation's chairman that he should invite further bids no later than Friday 14 April.

Consumer Protection (European Community)

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which European Economic Community Commissioners are responsible for aspects of consumer affairs in addition to the Commissioner for Consumer Protection; and which Commissioner is responsible for consumer price matters.

Mr. Forth: I have placed in the Library of the House a background note produced by the Commission, which lists the new Commissioners and their portfolios. While lead responsibility rests with Mr. Van Miert, the Commissioner for Consumer Protection, others with responsibility for areas of policy affecting consumers include Sir Leon Brittan, Dr. Bangemann and Mr. MacSharry. In line with the Council resolution adopted in October 1986, the consumer interest needs to be taken into account in all proposals which affect those interests.

TRANSPORT

Coastguard Service

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the current levels of overtime payments being made in the coastguard service, he will review his decision to reduce the operational complement of the service by 28.

Mr. Portillo: The amount of overtime worked by Her Majesty's coastguard over recent years has declined to a stable level. The reduction in the overall watchkeeping complement is commensurate with the merging of the area responsibilities of coastguard stations, and it is not anticipated that the total level of overtime payments will be unduly affected.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that employees of the coastguard service are not required to monitor and work with visual display units for excessively prolonged periods; and what is the maximum continuous period of work with display units allowed.

Mr. Portillo: Watchkeeping coastguards work 12-hour shifts, including a one and a half hour meal break, which may be taken in one or more parts. Whilst the use of visual display units has increased, it is unusual for any individual to spend more than 5-10 per cent. of the watch using one. This percentage may be exceeded during busy periods. Although there is no laid down maximum continuous period of work, there are regular breaks, and duties within the watch are varied.

Parachuting Safety

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce controls to separate hobby parachutists' landing areas and those of aircraft landing or taking off.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The air accidents investigation branch, assisted by the British Parachute Association, is investigating the recent accident in which a parachutist fell onto a taxiing aircraft and was killed. The investigation will determine whether the current controls were applied and whether they are adequate. The introduction of any further controls will depend on the recommendation arising from the accident investigation.

Thamesline River Services

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions there have been concerning the support from public funds of the Thamesline river services in central London; what decisions have been made; and what sums have been allocated to this service in the year 1989-90.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on 23 February at column *729*. The estimated support from public funds in the year 1989-90 is £400,000.

Bus Miles (London)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what would be the cost of doubling the number of bus miles travelled in London.

Mr. Portillo: The cost of doubling bus miles in London cannot realistically be assessed. In addition to substantial investment in vehicles' premises, facilities and staff, unknown factors include the routing and type of services provided, the demand for them and the revenues generated. Decisions about the appropriate level of bus services for London are matters for London Regional Transport.

Voyage Data Recorder

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are to be taken by the marine directorate to monitor the performance of the newly developed voyage data recorder; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has jointly funded, with Lloyd's Register of Shipping, the development of this voyage data recorder. Consideration is now being given to additional funding to carry out further research and to monitor the performance and reliability of the recorder in service.

Ship Crew Manning Levels

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning reductions of crew manning levels in relation to ship safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Many ships carry voluntary minimum safe manning certificates issued by the Department. In addition, the larger passenger ships are required to carry approved crew muster lists. The Department has received a number of representations from Members of this House, the seafarers' union and others concerning the reduction of crew manning levels in relation to ship safety. If necessary, marine surveyors inspect the vessel to ensure that it can be operated in a safe manner.

Flight Deck Crewing

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in relation to safe flight deck crewing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Safe flight deck crewing is a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority, which has the statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of civil aviation. I understand that the Civil Aviation Authority's requirements comply with internationally recognised criteria.

Marine Examination Fees

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received in response to proposals to increase marine examination fees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Two representations were received, which did not oppose the proposed average increase of 12 per cent. in marine examination fees, which is to be implemented on 1 April and which is broadly in line with inflation since the last changes in these fees. A third representation proposed that these and certain other fees should be abolished. We believe, however, that the costs of such services should be borne by those who use them and not by the taxpayer.

Aeronautical Safety

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies have been undertaken to ensure that the move of frequency for aeronautical radar can be effected without prejudice to aircraft safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman puts his question to the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority which, together with the Ministry of Defence, is responsible for the national air traffic services.

Single Line Junctions

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of junctions between double track railway routes where the former double junction has been replaced by a single track line switch and associated crossover, together with the number of such layouts where the short single line section is protected by a safety neck; and whether he has asked the railways inspectorate to carry out an assessment of the safety implications of such junctions.

Mr. Portillo: Information regarding the precise number of single line junctions, and those protected by a safety neck, is not readily available. These junctions have been used extensively throughout the British Rail network for many years. Whether or not this type of layout was in any way a contributory factor to the recent accident in Glasgow is a matter for the public inquiry, a starting date for which will be announced shortly.

Vehicle Mileages

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to respond to the proposals put to him by the Director General of Fair Trading to combat the practice of clocking vehicle mileages.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have today written to Sir Gordon Borrie. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library.

While deploring this criminal practice the Government do not believe that the expensive system proposed for collecting and storing data in order to deter clocking would be sufficiently reliable to warrant the cost and bureaucracy involved. The mileage information would not carry conviction with the public. We believe it may be possible to devise a voluntary alternative scheme that is more accurately targeted against vehicles more susceptible to clocking, for instance relatively new, high-mileage vehicles. It has been suggested to the Office of Fair Trading's used car working group that further work should be done on the circumstances and vehicles most likely to lead to clocking, and the true scale of the problem.

Services are already provided by private sector companies to investigate mileages where prudent purchasers wish to double-check on condition and value before buying. These could meet the public's needs better than the blanket system proposed by the group. We believe that the industry can do more to develop an odometer which cannot be covertly tampered with or replaced.

It would be better to make clocking much more difficult at the outset than create a burdensome system that still cannot guarantee to detect the offence. There is much that the industry can so more cost-effectively do than Government to combat clocking.

Computer Safety

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures have been undertaken to ensure protection from unauthorised penetration into any parts of the rail network that are currently computerised.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 15 March 1989]:* I understand that British Rail's physical and electronic protection of its computerised systems is such that any unauthorised penetration would be extremely unlikely to have any effect on safety. It would not be appropriate to give details. Protection of information held on computers is wholly a matter for British Rail. If my hon. Friend has any particular problems in mind perhaps she would approach British Rail.

MARPOL Convention

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the numbers of personnel and vessels that will be made available by his Department for enforcement of annex V of the marine pollution convention within British territorial waters.

Mr. Portillo *[holding reply 13 March 1989]:* Department of Transport marine surveyors who already visit ships to carry out surveys for the issue of safety and pollution certificates and who inspect ships for port state control will ascertain that arrangements for complying with Annex V of MARPOL 73/78 have been made. Additionally, surveyors will verify that port reception facilities for garbage are adequate.

The use of vessels to ensure compliance is not envisaged.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Agriculture and Food Research Council

71. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the future of financial resources for the Agriculture and Food Research Council.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend recently announced an allocation from the science budget of £74·57 million to the Agricultural and Food Research Council for 1989-90. The planning figures for the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 are £78·25 million and £81·74 million respectively. The allocation for 1989-90 is 22 per cent. higher than provision in the current financial year.

Consumers (Consultation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements there are for consulting consumers on the work and decisions of his Department.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Education Reform Act has created new opportunities for parents, employers and others in the community to be directly involved in education. In schools and colleges of further education governing bodies, which include employers and elected parents, will have responsibility for directing the policies of the institutions and managing the budgets delegated by local education authorities. We have also given parents the opportunity to seek grant-maintained status for the schools attended by their children. Over 3 million copies of a booklet designed for parents "Our Changing Schools" have been distributed: this booklet encourages parents to take a practical interest in their children's education.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Ms. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list *(a)* those local education authorities which include and *(b)* those which do not include head teachers in their calculation of pupil to teacher ratios in primary schools.

Mr. Butcher: The pupil/teacher ratios published by the Department for each local education authority in England include all qualified teachers including head teachers. The number of pupils and teachers is derived from returns made to the Department by schools in January of each year. A statistical bulletin giving the pupil/teacher ratio for each local education authority in England in January 1988 will be published shortly.

City Technology Colleges

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in paying grant monies under the city technology college programme for improving facilities at a school whose governors have given notice under section 14 of the Education Act 1944 to discontinue voluntary status, he will make it his policy to ensure that the governors retain the discretion to withdraw that notice.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend has made clear the factors on which he will need to satisfy himself before reaching a decision on any proposals from the governors of a voluntary school to discontinue that school in order to make the premises available for the establishment of a CTC. These include agreement in principle on a funding agreement, including grant towards capital costs, which would be recoverable in the event of the CTC failing to open for any reason.

Advisory Board for the Research Councils

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the membership of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The present members of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils are:

Professor Sir David Phillips KBE FRS (Chairman)—Professor of Molecular Biophysics, University of Oxford.
Professor E. Ash CBE FRS FEng—Rector, Imperial College, University of London.
Professor R. L. Bell CB—Director-General of ADAS, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.
Professor Margaret Boden FBA—Professor of Philosophy and Psychology, University of Sussex.
Dr. R. F. Coleman—Chief Engineer and Scientist, Department of Trade and Industry.
Sir Roger Elliott FRS—Secretary to the Delegates and Chief Executive, Oxford University Press.
Mr. J. Fairclough FEng—Chief Scientific Adviser, Cabinet Office.
Dr. D. J. Fisk—Chief Scientist, Department of the Environment.
Mr. J. S. Flemming—Executive Director, Bank of England.
Professor J. L. Knill—Chairman, Natural Environment Research Council.
Professor June Lloyd FRCP—Professor, Institute of Child Health, University of London.
Professor E. W. J. Mitchell CBE FRS—Chairman, Science and Engineering Research Council.
Mr. J. R. S. Morris CBE FEng (Deputy Chairman)—Chairman, Brown and Root (UK) Ltd.
Professor H. Newby—Chairman, Economic and Social Research Council.
Professor Sir Richard Norman FRS—Scientific Adviser, Department of Energy.
Professor E. R. Oxburgh, FRS—Chief Scientific Adviser, Ministry of Defence.
Profesor R. W. O'Grady, CBE—Chief Scientist, Department of Health.
Sir Charles Reece—formerly Research and Technology Director, ICI.
Dr. D. A. Rees, FRS—Secretary, Medical Research Council.
Dr. N. J. Shackleton, FRS—Director of Quaternary Research, University of Cambridge.
Sir David Smith, FRS—Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Edinburgh.
Professor W. D. P. Stewart, DSc, FRSE, FRS—Secretary, Agricultural and Food Research Council.
Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer, KBE, FRS—Chairman, University Grants Committee.
Sir Francis Tombs, FEng—Chairman, Rolls-Royce Ltd.; Chairman, ACOST.

Mr. J. M. M. Vereker—Department of Education and Science (Assessor).
Mr. D. A. Wilkinson—Department of Education and Science (Assessor).

The advisory board was established by the Secretary of State for Education and Science in 1972. It has the following terms of reference:—

(a) To advise the Secretary of State on his responsibilities for civil science with particular reference to the research council system, its articulation with the universities and departments, the support of postgraduate students and the proper balance between international and national scientific activity;

(b) To advise the Secretary of State on the allocation of the Science Budget among the research councils and other bodies, taking into account funds paid to them by customer departments and the purposes to which such funds are devoted;

(c) To promote close liaison between councils and the users of their research.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the remit of the committee of the advisory board for the research councils investigating the funding of the biological sciences in Britain has been extended to include a review of the research councils themselves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Advisory Board for the Research Councils announced the following terms of reference for its review of research councils' responsibilities for biological sciences, on 22 June 1988:

1. To review the disposition between Research Councils of responsibilities for research and training in the biological sciences and present arrangements for co-ordination.
2. To recommend any changes, in the present disposition of responsibilities and co-ordinating arrangements, that are needed to improve efficiency and effectiveness—taking account of national needs, trends in the biological sciences, and implications for Councils' responsibilities in related fields.

I understand that these have not been changed.

HOME DEPARTMENT

National Stud

70. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek powers to privatise the national stud; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: No.

Prisoners (Her Majesty's Pleasure)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been sentenced to be detained at Her Majesty's pleasure in each year since 1959; and if he will state in each case (i) whether they are still detained and (ii) how many years of imprisonment they served before they were released.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The information requested on those sentenced to be detained during Her Majesty's pleasure is published annually in "Criminal statistics England and Wales", (table S2.1 (A) of the latest issue, for 1987 Cm. 498) copies of which are in the Library. Information about the length of time detained in institutions other than prison service establishments is not readily available. The average time spent under sentence in prison service establishments by persons detained during Her Majesty's pleasure was between six and a half and seven years for those first released on licence in the years 1978 to 1987.

Including those recalled following an earlier release on licence, the population of such detainees held in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 31 December 1988 was about 200. Provision of further information would incur disproportionate cost.

Firearms Safety (Thames Valley)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Thames Valley police as to what were the security arrangements in operation prior to the granting and variations of the firearms certificate issued to the late Michael Ryan for the safekeeping of the rubber stamp of the signature of the appropriate chief officer of police of the Thames Valley police and as to what additional security precautions have been taken concerning such rubber stamps since the Hungerford tragedy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Arrangements for the safekeeping of office equipment are a matter entirely for individual chief officers of police.

Television and Radio Programmes (Disabled People)

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of hours of broadcast programmes which *(a)* are subtitled and *(b)* have a sign language interpreter on (i) BBC1, (ii) BBC2, (iii) ITV and (iv) Channel 4 in the last year.

Mr. Renton: I understand that the BBC and IBA broadcast respectively approximately 1,650 and 1,560 hours of subtitled programmes last year for reception on teletext sets. No precise information is available on open-caption sub-titling or on signing.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of hours of broadcast programmes on *(a)* BBC1, *(b)* BBC2, *(c)* ITV, *(d)* Channel 4, *(e)* BBC Radio and *(f)* independent local radio, which are specifically directed at people with disabilities, during the last year.

Mr. Renton: I understand that the number of hours of such programmes broadcast last year on BBC television, ITV and Channel 4, and on BBC radio were approximately 40, 35 and 53 respectively. In addition, many other programmes featured items directed both at people with disabilities and at the general audience. No precise information is available for independent local radio.

Police (Leicestershire)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the names of the chief constables of Leicestershire since 1959 and the years they served in that capacity.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

	Date
Mr. J. A. Taylor CBE, QPM, DL	1950-1972
Mr. A. Goodson OBE, QPM	1972-1986
Mr. M. J. Hirst QPM	1986-

Taxi Driving Licences

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the frequency of subject access requests to police forces from drivers in connection with applications for taxi driving licences.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. Applicants for subject access under the Data Protection Act are not required to state the reasons for their application.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to release data subjects from the obligation to apply to police forces for subject access under the terms of the Data Protection Act to procure information for transmission to a third party; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. There is no such obligation under the Data Protection Act.

Concessionary Television Licences

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his most recent estimate of the number of people benefiting from £5 concessionary television licences.

Mr. Renton: The concessionary licence fee is now payable per household, rather than per individual. It is estimated that on 31 January 1989 about 808,500 people in 634,110 households were covered by the concessionary licence.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the change in the number of people who would qualify for a concessionary television licence as a result of changes in the qualifying regulations effective from May 1988.

Mr. Renton: It is not possible to estimate the change in the number of people who may be able to qualify for the concessionary licence. No one who had the concession before May 1988 lost it as a result of the change in the regulations. Since May 1988 the number of people covered by the licence has increased by about 44,000.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how local authority sheltered housing provided from conversion of tower blocks into vertical warden schemes with a flat dedicated for communal use will be treated in respect of the concessionary television licence scheme.

Mr. Renton: Tower blocks are treated in the same way as any other sheltered housing schemes, and can qualify for the concessionary licence provided they satisfy the conditions set out in the regulations.

Electoral Register

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *765*, he will update the 1985-86 review of the arrangements to sell the electoral register to include consideration of *(a)* the ability of the electoral registrar being able to access copies of the information held by the community charge officer and *(b)* the restriction placed on the sale of the extract of the community charge register; if he will publish the 1985-86 review; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: To the first part of the question the answer is no, for the reasons given in my previous answer. Copies of the consultation paper which instituted the 1985-86 review were deposited in the Library in December 1984; subsequently, regulations authorising the supply of the register in computer-compatible form were debated in the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments on 21 January 1986.

Police (Sex Discrimination)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought against police forces for non-compliance with the Sex Discrimination Act 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Complaints alleging non-compliance with the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 are dealt with under the civil law by applications to industrial tribunals. I understand from the Equal Opportunities Commission that it is not possible to identify applications made against police forces.

Broadcasting

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the implications for community programming of proposals outlined in the White Paper, "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality".

Mr. Renton: We have now had over 2,700 responses to the broadcasting White Paper, including a number from charities, voluntary organisations and other organisations with a particular interest in community programming. We are considering very carefully all the responses we have received.

Police (Disciplinary Offences)

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time police officers are suspended from duty awaiting the results of investigations into alleged disciplinary offences in *(a)* Cheshire police, *(b)* Greater Manchester police and *(c)* Merseyside police; how many police officers are currently suspended from duty for this reason in each of the three forces; and, over the past five years, how many of those suspended have subsequently had no charges or disciplinary action taken against them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

Average length of time of suspension (calculated over the most recent convenient 12-month period):
(a) 11 months, *(b)* 7·4 months, *(c)* 9·6 months

Number of officers currently suspended
(a) 1, *(b)* 9, *(c)* 7.

Over the last five years, number of suspended oficers who subsequently had no charges or disciplinary proceedings brought against them

(a) 0, out of a total of 10 officers.
(b) 2, out of a total of 57 officers, including 9 whose cases are still under consideration. (Information relates to period from 1 January 1985 only—previous year's figures not readily available).
(c) 3, out of a total of 41 officers, including 6 whose cases are still under consideration.

Prisoners (AIDS)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has authorised the setting up of an isolation area in the hospital wing at Her Majesty's prison, Winson Green, for prisoners known to be HIV positive.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Birmingham is one of a number of prison service establishments with medical facilities which the director of prison medical services considers to be suitable for the care, support and (when necessary for their own protection) isolation of prisoners with AIDS-related illness or other infectious conditions.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers at Her Majesty's prison, Winson Green *(a)* requested and *(b)* received HIV tests in 1987 and 1988; and with what results.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Department does not disclose information of this nature.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what guidelines he has issued to prison governors about the association of prisoners known to be HIV positive with other prisoners;

(2) what guidelines he has issued to prison governors on the confinement of prisoners found to be HIV positive; and whether he will make a statement;

(3) what is his policy on the segregation of prisoners known to be HIV positive.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Department's policy on the management of such prisoners follows the broad principles of the Government's general policy but necessarily takes account of the special nature of prisons and the prison environment. Prisoners who are identified as HIV antibody positive and have no symptoms of illness are located in single accommodation or accommodated with other antibody positive prisoners, but there is no requirement that they should otherwise be precluded from associating with prisoners who are not so identified.

The guidelines to local management stress the importance of enabling HIV antibody positive prisoners to participate as fully as possible in normal prison life. It has also been made clear both to management and to staff that prisoners who have no symptoms of illness need not be located in the prison hospital or other special accommodation. However, the management of individual cases is a matter which must be decided by the governor and medical officer in the light of local circumstances and the nature and needs of the individual prisoner.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what protective clothing is available at Her Majesty's prison, Winson Green, for the use of prison officers when restraining prisoners known to be HIV positive.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In January 1987 arrangements were made for all prison service establishments in England and Wales to be supplied with sets of protective clothing comprising a zip-up one piece overall, rubber surgical gloves, a paper face mask and plastic eye goggles.

Drug Abuse (TV Advertisement)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will instruct the Independent Broadcasting Authority to withdraw the current advertising campaign relating to drugs on independent commercial radio stations to ensure that foul language is not used on the air.

Mr. Renton: No. Under section 9 of the Broadcasting Act 1981, the Independent Broadcasting Authority has responsibility for drawing up a code of advertising standards and practice and for ensuring that programme contracts comply with it.

Bail Information Schemes

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to expand bail information schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: By April 1990 we expect bail information schemes to have been extended from the present 13 to 20 courts.

Bail Hostels

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to increase the usage of bail hostels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Resources are being provided for the creation of about 500 new bail places at approved hostels by April 1991. The attention of the courts was drawn, in Home Office circular 25/1988 issued on 11 May 1988, to the range of bail hostel accommodation facilities available for persons whom they might be considering for the grant of bail.

A consultation paper on "Bail Accommodation and Secure Bail Hostels" was issued on 13 February 1989. The paper discusses the purpose and use of existing accommodation for bailees and the concept of a more secure type of hostel for those defendants who may currently be remanded in custody because of a lack of suitable bail places. The closing date for responses is 9 May 1989.

Community and Probationary Schemes

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to encourage the further use of community and probationary schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: In "Tackling Offending: An Action Plan", issued to the probation service in August 1988 following publication of the Green Paper "Punishment, Custody and the Community", the Home Office gave guidelines for enhancing and promoting the use of non-custodial penalties, including the probation order. Fach area probation service was asked to take the lead in establishing a local action plan for work with young adult offenders, on the basis of these guidelines.

The Home Office has introduced national standards for community service orders which are due to come into

effect on 1 April. Their purpose is to increase the confidence of the courts and the public in community service orders by ensuring that the orders are demanding and that they are strictly enforced.

The Government believe that there is considerable scope for increasing the use of probation and community service orders for offenders who would otherwise receive custodial sentences.

Trial Deadlines

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans for the introduction of wide-scale application of trial deadlines: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) on 8 February at column *676*.

Remand (Minor Offenders)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to ensure that minor offenders are not given remand; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 23 February at column *393*.

Remand System

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations took place with officers in the prison service during the course of the preparation of the report on the practicality of private sector involvement in the remand system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There was extensive consultation and discussion with prison staff at all levels including trade union representatives. Details are given in appendix II of the "Report to the Home Office on the Practicality of Private Sector Involvement in the Remand System" by Deloitte Haskins and Sells (1 March 1989), a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Football Matches (Arrests)

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he can provide figures giving the number of arrests made during league football matches for each season from 1979-80 to the present time;

(2) if he will make it his policy in future to ensure that figures for arrests made at football grounds are kept separately for arrests made inside and outside grounds, respectively.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The number of arrests made at Football League matches each season from 1984-85, when the Association of Chief Police Officers first collated these figures, is as follows:

Season	*Total arrests*
1984-85	[1]5,517
1985-86	4,143
1986-87	5,531
1987-88	6,106

[1] Includes Divisions 1 and 2 only.

These figures do not distinguish between arrests made inside grounds and those directly connected with matches made outside. Nor are the figures confined to arrests made only during the time a match was being played. Any further sub-division of these figures would be a matter for Association of Chief Police Officers.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he can provide figures for *(a)* the number of arrests made at Wimbledon football club as a percentage of the gate and *(b)* the corresponding average figures for the football league as a whole for each season from 1979-80 to the present time.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available figures are as follows:

	Arrests	*Attendance*	*Arrests as a proportion of attendance percentage*
1984-85			
Wimbledon	123	92,920	0·13
Total league clubs (divisions 1 and 2 only)	5,517	13,839,261	0·04
1985-86			
Wimbledon	7	95,793	0·01
Total league clubs	4,143	16,438,757	0·02
1986-87			
Wimbledon	35	163,652	0·02
Total league clubs	5,531	17,427,601	0·03
1987-88			
Wimbledon	49	159,691	0·03
Total league clubs	6,106	17,968,965	0·03

Television Advertising

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to change the current statutory ban on unreasonable discrimination by television companies against advertisers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No.

NORTHERN IRELAND

RUC and Army Raids

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many properties have been searched by the armed forces and the Royal Ulster Constabulary during each of the last five years;

(2) if a record is kept of the denominational affiliation of the householders whose properties have been searched by the armed forces and the Royal Ulster Constabulary during the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The available information on searches of premises under section 15 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 is as follows:

Year	Army		RUC
	Occupied	Unoccupied	
1984	Not available		Not available
1985	104	58	Not available
1986	137	41	1,818
1987	393	72	2,474
1988	[1]749	[1]195	4,136

[1]These figures are still subject to confirmation.

The majority of searches conducted by the Army would have been in conjunction with the RUC and are also counted in their figures.

Information relating to the religion of the householder is not kept by the police. Although it is recorded by the Army at the time of the search, it could not be made available without disproportionate cost.

Select Committees (Recommendations)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Select Committee recommendations have been made about, and how many accepted, by his Department since June 1987.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Only one Select Committee recommendation has been made about this Department, and then indirectly. The recommendation was in fact mainly relevant to the Department of Social Security and was not accepted by them or us.

Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation by his Department in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for 1989-90.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The total sum paid out in fees to outside organisations in the furtherance of privatisation is:

Year	£
1979-80	nil
1980-81	nil
1981-82	nil
1982-83	nil
1983-84	nil
1984-85	nil
1985-86	52,380
1986-87	4,298
1987-88	2,411

Precise figures for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are not yet available.

Kincora Boys' Home

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many former residents of the Kincora boys' home have received compensation payments from the Eastern health board for assaults; how many former residents have made claims; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 15 March 1989]:* Eleven claims for compensation have been received by health and social services boards from former residents of Kincora boys' home. To date three claims have been settled and payment has already been made jointly by the Eastern and Northern health and social services boards in respect of one of these. The question of compensation is entirely a matter for settlement between the parties concerned.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Frank Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for *(a)* the estimated expenditure by the Treasury on press and public relations during 1988-89 and *(b)* the budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The estimated expenditure for the current year is £539,162; the budget provision for 1989-90 is £559,980.

Central Office of Information

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total estimated cost of work put out by the Central Office of Information to private agencies this year; what it was in 1987-88; and what it is estimated to be in 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The cost of work put out by the Central Office of Information on behalf of other Government Departments to private agencies is as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	114·6
1988-89	[1]113·2

[1] Estimated.

Detailed decisions on estimated expenditure by COI on behalf of other Government Departments for 1989-90 is a matter for departmental Ministers and the amount to be put out to private agencies is not yet known.

Employer Housing Grants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was *(a)* the number, *(b)* the value and *(c)* the cost in revenue forgone, of tax-free employer grants to employees moving to higher cost housing areas in each year this scheme has been in force; and what is his estimate for the current year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that reliable estimates are not available.

Civil Servants (Allowances and Pensions)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many pensioner civil servants receive indexed allowances and pensions.

Mr. Brooke: Principal Civil Service pension scheme pensions, in common with other public service pensions, are index-linked under the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971, as amended. There were about 381,000 such pensions in payment to retired civil servants during 1988-89.

Netherlands Antilles (Double Taxation)

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether a new double taxation convention has been negotiated with the Netherlands Antilles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As foreshadowed in the Inland Revenue press release of 24 June 1988, the United Kingdom Government gave notice of termination of the existing convention by 30 June 1988 in accordance with the provisions of that convention. The existing convention will, therefore, cease to have effect in the United Kingdom from April 1989. Discussions are continuing at official level about a new double taxation convention. Whatever the outcome of these discussions, the Government propose, in accordance with the undertaking given in the press release, to introduce provisions for this year's Finance Bill to preserve the existing exemption from tax of interest paid from the United Kingdom to the Netherlands Antilles to fund the payment of interest on Eurobonds issued by Netherlands Antilles finance subsidiaries before 26 July 1984. These provisions will apply to interest payments paid from the United Kingdom on or after 1 April 1989.

Charities

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes the Government have introduced since 1979 to benefit charities financially.

Mr. Lilley: Successive Finance Acts, and the measures announced in the Budget on March 14 will have:

(i) reduced the period of charitable covenants qualifying for tax relief from "over six" to "over three" years (1980);

(ii) would allow heritage and conservation charities to give covenanted members free or cheap entry to properties without loss of tax relief on covenants (1989 Budget);

(iii) introduced higher rate income tax relief for charitable covenants with a £3,000 limit (1980); increased the qualifying limit to £5,000 (1983); and to £10,000 (1985); and abolished the limit completely in 1986;

(iv) raised the capital transfer tax exemption limit for gifts to charities on or within one year of death from £100,000 to £200,000 (1980) and then to £250,000 (1982) before abolishing the limit completely in 1983;

(v) provided in place of reduced rate relief, a complete exemption from stamp duty for all transfers to charities, whether by sale or gift (1982);

(vi) given tax relief for employers costs met by a company during a period of secondment to a charity (1983), and extended that to all employers (1984);

(vii) introduced relief for single donations by non-close companies (1986);

(viii) introduced VAT zero rating for cars leased to the disabled (1984). The Budget would exempt such cars from car tax as well;

(ix) extended the range of specialised goods and services eligible for VAT zero rating when acquired by charities (eg medicinal products (1986)). The Budget extends this relief to sterilising equipment and to classified advertising;

(x) largely shielded charities from the effect of the ECJ judgement on UK zero-rates by zero-rating fuel and power and new construction for charities' non-business purposes; and by not giving landlords the option to tax rent from charities non-business buildings other than offices and by phasing in over 5 years options to tax the rent on charities' business and office accommodation;

(xi) the Budget exempted from VAT fund-raising events by charities;

(xii) introduced the payroll giving scheme (1986) with an annual limit of £100, to operate from April 1987. The limit was subsequently raised to £120 (1987) and doubled to £240 (1988). The Budget would double this limit again to £480.

In addition, the 1988 Local Government Finance Act provides for charities to be relieved from April 1990 of at minimum 80 per cent. of their business rate due.

It is estimated that the total amount of tax repaid to charities in respect of income from which tax has been deducted increased from £130 million in 1978-79 to some £400 million in 1987-88; this was itself an increase of £60 million compared with 1986-87. The Government provide substantial support in grants as well as in tax relief. The total level of grants increased by over 90 per cent. in real terms between 1979-80 and 1986-87 when it stood at £1,173 million.

THE ARTS

Victoria and Albert Museum

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether staff from his Department have met the director of the Victoria and Albert museum to discuss staffing in the *(a)* last three months and *(b)* last six months.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* The organisation and staffing of the Victoria and Albert museum are matters for the director and trustees of the museum.

The director has explained to me and to my Department the objectives of the plans announced by the museum on 27 January. I fully support those objectives.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Service College

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the criteria on which the Civil Service college arranges sessions for new members of the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Most induction training for civil servants is carried out by Departments for their own staff. College courses are designed to meet the needs of particular groups of more senior staff, administration trainees and professional groups of whom there are only a few new entrants in any one Department each year.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide figures showing the total amount of Government aid which has been sent to Ethiopia to help fight the spread of meningitis.

Mr. Chris Patten: Over the last month and in response to requests from several British voluntary agencies, we have provided over £500,000 for vaccines used to combat the current meningitis epidemic. This includes our share of assistance provided by the European Community, also for vaccines.

Japan

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Minister of State's discussions in Japan on Japanese rain forest policy.

Mr. Chris Patten: I raised British concern over the destruction of the rainforest with both Japan's aid loan agency and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both stressed that Japan is paying increasing attention to the environment in its aid programmes. Japanese officials have paid several visits to the Overseas Development Administration to study our environmental assessment procedures.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Robin Cook To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the value of the basic retirement pension as a proportion of average earnings in April 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not yet available.

War Pensions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many representations he has received from war pensioners or war pensioners' organisations on the reduction of the full war pension disregard for housing benefit to £5 from April 1988;

(2) if he will list the local authorities which have abandoned or modified discretionary housing benefit enchancements for war pensioners after the withdrawal of a full disregard in April 1988; and if he will estimate the number of war pensioners affected by such abandonments or modifications;

(3) if he will estimate the total savings made as a result of disregarding £5 of each war pension for housing benefit purposes after April 1988 rather than the total amount as before;

(4) if he will list the local authorities who exercised a discretionary scheme to pay housing benefit at a higher rate to war pensioners prior to April 1988; and what is the number of war pensioners benefiting from such schemes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Prior to April 1988 the first £4 of a war pension was disregarded in housing benefit but local authorities had discretion to enhance the scheme—for example by disregarding war pensions or other income in full—at their own cost. The local authorities which operated such schemes are listed at A. From April 1988 discretionary local schemes other than variation of the disregard for war pensions were abolished and the statutory war pension disregard was increased to £5. Although local authorities retain the discretion to disregard war pensions in full at their own cost some chose to abandon or modify their local scheme in April 1988, as listed at B.

I regret that information on the numbers affected by local schemes is not available.

A. Local authorities who operated a local scheme for war pensioners prior to April 1988

Aberdeen
Adur
Amber Valley
Angus
Annandale and Eskdale
Argyll and Bute
Aylesbury Vale
Banff and Buchan
Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Basingstoke
Bearsden and Milngavie
Berwickshire
Bexley
Birmingham
Blaby
Blackburn
Blackpool
Boothferry
Borders
Boston
Bournemouth
Bracknell
Bradford
Braintree
Breckland
Brecknock
Brent
Brentwood
Brighton
Chorley
Christchurch
Clackmannan
Clydebank
Clydesdale
Corby
Coventry
Craven
Crawley
Crewe and Nantwich
Cumbernauld
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth District Council
Cumnock and Doon
Cunninghame
Dacorum
Darlington
Daventry
Delyn
Derby
Doncaster
Dover
Dudley
Dumbarton
Dundee
Dunfermline
Glenrothes DC
Gloucester
Gordon
Gosport
Great Yarmouth
Guildford
Hackney
Hambleton
Hamilton
Hammersmith
Harborough
Haringey
Harlow
Harrow
Hart
Hartlepool
Havant
Havering
Hereford
Hertsmere
High Peak
Highland
Hillingdon
Hinckley and Bosworth
Horsham
Hounslow
Macclesfield
Maidstone
Maldon
Medina
Meirionnydd
Mendip
Bromley
Broxbourne
Broxtowe
Burnley
Bury
Caithness
Calderdale
Cambridge
Camden
Cardiff
Carlisle
Castle Point
Central Regional Council (Scotland)
Ceredigion
Charnwood
Chelmsford
Cheltenham
Chester
Chesterfield
Chiltern
Durham
Dwyfor
Ealing
East Cambridgeshire
East Devon
East Hampshire
East Kilbride
East Kilbride Development Corporation
East Lothian
East Staffordshire
Eastleigh
Eastwood
Edinburgh
Ellesmere Port
Elmbridge
Enfield
Epsom and Ewell
Ettrick and Lauderdale
Exeter
Falkirk
Fenland
Fife
Forest of Dean
Gedling
Glasgow
Huntingdon
Inverclyde
Inverness
Islington
Kennet
Kilmarnock and Loudoun
Kincardine and Deeside
Kingston-upon-Thames
Kingswood
Kirkcaldy
Kirklees
Knowsley
Kyle and Carrick
Lambeth
Langbaurgh
Leicester
Lewes
Lewisham
Lincoln
Livingston Development Corp
Lliw Valley
Lochaber
Lothian
Luton
Merton
Mid Bedfordshire
Mid Devon
Middlesbrough
Midlothian
Milton Keynes

Mole Valley
Monklands
Montgomery
Moray
Motherwell
Nairn
Neath
New Forest
Newbury
Newham
Newport
Nithsdale
North Bedfordshire
North Cornwall
North Dorset
North East Fife
North Hertfordshire
North Kesteven
North Shropshire
Reigate and Banstead
Renfrew
Rhondda
Rhuddlan
Ribble Valley
Richmond upon Thames
Richmondshire
Ross and Cromarty
Rossendale
Rother
Roxburgh
Rugby
Runnymede
Rushcliffe
Ryedale
Salford
Sandwell
Scarborough
Scottish Special HA
Sedgefield
Sefton
Selby
Shepway
Shetland
Skye and Lochalsh
Surrey Heath
Sutherland
Sutton
Swale
Swansea
Tameside
Tandridge
Tayside
Tendring
Test Valley
Tewkesbury
Thamesdown
Three Rivers
Thurrock
Tonbridge and Malling
Tower Hamlets
Tunbridge Wells
Tweeddale
Vale of Glamorgan
Vale of White Horse
Vale Royal
Wakefield
Walsall
Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
North Tyneside
North West Leicester
North Wiltshire
Northampton
Nottingham
Nuneaton and Bedworth
Oadby and Wigston
Ogwr
Oldham
Orkney
Penwith
Perth and Kinross
Peterborough
Plymouth
Poole
Port Talbot
Portsmouth
Radnor
Redditch
Slough
Solihull
South Bucks
South Cambridgeshire
South Herefordshire
South Holland
South Lakeland
South Northampton
South Ribble
South Staffordshire
South Tyneside
South Wight
Southampton
Southend on Sea
Southwark
Spelthorne
St. Helens
Staffs. Moorlands
Stevenage
Stewartry
Stirling
Stockton on Tees
Stratford on Avon
Strathclyde
Strathkelvin
Watford
Waverley
Wealdon
Welwyn Hatfield
West Derbyshire
West Lothian
West Norfolk
West Somerset
West Wiltshire
Western Isles
Westminster
Weymouth and Portland
Wigan
Wigtown
Wimborne
Winchester
Windsor and Maidenhead
Wirral
Woking
Wolverhampton
Woodspring
Worthing
Wycombe
York

B. Local authorities who abandoned or modified their local scheme for war pensioners in April 1988

Barking and Dagenham
Barnet
Bexley
Boothferry
Bournemouth
Brecknock
Fenland
Havant
Lliw Valley
Mid Devon
Nuneaton and Bedworth
Portsmouth
South Bucks
South Herefordshire
Swansea
Thamesdown
West Norfolk
Weymouth and Portland

Source: 1988 returns from 476 of the 483 local authorities in Great Britain.

Broadcasting

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the likely implications on public service broadcasts emanating from his Department of the White Paper, "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality."

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no reason to suppose that the proposals in the White Paper will alter the present arrangements whereby public service messages are broadcast by the BBC. It will be for the new Channel 3 and 5 licensees to consider whether they will broadcast such messages. The arrangements for paid Government advertising on television will not be affected by the proposals.

Student Grants

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if local authorities treat a full-time student who receives no grant as though he did receive a full grant, for the purpose of assessing housing benefit eligibility.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: When an award is made in respect of student maintenance, the full grant is taken into account for the purposes of establishing entitlement to housing benefit. This applies even when the amount of grant payable has been reduced or extinguished by an assessed contribution in respect of the income of a parent or a spouse of the student, whether or not that contribution has actually been received by the student.

When no award has been made, however, there is no provision to take a notional grant into account.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his estimate of the annual amount which will be saved as a result of the £2 cut on housing benefit transitional payments;

(2) what is his estimate of the saving in public expenditure which will result from his imposition of a closing date of 31 March 1989 for applications for housing benefit transitional payments.

(3) what is the estimated take-up of housing benefit transitional payments.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In view of the number of applications for housing benefit transitional payments which continue to be received and to ensure the maximum take-up of these awards the closing date for receipt of housing benefit transitional payments has been extended to 30 June 1989. It is not yet possible to estimate either the final expenditure and caseload or the effect of the £2 flat rate deduction from 10 April 1989. By the time the closing date is reached we expect the vast majority of people eligible for transitional payments to have applied for them and we do not, therefore, expect any significant saving in expenditure.

Young Homeless People

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he has any plans to assist financially young people of 16 and 17 years of age who have been excluded from the parental home or who have no parental home to go to; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what are the means being used by his Department to determine the extent and degree of poverty among those aged 16 and 17 years who, for whatever reason, are not living in the parental home; and if he will publish the results of any such examination.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In addition to our monitoring we have examined evidence from organisations such as Barnardo's and the Church of England Children's Society. We have also had discussions with representatives from these and other bodies in the voluntary sector as well as local authority associations.

Our own monitoring has included careful observation of the types of cases referred for consideration under the severe hardship provision.

Our current policies are sound for the overwhelming majority of 16 and 17-year-olds. However, our studies reveal that a minority of young people who, for good reason, have to live independently are facing difficulties. We have therefore decided to introduced the changes announced by my hon. Friend on 13 March at columns *27-28*.

Elderly People (Care Provisions)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) whether the personal allowance element of pensions paid to elderly persons in hospitals, nursing homes and residential care homes is intended for the personal use of pensioners for the purchase of items not provided by the establishment, such as clothing and stationery;

(2) what evidence he has that some residential institutions include the personal allowance of pensions in the minimum charge demanded of the pensioner.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The level of fees in an independent residential care home or nursing home is a matter between the resident and the proprietor and depends on the level of services to be provided. The income support personal expenses allowance is intended to cover day-to-day living expenses but claimants are, of course, free to spend this money in any way they choose.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) during the benefit year April 1988 to April 1989 how many claims for attendance allowance were received; how many claims for attendance allowance were granted; how many claims for attendance allowance were awarded posthumously; and what is this figure as a percentage of total number of claims received and number of claims granted; of the posthumously awarded claims, how many were granted following a request for review or appeal after initially being refused; and what is this figure as a percentage of total claims made and number of claims granted;

(2) during the benefit year April 1987 to April 1988; how many claims for attendance allowance were received; how many claims for attendance allowance were awarded; how many claims for attendance allowance were awarded posthumously; what is this figure as a percentage of total claims made and number of claims granted; of the posthumously awarded claims, how many were granted following a request for review or appeal after initially being refused; and what is this figure as a percentage of total claims made and number of claims granted.

Mr. Scott: Information about posthumous awards of attendance allowance is not recorded as a matter of course and could be extracted only at disproportionate cost. The information which is available is in the table.

Table

Attendance allowance: Numbers of claims received and awards made 1987-88 and 1988-89

Year	*Number of claims received*	*Number of awards made*
1987-88	351,554	213,907
1988-89	[1]292,485	[2]156,137

[1]To 28 February 1989.
[2]To 31 December 1988.

Family Credit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much of the extra spending on family credit is attributable to the freeze in child benefit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: When the 1989 uprating was announced it was estimated that the total cost of the family credit uprating would be £128 million, of which £23 million was directly attributable to the 45p added to the child credit rates as compensation for the child benefit standstill.

Benefit

Mr. Battle To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion and how many supplementary benefit/income support claims from couples are made by women.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of supplementary benefit claims from couples made by women is 19,000. This represents 1·77 per cent. of supplementary benefit claims from couples.

I regret income support information is not yet available.

Note: Number of claims rounded to nearest thousand.
Source: May 1987 Annual Statistical Inquiry.

Retirement Age

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost for equalising retirement ages for men and women at the ages of 60, 62, 63 and 65 years assuming everyone elects to retire at the specified age; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 21 February 1989, c. 598]:* I regret that the reply given has been found to contain an error. The information requested with the amended figures is as follows.

The most recent estimates, which are based on 1985-86 benfit rates, are that the approximate net annual cost to public funds of equalising state pension age at 60 years would be £3,000 million and at 63 years £800 million; equalisation at 65 years would save about £500 million. Estimates are not available for equalisation at 62 years.

Social Fund

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the anticipated end of the year out-turn on the numbers of

claimants and levels of expenditure, *(b)* the most recent figures for the numbers of claimants and levels of expenditure and *(c)* the anticipated numbers of claimants and levels of expenditure for 1988-89 for (i) funeral payments from the social fund and (ii) maternity payments from the social fund.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 13 December 1988, c. 534]*: The available information is as follows:

Anticipated end of year out turn

Type of payment	*Number of claimants*	*Expenditure £ million*
Maternity payments	173,000	15
Funeral payments	48,000	21

Actual claims and expenditure to and including October 1988

Type of payment	*Number of claimants*	*Expenditure £ million*
Maternity payments	102,603	9
Funeral payments	28,582	11

EMPLOYMENT

Perivale Skill Centre

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the Perivale skill centre.

Mr. Cope: Perivale skill centre is part of the Skills Training Agency which, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in the House on 13 March, is to be offered for sale through a private tender process.

Wages Council

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central, 6 March, *Official Report*, column *412*, whether he will now indicate the current level of total responses received on his wages councils consultative document; and if he is now in a position to break down the responses into those supporting and those opposing the abolition of wages councils.

Mr. Nicholls: The current level of total responses is 394. The breakdown of the responses into those supporting and those opposing the abolition of wages councils will be published in due course.

Employment Training

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many approved employment training agencies deal solely with unemployed graduates; and if he will list them.

Mr. Nicholls: None. All training agents and training managers will deal with unemployed graduates as required.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many unemployed graduates are currently on employment training courses;

(2) how many unemployed graduates have left employment training courses since September 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: Information about the number of graduates on or leaving employment training is not yet available.

Docklands

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the level of unemployment in the Docklands urban development area as a percentage of the total London figure in each year since 1981; and what are the same calculations for the three Docklands boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Newham and Southwark.

Mr. Cope: The following information is also available from the Library. The table shows the annual average number of unemployed claimants in London docklands and the London boroughs of Newham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets for the years 1983 to 1988, in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the number of unemployed claimants in Greater London. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available on the same geographical basis. Comparisons are affected by changes in the coverage of the count.

Annual average unemployment 1983 to 1988

	1983[1]		*1984*		*1985*		*1986*		*1987*		*1988*	
	Unemployed claimants	*Percentage in Greater London*	*Unemployed claimants*	*Percentage in Greater London*	*Unemployed claimants*	*Percentage in Greater London*	*Unemployed claimants*	*Percentage in Greater London*	*Unemployed claimants*	*Percentage in Greater London*	*Unemployed claimants*	*Percentage in Greater London*
London Docklands	5,109	1·4	5,465	1·4	5,775	1·4	5,762	1·4	5,236	1·4	4,274	1·5
Newham	15,673	4·3	16,254	4·5	17,007	4·2	17,468	4·4	15,746	4·3	12,825	4·4
Southwark	17,991	5·0	19,563	5·1	21,016	5·2	21,632	5·3	19,820	5·4	16,819	5·8
Tower Hamlets	15,451	4·3	15,457	4·0	16,132	4·0	16,257	4·0	15,346	4·2	12,955	4·4

[1] Average of seven months June to December 1983, comparable figures for earlier months are not available on the same geographical basis.

Tourism

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the review of tourism will be published.

Mr. Lee: We shall announce decisions following the review of tourism policy as soon as possible.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many TECs he is planning for London.

Mr. Cope: The prospectus for training and enterprise councils was published on Friday 10 March. It is now for business leaders wishing to establish a TEC to come together and apply for development funding, and it is for the employers themselves to propose the area the TEC should cover, having consulted the regional director of the Training Agency.

Because of London's unique labour market, it is important that the development of the TEC network there should be considered very carefully, particularly in the

centre of London. I have therefore decided, in consultation with Brian Wolfson, chairman of the National Training Task Force, that a small temporary group of employers should look at the issues in London and report to the task force accordingly.

Allen Sheppard, chairman and chief executive of Grand Metropolitan plc and a member of the task force, has agreed to lead the group's discussions. Employers and others wishing to make their views known to the group should do so through the Training Agency's regional director for London, Mark Addison.

Open College

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has plans for further funding for the Open college; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: I am pleased to announce that we have decided to provide further funding for the Open college to develop its important work. We are currently discussing with the college arrangements for this further funding, which would be up to a maximum of £12 million for its commercial activities over the next three years, and further £6 million for broadcasting activities.

The college's recent performance has been very encouraging. Sales of courses are now running at over 5,000 a month, and over 60,000 learners have taken college courses since its start. Some 600 companies are associated with the college and many major companies and institutions are collaborating with the college to produce training materials to meet their specific training needs.

The achievement of self-financing of the college within the next three years remains our firm goal. However, in order to give the college the secure base it needs to achieve this, further funding would be required. Support will also be needed for broadcasting.

In order to ensure the best value for money for the public purse, this funding is subject to important conditions, not least that the college should have agreed with us the next stage of its business plan setting out the route to self-financing over the three year period without any further calls on public support thereafter. The plan would also outline how the college's work over this period would support out training objectives. Michael Green, the college's chairman, has welcomed our decision and fully accepts these conditions.

This further funding provides the opportunity the college needs to secure its work with others in industry and education in helping to meet the nation's skill needs. The college will encourage employers to provide more effective training for their workforce; it will help individuals including the unemployed to gain the skills they need to contribute effectively to the economy; and will support us in our task of persuading individuals and employers increasingly to invest in their future by providing effective training.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has given consideration to the recent Disclosure of Foreign Funding Bill, passed by the South African Government, which will place restrictions on organisations in South Africa receiving financial support from abroad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We made clear to the South African Government our serious concern about certain features of the draft Disclosure of Foreign Funding Bill, which has since been amended substantially. We shall continue to make clear the unacceptable nature of any legislation which restricted or inhibited the provision of aid funds to the black community.

Sudan

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the present situation in Sudan.

Mr. Waldegrave: We call on all parties in Sudan to work for the restoration of peace and stability and the early implementation of the plan of action agreed in Khartoum on 9 March by the United Nations conference on the displaced.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Guillotine

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the occasions on which the Government have introduced the guillotine since 1979 and indicate after how many hours in Committee on each Bill.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

Guillotining of Bills

Session and Bill	*Hours in committee before guillotined*	*Total hours in committee*
1979-80		
Education (No. 2)	82	104
Social Security	60	99
Housing	110	149
Social Security (No. 2)	44	66
1980-81		
Transport	55	95
British Nationality	90	145
1981-82		
Oil and Gas (Enterprise)	70	104
Employment	91	107
Northern Ireland (CWH)	54	63·30
1982-83		
Transport	80	100
Telecommunications	110	158
Housing and Building Control	90	110
1983-84		
Telecommunications	80	112
Rates	80	112
Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland)	82	99
1984-85		
Local Government	86	153
Transport	76	134
1985-86		
Gas	85	129

Session and Bill	Hours in committee before guillotined	Total hours in committee
Social Security	115	167
European Communities (Amendment) (CWH)	18	23
1986-87		
Local Government Finance (CWH)	14·50	20·50
Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc (Scotland)	101	124
1987-88		
Education Reform	88	151
Local Government Finance	72	129
Social Security[2]	—	—
Firearms (Amendment)[1]	—	—
School Boards (Scotland)[2]	—	—
Housing[2]	—	—
1988-89		
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions)	52	63
Water	75	145
Official Secrets (CWH)	14	29

(CWH = Committee of the Whole House).
[1] Guillotined on consideration on Report.
[2] Guillotined on consideration of Lords Amendments.

Parliamentary Passes

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many passes have been issued to persons acting as secretarial or research assistants to the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on *(a)* 1 October 1988, *(b)* 1 November 1988 and *(c)* 1 February 1989.

Mr. Wakeham: It would be inappropriate for me to provide information about passes sponsored by individual right hon. and hon. Members.

SCOTLAND

Agriculture

72. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last made a speech outlining the Government's plans for developing Scotland's agriculture in less populated areas.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The importance of agriculture in Scotland's rural areas is a regular theme of speeches by my right hon. and learned and noble Friends. Most recently my noble Friend dealt with this among other issues in his keynote address to the annual general meeting of the Scottish National Farmers Union last week.

Dialysis

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many new patients per million population in Scotland received (i) haemodialysis and (ii) continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis in 1988 or the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available in the exact form requested. In 1987 (the most recent year for which figures are available) the number of new patients per million of the population (pmp) received on to all forms of dialysis was 58·2. This includes continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis. The total number of patients (both new and existing) receiving dialysis in 1987 was as follows:

	Actual
Hospital dialysis	264
Home dialysis	181
Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis	346

Electoral Register

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *749*, he will update the 1985-86 review of the arrangements to sell the electoral register to include consideration of *(a)* the ability of the electoral register being able to access copies of the information held by the community charge officer and *(b)* the restriction placed on the sale of the extract of the community charge register; if he will publish the 1985-86 review; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have no plans for a further review, for the reasons given in my previous answer to the hon. Gentleman on 24 February at column *749*. Copies of the consultation paper which instituted the 1985-86 review were deposited in the Library in December 1984; subsequently, regulations authorising the supply of the register in computer-compatible form were debated in the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments on 21 January 1986.

A850 Broadford-Kyleakin Road, Skye

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the proposal which he has received from Highland regional council concerning the upgrading of the A850 Broadford-Kyleakin road, Isle of Skye, with particular reference to *(a)* the number of objections received and *(b)* whether he intends to call the application in for public inquiry procedures.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend considered the notice of intention to develop, submitted to him by Highland regional council as planning authority on 15 December 1988, together with the 213 letters of objection received, and has decided that the issues involved do not warrant his intervention. A letter was sent to Highland regional council on 23 February indicating that planning permission for the proposed development was deemed to have been granted.

Youth Unemployment

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish figures from all available sources as to the number of 16 to 18-year-olds in Greenock and Port Glasgow without a YTS place, and known to the local careers office to be without work.

Mr. Lang: The only information available on the number of young people seeking YTS places is that held by the local careers services. I understand that on 9 March 1989, 116 young people were registered for work or a YTS place at careers offices in Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Self-Governing Hospitals

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will name the two hospitals he expects to have self-governing status by 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This will be a matter for discussion with health boards in the light of responses to the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Crack

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on Government measures being taken to reduce the availability and use of the drug known as crack.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's strategy and the wide range of measures being taken to deal with the problem of drug misuse, including the interdiction of cocaine of which "crack" is a derivative, are described in "Tackling Drug Misuse—A Summary of the Government's Strategy", copies of the third (1988) edition of which are available in the Library.

Single European Market

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many members of his Department are employed specifically to assist firms preparing for the single European market of 1992; and if he will give a breakdown of the number by grade.

Mr. Rifkind: Within the Industry Department for Scotland there are 63 officers, plus appropriate clerical support staff, employed to deliver assistance to industry under the enterprise initiative. This number comprises:

1 Grade 3
2 Grade 5
1 Grade 6
6 Grade 7
8 Senior Executive Officers
1 Senior Scientific Officer
1 Senior Professional and Technical Officer
22 Higher Executive Officers
21 Executive Officers

The enterprise initiative schemes, although capable of wider application, can all be used by companies to help prepare for the single market. There are also staff in other Scottish Office Departments whose duties include the monitoring of single market developments in specific industrial sectors and to provide appropriate assistance to their client groups.

Investment Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the total number of applications *(a)* received and *(b)* approved for investment grants from 1 April 1988 to 31 December 1988; what was the total amount of expenditure involved; and what the total estimated expenditure planned for that period;

(2) what was the total number of applications *(a)* received and *(b)* approved for innovation grants from 1 April 1988 to 31 December 1988; the total amount of expenditure involved; and the total estimated expenditure involved and *(c)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period;

Mr. Lang: The information requested is shown below for the period 1 April to 31 December.

Regional Selective Assistance

	Number
Applications received	188
Applications processed	171
	£ million
Payment authorisations made	23·5

The provision of the financial year 1988-89 is £60·4 million. Expenditure under this scheme is normally concentrated in the last quarter of the financial year.

ENVIRONMENT

London Docklands

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many firms or businesses have been relocated with London Docklands development corporation assistance since 1981; how many of these firms were moved to locations outside the urban development area; and how many jobs were in firms or businesses relocated with London Docklands development corporation assistance since 1981.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the London Docklands development corporation has done to co-ordinate information on job opportunities, trends and forecasts, training needs and take-up of training opportunities.

Mr. Trippier: Several employment and training co-ordinating groups have now been set up in Docklands, which exchange information of this type, and on which the LDDC, local authorities, other agencies and the private sector are all represented.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what gaps in training provisions the London Docklands development corporation has identified; and what intervention it has undertaken to remedy them.

Mr. Trippier: This is primarily a matter for agencies responsible for training provision. The corporation is helping by providing information, improving co-ordination among those involved, and by its contribution to a wide range of training projects.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the London Docklands development corporation has taken to see that a high proportion of jobs at Tobacco dock will go to local people.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 31 January at column *201*.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a breakdown and analysis of existing jobs in the Royal docks area of Newham.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the LDDC's 1987 census of employment, a copy of which has been laid in the Library.

National Newspapers (Docklands)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people, employed by national newspapers who were previously located in the Fleet street area, are now located in Docklands.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not held by the Department.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the number of refrigeration units in the United Kingdom containing chlorofluorocarbons that will need to be disposed of by 1995; and what plans are in place to ensure the safe disposal of these units without releasing the contained chlorofluorocarbons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are estimated to be some 30 million domestic refrigerators and freezers in use in the United Kingdom. Some 2 million appliances are disposed of each year. As yet no techniques for the safe disposal of the insulation material have been developed. At least one retailer of domestic refrigerators and freezers will collect the old appliance and recover the refrigerant for recycling. Recycling services, provided by both United Kingdom manufacturers of CFCs and by some refrigeration companies, are widely used by commercial and industrial refrigerants.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what regulations are in place to segregate wastes containing chlorofluorocarbons from other wastes at municipal disposal sites.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. Officials of the Department will shortly be meeting representatives of the local authorities to discuss their role in efforts to reduce emissions of CFCs.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provisions he has made to ensure that obsolete fridges, aerosols and packaging containing chlorofluorocarbons are disposed of in a way that does not release the chlorofluorocarbons into the atmosphere.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) contained in aerosols are emitted to the atmosphere as their contents are used—old aerosol cans do not therefore generally contain CFCs. The difficulties inherent in identifying which packaging materials contain CFCs, and the logistical problems involved, mean that to legislate for their safe disposal is not a practical proposition. The industries are in any case rapidly moving away from the use of CFCs. For the disposal of refrigerators, I refer to the answer that I gave the hon. Member earlier today.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress in research into chlorofluorocarbon replacement *(a)* HCFC-22 and *(b)* HCFC-134a.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: HCFC-22 is already commercially available. HCF-134a is expected to be available in commercial quantities in the early 1990s, subject to the satisfactory outcome of toxicological testing and environmental evaluation.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress towards reducing ozone layer depletion following the conference on saving the ozone layer on 5 to 7 March; and what agreements have been reached with the People's Republic of China to ensure their production of chlorofluorocarbons is minimised.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Progress expected to flow from the saving the ozone layer conference is summarised in the chairman's message prepared by my right hon. Friend. The message will be delivered to the first meeting of the contracting parties to the Montreal protocol in Helsinki in May. I am arranging for the message and the rapporteur's more detailed account of the conference to be placed in the Library. At the conference the People's Republic of China was one of a number of countries to indicate that it would give serious consideration to acceding to the Montreal protocol.

Environmental Council

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many meetings of the Council of European Community Environment Ministers he has attended in person since taking office; and if he will make a statement on the basis on which it is decided which Minister should attend such meetings.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 6 December 1988 at col. *153*.

Home Insulation

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will discuss with the local authority associations a joint programme of home heating insulation and make the necessary finance available.

Mr. Trippier: The local authority associations are consulted each year on the method of distributing capital allocations for housing to individual local authorities. In setting allocations, the Department takes into account authorities' own assessments of needs, including that for insulation and heating. A specific sum is currently set aside to finance grants under the homes insulation scheme, but it is otherwise for authorities to determine their own investment priorities for insulation within the total resources available.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, on the same basis as table F5, in the Green paper, "Paying for Local Government", what percentage of householders in Leyton constituency whose equivalent net income falls in the range of *(a)* £100 to £200 per week and *(b)* £400 to £500 per week would, on 1988-89 figures, pay a higher net community charge, without safety nets, than net rates.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is not available. The table in the Green Paper was based on a sample survey which cannot provide reliable estimates for individual constituencies.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* all Government publications relating to the community charge which are to be made available in ethnic minority languages and *(b)* the languages to be used in each case.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Copeland on 16 February at column *383*. My right hon. Friend and I have

been preparing a programme for public information which includes these important matters and we shall be making an announcement on our decisions on minority translations in the near future.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of how many people will pay more in poll tax than they currently pay in rates in the Nottingham, North constituency.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. Nor have we any estimate of the numbers of gainers and losers in each local authority or constituency, as a result of the introduction of the community charge. Figures published on 15 December 1988 show that nationally nearly 60 per cent. of all households would pay less with the community charge than they do now with domestic rates.

Litter

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make the abatement of litter by local authorities a statutory obligation as provided for in the Litter Act 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Litter Act 1983 gives local authorities powers to take action on litter. We are pursuing a series of initiatives within the existing legal framework and will consider whether any strengthening of the legislation is necessary, including the possibility of implementing section 4 of the Act to require authorities to prepare litter plans.

Detergents

Mr. William Ross: to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what quantities of phosphorus-free detergents were *(a)* produced and *(b)* used in the United Kingdom in each of the last three years for which figures are available; what percentage of these were domestic detergents; and whether he has any plans to encourage the wider use of such detergents.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Over the last three years there has been no production of phosphate-free detergents in the United Kingdom. Usage, from imports, is estimated to be well below 0·5 per cent. of the total United Kingdom market for detergents. The environmental safety of some current phosphorus substitutes is uncertain. The Government have no plans at present to encourage the wider use of phosphate-free detergents.

Methane Gas

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what initiatives he has under consideration for improving data collection and monitoring of the sources and sinks of methane gas in respect of the rate of increase of methane concentration in the air; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what initiatives he has under consideration to investigate reasons for the rate of increase of nitrous oxide in the atmosphere; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* Inventories and assessments of atmospheric concentrations of methane and nitros oxide are in hand under the DOE's research programme as part of the NASA global atmospheric gases experiment. The results will be available for the work of the UNEP/WMO intergovernmental panel on climate change. The chemical sinks of methane are also being studied under DOE's research programme.

Tenants' Charter

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he takes to ensure that all local authorities bring to the attention of their tenants and to those on their housing waiting lists, particularly single people, the provisions of the tenants' charter in the Housing Act 1980 with particular reference to the creation of sub-tenancies.

Mr. Trippier: Responsibility for informing their existing and potential tenants must lie with local authorities, but leaflets on the tenants' charter and, specifically, on lodgers, are distributed widely by my Department.

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to hold discussions with local authority associations with a view to devising a fairer and more realistic waiting list system for the public housing sector.

Mr. Trippier: I have no plans to do so.

Public Sector Housing

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each local authority in England the number of *(a)* single people under the age of 21 years and *(b)* single mothers under the age of 21 years registered as seeking public sector housing.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available centrally.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to require local planning authorities to pay the costs of appeals by applicants against their decisions that are upheld.

Mr. Chope: The Department's circular 2/87 makes clear that costs may be awarded following a public local inquiry if any party to a planning appeal is judged to have acted unreasonably. The Government have no plans to alter the basis for awarding costs.

Catalytic Converters

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with representatives of other Governments regarding catalytic converters.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Discussions at ministerial level on vehicle emission control issues are a frequent feature of the European Community Environment Council meetings and the preparations for them. If the common position on stage II of the Luxembourg directive

for small cars reached at the November 1988 Council is adopted following completion of the co-operation procedure with the European Parliament, we expect that virtually all cars will need to be fitted with some form of catalytic converters.

Racial Harassment

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish fully the Brunel university study into racial harassment which his Department commissioned; and when he expects to announce new proposals to counter such activity.

Mr. Trippier: I cannot yet say when any products of this study will be published; we do not yet have a final draft of the proposed good practice guide, or a draft of the study report.

Air Pollution

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures for the comparative level of *(a)* carbon monoxide and *(b)* nitrogen oxide in the air in British cities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* The results of air quality monitoring programmes carried out for the Department have been published annually since 1979 in the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" and its complementary "Statistical Bulletins". Copies of these documents are placed in the Library of the House. Results for carbon monoxide were first published in Digest No. 2, 1980, and for nitrogen oxides in Digest No. 3, 1981.

New Towns

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the remaining new town development corporations to have completed the development of their respective towns.

Mr. Trippier: Following statutory-consultations, I have announced that Warrington and Runcorn development corporation will be wound up in September 1989. The proposed wind-up dates for the remaining development corporations are September 1991 for Telford and March 1992 for Milton Keynes.

Rural Communities Council

73. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of the Rural Communities Council; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met representatives of Action with Communities in Rural England, the national body representing rural community councils, on 21 December 1988, when they formed part of a deputation from Rural Voice to discuss rural housing issues. He also spoke about rural housing to the annual general meeting of the Gloucestershire rural community council on 1 September 1988.

Right to Buy

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether officials from his Department have had meetings with officials of the London borough of Sutton to discuss the right to buy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Officials in my Department last met officials of the London borough of Sutton on 19 May 1988 to discuss right to buy. The Government continue to keep a close interest in the performance of all local authorities under right-to-buy legislation.

Turtles

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take steps to curb the import of North American box turtles; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Anyone wishing to import these turtles into the United Kingdom is already required to obtain a licence under the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976. We are satisfied that trade does not at present pose any threat to the survival of the species, and it is therefore generally permitted. However, it is and will continue to be carefully monitored so that, if necessary, stricter controls can be introduced to ensure that the animals do not become endangered in the wild.

HMS Cambridge

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will call in the decision by the South Hams district council to refuse permission to erect a five foot high security fence around the borders of HMS Cambridge, the gunnery school at Wembury near Plymouth;

(2) if he will hold a public inquiry into the proposal to erect fencing around the boundaries of HMS Cambridge, the gunnery school at Wembury near Plymouth.

Mr. Michael Howard: No proposal for fencing at HMS Cambridge has been referred to the Secretary of State. Crown development which would require planning permission if carried out by a private owner (including fencing over two metres in height) is the subject of consultation with the local planning authority. So also is development which would not need specific permission but would have a significant planning impact, visually or otherwise, beyond the Department's own site; circular 18/84 sets this out. If the local planning authority objects, the matter must then be referred to the Secretary of State for the Environment. If a proposal is referred, there is provision for a non-statutory public local inquiry.

Incinerators (Pollution)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for new limitations on pollution from incinerators of municipal rubbish; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Health and Safety (Emissions into the Atmosphere) (Amendment) Regulations 1989, which are due to come into force on 31 March 1989, will bring under the control of the national air pollution inspectorates all incinerators capable of burning 1 tonne or more of municipal waste per hour. When drawing up control requirements the inspectorates will ensure compliance with the EC directive on the

prevention of air pollution from new municipal waste incinerators. Agreement on this directive was reached at the Council of Environment Ministers' meeting on 2 March 1989. Discussions are continuing within the Community on a draft directive dealing with existing municipal waste incinerators.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for new guidance on practices at incinerators to limit dioxin discharges; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: From 31 March all large incinerators will be under the control of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution. We propose to minimise emissions of dioxins by the strict control of combustion conditions. This is the approach adopted in the EC directive on the prevention of air pollution from new municipal waste incineration plants agreed by the Council of Environment Ministers on 2 March. The EC Commission is setting up a working party of experts to report on control of dioxins from incinerators. We will co-operate fully with this work.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost of the newspaper advertisements, "Council Tenants—Who Should Manage Your Home?" placed in the press on Sunday 12 March.

Mr. Trippier: Approximately £81,350.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his definition of the term "acceptable rent" referred to in his Department's advert placed in the Sunday press on 12 March; to which section of the Housing Act 1988 it refers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The term "acceptable rent" is a reference to the proposals for rents (including arrangements for rent review) which tenants transferring under tenants' choice will have accepted in consultations under section 102 of the Housing Act 1988.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had an opportunity to consider the consultants' reports on housing action trusts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I have today published the consultants' reports on the six areas that we proposed for housing action trusts. Copies of the reports have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The consultants have concluded that, having regard to the matters listed in section 60 of the Housing Act 1988, the Loughborough and Angell town estates in Lambeth; the North Peckham and Gloucester grove estates in Southwark; and the Downhill, Town End farm, Hylton castle and part of the Red house estates in Sunderland justify the establishment of trusts. I therefore propose to proceed in these areas, subject to some minor boundary changes.

In Leeds, the consultants consider that the Halton moor, Seacroft South and Gipton estates meet the criteria for designation: but that the most compelling case for a trust is at Gipton. I therefore propose to proceed in that area only.

In Sandwell, the consultants consider that there is not a strong enough case to establish a HAT for the Lion farm, Wallace close and Titford estates; but that the Windmill lane estate would benefit from a trust and that there is also a case for treating a widee area of the Cape hill community. I agree with the consultants' findings. I am therefore asking them to carry out a further study to help us decide whether to proceed with proposals for a trust in that area and where to draw the boundaries.

In Tower Hamlets, the consultants conclude that the problems associated with the six run-down council estates they studied justify the establishment of a HAT. However, a trust could tackle the overcrowding that exists on the estates only if it had enough land to provide more housing for the people who now live there. This could involve considerable disruption of the existing communities and would require a much larger area for a trust than we originally proposed. I have therefore decided not to proceed with my original proposal. If, after discussion with tenants, the council wishes to bring forward a proposal for a different trust area, I would be prepared to consider it.

The Housing Act requires me to consult local authorities and hold a ballot of tenants in each proposed area before I can seek Parliament's approval to orders setting up a trust. My hon. Friend is writing to the leaders of the councils concerned today. I also intend to consult local people fully about how we propose to take matters forward. As a first step, we are sending explanatory leaflets to all individual residents in the proposed trust areas. I also propose to appoint consultants to discuss the proposals with residents and to seek their own ideas for improving the design, condition, management and general living conditions of their estates. Tenants will have time to consider the ideas which emerge from these consultations before they vote on a trust in a ballot.

The creation of trusts provides an opportunity to target extra Government resources on some of our most difficult estates. But it will be for individual tenants to decide whether they want me to proceed. If they do not want a trust, then the available resources can be used to tackle areas of problem housing elsewhere. I am therefore prepared to consider sympathetically any proposal which other councils or tenants wish to bring forward for a trust in their area.

HMS Cambridge

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) in the light of the designation of land at HMS Cambridge in South Hams as an area of outstanding natural beauty, great landscape value, and part of the heritage coastline, if he will ensure that any security fencing in and around the camp is designed with the consent of the parish council and the district council; and if he will make a statement on the present situation;

(2) if he will ensure that no security fencing is erected in or around HMS Cambridge at Wembury in South Hams without planning consent being first obtained from the relevant authority or from him on appeal;

(3) if he will ensure that any security fencing around HMS Cambridge, the Gunnery School at Wembury in South Hams is confined to the immediate area justified by security considerations.

Mr. Neubert: I have been asked to reply. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Architecture (Protection)

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the guidance his Department issues on the protection of squares and other specific forms of architectural layout against inappropriate development in (i) London and (ii) elsewhere.

Mr. Chope: Where there is a clear policy in an up-to-data local plan, which is consistent with the relevant provisions of the structure plan, it will carry considerable weight, and I will be guided by it and my inspectorate in dealing with planning appeals, particularly where the proposal in question raises purely local considerations. The Government recognise the importance of many of London's squares and are satisfied that any proposals affecting them are regulated in the public interest through the planning system.

Many squares also have conservation area protection; special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area in the exercise of development control.

HEALTH

Student Midwives

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many student midwives already holding registered nurse qualifications have been seconded by their health authority for their midwifery course; and what proportion is this of all student midwives who are registered nurses.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the progress of research into the sudden infant death syndrome and the Government's contribution to such research.

Mr. Freeman: The Medical Research Council (MRC), the main agency through which the Government sponsors biomedical and clinical research, has, over the years, funded a wide range of research related to sudden infant death syndrome.

I am, however, advised that no particular clinical factors have yet been unequivocally identified as the cause of sudden infant death syndrome. For current MRC research I refer my hon. Friend to my answer to my hon. Friend, the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on 20 February at columns *524-5*. A number of epidemiological factors have been shown to be associated with sudden infant death syndrome. But again none have been unequivocally identified as the cause.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to increase the number of hearing aids dispensed, and their subsequent usage.

Mr. Mellor: We are at present giving detailed consideration to suggestions for changes to the current arrangements for the provision of hearing aids in the context of proposals made by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received concerning the current organisation of hearing aid services.

Mr. Mellor: Sixty-two representations have been received calling attention to the recent proposals made by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the "Hearing Aids—the Case for Change" proposals brought forward by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf.

Mr. Mellor: The suggestions for changes in hearing aid services which have been made by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf are being carefully considered.

Audiology Services

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met representatives of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf to discuss audiology services.

Mr. Mellor: The most recent meeting on this subject between the Department and representatives of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf was at official level and took place on 25 November 1988. The then Minister of State for Health—my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton)—and my hon. Friend the Minister for the Disabled met representatives of the institute on 29 June 1988 to discuss their views on audiology services.

Midwives (Pay)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the Royal College of Midwives to discuss its rates of pay.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State met the president and the general secretary of the Royal College of Midwives on 7 December. They had a friendly and useful discussion on a range of issues arising from the 1988 pay award and associated regrading exercise, which gave midwives an average pay increase of over 20 per cent. last year.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the latest available figures for the number of people on waiting lists in the area of the Trent regional health authority, and the percentage of those on waiting lists who have been waiting for *(a)* six months or more and *(b)* one year or more.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the publication "Hospital In-patient waiting lists—England at 30 September 1988—National Regional and District summaries", copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Social Workers

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the names, professional qualifications and occupations of members of the Central Council for the Education and Training of Social Workers.

Mr. Mellor: The names and occupations of members of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social

Work are set out in the list. There is currently one vacancy on the council. A new council will be appointed from 1 September 1989. We do not hold centrally information concerning the professional qualifications of members.

CENTRAL COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN SOCIAL WORK

Membership of Council as at 9 March 1989

Chair

Professor B. Saul—Vice Chancellor, University of York

Other Members

Kina, Lady Avebury—Planning Co-ordinator, Tower Hamlets, Social Services Strategy Group
Mrs. V. Benjamin—Training Officer, Gwynned Social Services Department
Dr. B. R. Bewley—Senior Lecturer and Consultant, Department of Information and Planning, St. George's Hospital, London
Mr. M. G. Clarke—Director, Local Government Training Board
Mr. P. Cresswell—Social Worker, Speke, Liverpool
Miss J. D. Ford—Lecturer/Acting Head of Department, Department of Social Administration and Social Work, University of Glasgow
Miss. S. Hall—Principal Officer, Research and Development Barnardo's
Miss M. C. Hartnoll—Director of Social Work, Grampian Regional Council, Aberdeen
Miss S. Irwin—Director of Social Services, Northern Health and Social Services Board, Northern Ireland
Councillor Mrs. D. N. James—Chair, Social Services Committee, Surrey County Council
Mr. D. N. Jones—General Secretary, British Association of Social Workers
Mrs. T. Jowell—Director, Community Care Special Action Project, Birmingham Social Services Department
Dr. G. H. Michael—Senior Lecturer in Social Work, University of Ulster
Mr. E. Morrell—Chief Probation Officer, West Midlands Probation Service
Professor J. O'Neill—Former Director (retired), Trent Polytechnic, Nottinghamshire
Professor P. Parsloe—Head of Department/Professor of Social Work, University of Bristol
Professor G. Pearson—Head of School of Social Work, Middlesex Polytechnic
Mrs. C. C. Pryde—District Officer, Social Work Department, Motherwell, Scotland
Councillor B. M. Scott—Vice-Chairman, Social Work Committee, Strathclyde Regional Council
Mr. P. G. Senior—Senior Probation Officer (Training), South Yorkshire Probation Service, and Senior Lecturer in Social Work, Sheffield City Polytechnic
Mr. J. W. Small—Assistant Director, Social Services Department, London Borough of Hackney
His Honour Judge E. Stockdale—Circuit Judge
Mr. T. C. Storrie—Principal, Cassio College, Watford
Dr. R. G. Walton—Director of School of Social Work, University College, Cardiff

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many post-qualifying social work courses specialising in mental health and mental disorder have been approved by the Central Council for Education and Training of Social Workers; and how many students completed these courses in each year since 1983.

Mr. Mellor: During the period that the Approved Social Worker (ASW) Examining Board was in being (1983-1986), 1,660 candidates working with mentally ill people were successful in ASW examinations. Since 1986 the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work has approved 60 training courses for ASWs in local authorities with places for approximately 900 students. In addition, since the 1983-84 academic year CCETSW have approved the following relevant post-qualifying courses:

(a) Mental illness disorder: seven specialist courses with an output of 91 social work students and 36 non-social work students;
(b) Mental handicap: six specialist courses which have provided an output of 11 social work and 16 non-social work students;
(c) Other post-qualifying training courses: a further 103 social work students undertook options in this area of work as part of other post-qualifying studies.

Parallel Imports

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy not to issue product licences for parallel imports for products originating from countries that are not members of the pharmaceutical inspection committee.

Mr. Mellor: No. The United Kingdom product licence (parallel import) scheme covers products from any member state of the European Community. To discriminate against those member states which are not members of the pharmaceutical inspection convention (PIC) might be interpreted as a quantitative restriction on imports and as such would offend article 30 of the treaty of Rome.

Medical Control Agency (Director)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will make an announcement regarding the appointment of a director for the Medicines Control Agency.

Mr. Mellor: The appointment of Dr. Keith H. Jones as the first director of the Medicines Control Agency was announced on 3 March 1989. A copy of the press release is in the Library. The agency will come into operation from 1 April 1989.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to expand the provision of genito-urinary clinics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I wrote to regional health authorities on 28 February announcing that for 1989-90 the Department was doubling the resources available to the National Health Service for the prevention of HIV infection and the provision of services related to HIV infection and AIDS from £58·6 to £129·5 million. In the letter I asked authorities to give particular prominence in the use of the extra money to substantial upgrading of genito-urinary medicine services.

Psychiatric Care

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether every regional health authority area contains secure psychiatric units; how many such units there are in each region; and what steps are being taken to provide further such units;

(2) how many secure units are available to his Department for accommodating mentally disturbed individuals; whether they are available for use by mentally disturbed prisoners; what capacity is available for this purpose; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Every regional health authority, except South West Thames, has a regional secure unit and many

also have interim secure facilities. Officials are to meet representatives of South West Thames Regional Health Authority in April to discuss their proposals for secure provision. Following is a list of regional secure units and interim secure facilities.

All these units are able to take mentally disturbed prisoners where it is clinically appropriate.

Regional secure units: summary of latest position—December 1988
("MI" denotes mental illness hospital, "MH" denotes mental handicap hospital. This applies to the main hospital, not necessarily to the patients admitted to the Unit. The dates shown for opening are when the Unit first admitted patients.)

Region and regional bed target (basis: 20 per million population)	*Permanent RSU(S) completed under construction/proposed*	*Declared interim secure facilities*
Northern—62	Hutton Unit, St. Lukes Hospital, Middlesbrough (MI) 25 beds—opened November 1980	
Yorkshire—71	Newton Lodge, Fieldhead Hospital, Wakefield (MH) 48 beds—opened July 1984	Broadgate Hospital, Beverley (MI) 2 Units—38 beds (Total) Clifton Hospital, York (MI) 15 beds Storthes Hall Hospital, Huddersfield (MI) 11 beds High Royds Hospital, Ilkley (MI) 16 beds Stanley Royd Hospital, Wakefield (MI) 8 beds
Trent—91	Arnold Lodge, Towers Hospital, Leicester (MI) 45 beds—30 beds now open—opened July 1983. A network of local intensive care facilities for the mentally ill and mentally impaired is being developed throughout the region to complement the RSU	
East Anglian—36	Norvic Clinic, St. Andrews Hospital, Norwich (MI) 36 beds—opened May 1984	
North West Thames—69	Three Bridges Unit, St. Bernards wing of Ealing Hospital, Ealing (MI) 40 beds—opened November 1986	
North East Thames—74	Unit at Runwell Hospital, Wickford, near Southend (MI) 10 beds—opened September 1983. Four additional beds opened October 1988 *Proposed* Friern Hospital, Southgate (MI) 32 beds Homerton Hospital (MI) 30 beds. (Scheme starts 1990-91)	Friern Hospital, New Southgate (MI) 10 beds—operational August 1986 Hackney Hospital (MI) 12 beds: available from December 1987
South East Thames—72	Bethlem Royal Hospital[1] (MI) 30 beds—opened August 1985 Cane Hill Hospital, Coulsdon (MI) 15 beds—opened October 1984 Oakwood Hospital, Maidstone (MI) 15 beds—opened May 1985 Bexley Hospital (MI) 15 beds—opened June 1985 Hellingly Hospital, Hailsham (MI) 15 beds—opened June 1986	
South West Thames—58	A 15 bed unit in the London area is in the planning stage. The unit will function in association with eight district and supra-district intensive care units (MI) throughout the region. The MH strategy is under review	
Wessex—53	Ravenswood House, Knowle Hospital, Fareham (MI) 31 beds—opened January 1985	
Oxford—44	Sycamores Unit, Borocourt Hospital (MH) 14 beds—opened June 1987 Marlborough House, Milton Keynes (MI) 12 beds Rotherfield Unit, Fair Mile Hospital, Wallingford (MI)—14 beds, due to be completed over the next few months	Nine places opened in July 1987. The remaining five places opened in a phased manner in late 1988, early 1989 To open December 1988 with six, increase to 12 over the next few months To open 10 April 1989 with four patients initially
South Western—63	Butler Clinic, Langdon Hospital, Dawlish (MH) 30 beds—opened June 1983 Fromeside Clinic, Glenside Hospital, Bristol (MI)—30 beds	Interim unit of 10 places is proposed for Glenside Hospital pending the opening of the Fromeside Clinic
West Midlands—104	Reaside Clinic, Rubery Hill Hospital, Birmingham (MI) 100 beds—40 beds opened October 1987; to be increased to 70 in April 1989; to 84 in April 1990; to 100 in April 1991	Coleshill Hall Hospital, Birmingham (MH) eight beds
Mersey—50	Scott Clinic, Rainhill Hospital, Prescott, Liverpool (MI) 50 beds—opened August 1983	

Region and regional bed target (basis: 20 per million population)	Permanent RSU(S) completed under construction/proposed	Declared interim secure facilities
North Western—82	Gardiner Unit (Adolescent) Prestwich Hospital, Manchester (MI) 20 beds—opened January 1985 Edenfield Centre (Adult) Prestwich Hospital, Manchester (MI) 88 beds—opened July 1986 (66 beds open only)	Langdale Unit Whittingham Hospital, Preston (MI) 24 beds. The future of the Langdale Unit will need to be considered as part of the contraction of Whittingham Hospital

[1] The question of the closure of some of these beds is under consideration.

Drugs

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many companies have not agreed their annual financial return under the PPRS for the following years *(a)* before 1985, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1986 and *(d)* 1987.

Mr. Mellor: The number of annual financial returns under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme not yet cleared for each of the years concerned is as follows:

	Number
pre 1985	1
1985	3
1986	6
1987	28

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent, in settling pharmaceutical company annual financial returns under the PPRS, he is taking into consideration the general return to British industry as reflected in the FT 500 index or comparable index.

Mr. Mellor: The renegotiation of the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme in 1986 included agreement on percentage rates of return on capital employed for the years 1986-87 and 1987-88. From 1988-89, the Department is required to review the rate of return each year on the basis of principles set out in the scheme. These include taking account of any "significant alterations since the last PPRS rate change in the underlying average return on capital of British industry as brought out for example in relevant changes in the FT 500 index." This requirement is being followed in the Department's operation of the scheme.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pharmaceutical companies supplying the National Health Service have not applied for a price increase in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested, for companies providing full financial returns under the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme, is as follows:

	Number
1984	29
1985	38
1986	37
1987	30
1988	31

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the indexed aggregate cost of National Health Service medicines supplied under the PPRS in relation to general inflation from 1986.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have the information in the form requested.

The table shows the indexed aggregate expenditure in NHS medicines in total in 1986-87 and 1987-88; this includes expenditure on generic drugs which are not covered by the PPRS.

	1986-87	*1987-88*
Indexed aggregate expenditure on NHS medicines in total	100	110·7
Index of GDP deflator	100	105·3

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what discussions have been and are taking place on amending the grey area of PPRS; when an interim review is scheduled; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions have been and are taking place on amending the research and development allowance element of PPRS; when an interim review is scheduled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: There have been discussions between officials of the Department and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry clarifying the Department's implementation of the provisions in the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme relating to "grey area" excess profits and research and development support arrangements. No amendments to the scheme's provisions are being considered. The scheme provides for either party to request a review "after not less than three years"—i.e. from October 1989.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount spent on drugs in the National Health Service per head of population for each year in the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is as follows:

Total expenditure on drugs in the NHS, per head of population

	Total
1978-79	17·22
1979-80	19·43
1980-81	23·26
1981-82	26·74
1982-83	30·59
1983-84	33·88
1984-85	36·39
1985-86	38·76
1986-87	41·42
1987-88	45·71

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount spent on drugs in the National Health Service per head of population in real terms for each year in the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is as follows:

Total expenditure on drugs in the NHS per head of population, at 1987-88 prices[1]

	£
1978-79	35·34
1979-80	34·11
1980-81	34·48
1981-82	36·09
1982-83	38·53
1983-84	40·81
1984-85	41·73
1985-86	42·17
1986-87	43·61
1987-88	45·71

[1] Adjusted in line with the GDP deflator.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount spent on drugs in the National Health Service in real terms for the last 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is as follows:

Total expenditure on drugs in the NHS, at 1987-88 prices[1]

	£ million
1978-79	1,648
1979-80	1,593
1980-81	1,613
1981-82	1,690
1982-83	1,803
1983-84	1,912
1984-85	1,959
1985-86	1,987
1986-87	2,061
1987-88	2,167

[1] Adjusted in line with the GDP deflator.

NHS (Review)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further representations he has received on his White Paper on the review of the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received a number of representations on the White Paper. Many still have questions but I have been very pleased by the positive and constructive nature of many of them.

Junior Hospital Doctors (Working Hours)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how far the target maximum of one night in three rota commitment for junior hospital doctors has been achieved in each year from 1982 in terms of (1) the number of such rotas and (2) the number of doctors working them.

Mr. Mellor: The information in the form requested is not readily available. The number of junior hospital medical and dental staff in England and Wales who were contracted for 84 hours (broadly equivalent to a one in three rota commitment) or less is estimated to have increased from 9,796 at 30 September 1986 to 10,724 at 30 September 1987.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average number of contracted hours of duty of junior hospital doctors.

Mr. Mellor: The average weekly number of contracted hours of duty of junior hospital doctors in England and Wales was 83 on 30 September 1987. A survey in 1985 showed that the average weekly number of hours actually worked as against on duty was 57.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior hospital doctors are known to have contracted hours of duty in excess of 104 hours per week.

Mr. Mellor: In England and Wales on 30 September 1987, 1,463.

Consultants (Support Staff)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many additional staff other than consultants have been assessed as necessary to support consultants in acute specialties under circular EL 88 P82.

Mr. Mellor: Health authorities will report their staffing proposals under this circular to the Department in October this year.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many appointments he expects to make to self-governing hospital trusts assuming 250 such trusts and a board of 10; and if he will estimate the value of such appointments assuming the chairpersons of such trusts were remunerated on the present basis of district health authority chairs and the other directly appointed members received £1,000 each.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As the hon. Member will be aware from chapter 3 of the White Paper "Working for Patients", I shall be responsible for appointing the chairman of each National Health Service hospital trust and up to three out of a possible five non-executive members. I am considering the question of remuneration for the chairman and non-executive members. There is little point in calculating the value of these appointments on the basis of assumptions plucked out of the air.

Health Authorities (Allocations)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will provide exemplifications of allocations to regional health authorities on a weighted capitation basis for 1988-89 and 1989-90 on the assumption that direct payments between regions have the same net effect as cross-boundary flow adjustments;

(2) if he will list the cash allocations to regional health authorities for 1984-85 and subsequently both before and after later cross-boundary flow adjustments, and expressing those adjustments as a percentage of the initial allocation.

Mr. Freeman: Under the resource allocation working party method of resource allocation, inter-regional flows were taken into account by adjusting the weighted populations used to determine target shares of resources available. Within the formula, their impact on weighted populations was relatively small. Actual allocations reflected the acceptable pace of change towards these targets over time. It is therefore not possible to disaggregate the cash element of cross-boundary flows in regional health authority allocations to date.

Prescribing Costs

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the per capita prescribing cost for each family practitioner committee in England and Wales in 1987-88.

Mr. Mellor: The information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. The net ingredient cost per capita of prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists, appliance contractors and dispensing doctors for each family practitioner committee in England in 1987 was as follows:

F.P.C.	*Average NIC per person £*
Avon	31·27
Barking and Havering	32·08
Barnet	30·80
Barnsley	40·78
Bedfordshire	31·60
Berkshire	30·66
Bexley and Greenwich	29·69
Birmingham	38·34
Bolton	34·84
Bradford	35·20
Brent and Harrow	32·76
Bromley	30·31
Buckinghamshire	30·05
Bury	41·44
Calderdale	37·33
Cambridgeshire	30·73
Camden and Islington	31·36
Cheshire	35·41
City, Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets	34·11
Cleveland	38·59
Cornwall	37·75
Coventry	35·68
Croydon	29·87
Cumbria	36·65
Derbyshire	32·96
Devon	35·58
Doncaster	38·21
Dorset	39·31
Dudley	31·64
Durham	38·19
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	31·87
East Sussex	37·96
Enfield and Haringey	29·96
Essex	32·15
Gateshead	37·00
Gloucestershire	29·74
Hampshire	32·53
Hereford and Worcester	31·66
Hertfordshire	31·03
Hillingdon	31·65
Humberside	37·35
Isle of Wight	40·53
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	37·13
Kent	34·17
Kingston and Richmond	32·97
Kirklees	32·81
Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark	31·27
Lancashire	40·65
Leeds	36·05
Leicestershire	32·58
Lincolnshire	38·08
Liverpool	40·08
Manchester	37·84
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	31·79
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	36·99
Norfolk	35·67
North Tyneside	44·66
North Yorkshire	33·94
Northamptonshire	30·96
Northumberland	36·37
Nottinghamshire	31·16
Oldham	35·60
Oxfordshire	28·94
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	34·39
Rochdale	38·21
Rotherham	34·17
Salford	44·22
Salop	33·10
Sandwell	39·41
Sefton	36·72
Sheffield	34·79
Solihull	34·73
Somerset	33·68
South Tyneside	37·62
St. Helens with Knowsley	36·58
Staffordshire	33·56
Stockport	36·92
Suffolk	33·02
Sunderland	41·15
Surrey	31·16
Tameside	37·26
Trafford	40·92
Wakefield	38·90
Walsall	39·35
Warwickshire	34·13
West Sussex	36·66
Wigan	39·90
Wiltshire	31·04
Wirral	40·09
Wolverhampton	37·98

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information is available about per capita prescribing costs for individual general practitioners or general practitioner practices.

Mr. Mellor: A prescribing information system, known as PACT, provides GPs within a practice with information on the number of items per patient and the average cost per patient for their practice, compared with the FPC average. The practice average is calculated using the number of patients on the practice list.

Performance-related Pay (Sunderland)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the bonus paid in 1988 to the Sunderland district general manager and each of his unit general managers.

Mr. Mellor: No. Additions to salary paid under the performance-related pay scheme are confidential between managers and their employing authority.

NHS Policy Board

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the professional qualifications of each member of the new National Health Service policy board;

(2) if he will summarise what expertise and experience in the management and planning of health care provision each member of the new National Health Service policy board has.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have not yet decided on the membership of the National Health Service Policy Board.

Hospital Trusts

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if an application to establish a National Health Service hospital trust by the chairman and general manager of a district health authority will be sufficient to initiate the process; and what is the procedure of appeal against establishing a hospital trust.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It will be open to a variety of interests, including the chairman and general manager of

a district health authority, to initiate the process. There will be no formal appeal procedure but, in considering an application, I will take account of the views of those with an interest.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if any decisions have yet been taken on the remuneration that will be paid, when a National Health Service hospital trust is established, to *(a)* the chairman, *(b)* executive members of the board of directors and *(c)* non-executive directors.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. I will set the level of any remuneration for the chairmen and non-executive directors of NHS hospital trusts with the consent of the Treasury. The executive directors will be employees of the trust and their remuneration will therefore be a matter for the trust to determine.

District Health Authorities

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what remuneration the current chairmen and members of district health authorities receive.

Mr. Mellor: Chairmen are entitled to receive remuneration which currently stands at £11,868 a year. They may as an alternative choose to claim financial loss allowance. Members do not receive remuneration, although in certain circumstances they may claim financial loss allowance. Both chairmen and members are entitled to claim travelling and subsistence allowances.

Resource Management Initiative

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of the resource management initiative; and what savings its introduction has achieved.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Health has contributed £2·3 million to the six pilot acute resource managment sites to date. In addition, health authorities, both regional and district, have provided some funding to the projects. Piloting at the six sites is still continuing and the initiative is scheduled to be evaluated by the joint consultants committee and the management executive, the co-sponsers of the projects, in October 1989. Financial savings and quality of care benefits will mainly accrue at the sites once their new systems are fully implemented. At most sites this will be during 1989-90 at which point the sites should be absorbing their continuing running costs. To date, benefits have been mainly in the form of an improvement in the working relationship between staff groups and in planning and budget setting.

Dental Charges

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much, on average, dental check-ups are costing patients since December 1988.

Mr. Freeman: From 1 January 1989 the charge for a dental examination is £3·15. Dental examinations are free for people under 18, full-time students under 19, pregnant women and women who have had a baby in the previous 12 months, recipients of income support and family credit and others on a low income.

Benodiazepines

Dr. Owen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the average length of time that it takes for those addicted to benodiazepines to be free of all withdrawal symptoms from these drugs.

Mr. Freeman: The Department has no information on this matter.

Dr. Owen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has that benzodiazepines are still being routinely prescribed as sleeping tablets in hospitals; and for what periods.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect centrally information about prescribing patterns of hospital doctors.

Dr. Owen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any more recent estimates than that published in 1986 of the number of people addicted to or dependent on benzodiazepines; and whether he will give financial support to help people withdraw from these drugs.

Mr. Freeman: There are no precise figures to show the level or trend in benzodiazepine dependence. Significant sums have been invested in the treatment of drug misuse including £17·5 million centrally in grants to 188 local projects many of which also offer help to tranquilliser victims. Regional health authorities have since 1986 received earmarked funds annually for the development of services for those experiencing problems from the use of illicit or prescribed drugs. In 1989-90, the sum will be increased to £14 million. In addition, we are funding MIND to establish a national directory of services for tranquilliser dependants and to produce up-to-date publicity material, and Tranx UK has this year received £10,000 towards its national activities.

Cholesterol Screening

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects his Department's standing medical advisory committee to report on mass cholesterol screening; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I expect to receive the standing medical advisory committee's report on the cost-effectiveness of opportunistic cholesterol testing by late summer. The standing medical advisory committee has established a working party which is considering the issues and taking expert advice. I understand it will report back to the main committee shortly.

Civil Servants (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community; and what is the gross annual cost of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg in connection with this work.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 15 March 1989]:* Eight officers in the Department are wholly engaged in work related to the EC. Others are involved from time to time. Expenditure on travel on EC business is not differentiated from other departmental travel expenditure.

Hospitals (Nurseries and Creches)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all the health authorities that provide nursery and creche facilities at hospitals in their district, the names of the hospitals concerned; the number of places available, and the fees normally charged.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 15 March 1989]:* We do not collect this information centrally.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bees

5. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the health of bees is improved rather than impaired by modern agricultural practice.

60. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department has commissioned on the effect on the food chain of pesticides and changes in habitat of bees.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Improvement of bee health is primarily a matter for beekeepers themselves. However, I believe that bees will benefit from environmental and set aside measures that we are now taking.

My Department commissions research in several areas relating to pesticides, the habitat of bees and the human and broader food chains. More specifically, we are undertaking research on techniques for monitoring pesticide residues in agricultural produce, on spray drift and on the foraging behaviour of bees and the way of deterring their exposure to pesticides whch are applied to crops.

Bovine Somatotropin

10. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects the veterinary products committee to report on its consideration of bovine somatotropin.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The veterinary products committee will recommend whether or not any BST product should be licensed when it has received and evaluated all pertinent data. I cannot say when this will be.

Fraud (EC)

14. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take to tackle fraud in the European Community.

Mr. MacGregor: I have regularly been raising the matter of fraud in the Council of Agricultural Ministers. I have suggested various lines of action at the February Council and I shall continue to press the European Commission and the Council of Ministers to strengthen the controls in agricultural legislation against fraud and to follow up vigorously the work done by the Court of Auditors.

Farm and Conservation Grants

15. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what responses he has received to his announcement of the farm and conservation grants scheme.

Mr. Ryder: This new scheme was given a warm welcome by organisations with an interest in countryside and environmental matters, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Council for the Protection of Rural England, as well as by the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association.

Research and Development

20. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement about the future of research and development in his Ministry.

Mr. MacGregor: My Department remains firmly committed to supporting strategic research and work of a public good nature in relation to issues such as food safety, environmental protection and animals welfare. We are engaged in talks with the industry on the Government's decisions that it will in future look to the industry to fund within a reasonable timescale near-market research which is primarily of benefit to the industry.

Sheep Scab Dipping

21. **Mr. Fry:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what account has been taken in his Department's review of sheep scab dipping policy of the consequential benefits in the control of other sheep ectoparasites.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the course of our review we have consulted widely, and considered carefully all the comments received, including those on the incidental benefits in the control of other ectoparasites as well as the scab mite. We have concluded that our control arrangement should include an annual nationwide compulsory dip. There should therefore continue to be benefits in the control of other ectoparasites.

National Farmers Union

23. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the National Farmers Union; and what issues were discussed.

24. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the National Farmers Union, and what matters were discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I last met the President of the National Farmers Union on 1 March 1989 to discuss potato marketing.

46. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he is next due to meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the dairy sector.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no present plans to do so.

Development Advisory Service

25. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the future of the Agricultural development advisory service.

Mr. MacGregor: ADAS continues to provide excellent service. Its future size depends in part on the extent to which industry is prepared to fund near-market R and D and pay for appropriate advisory services.

Veterinary Schools

26. **Mr. Adams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the implications for animal health of the proposed closure of the Glasgow or Cambridge veterinary schools.

Mr. MacGregor: My concern is to ensure that sufficient qualified veterinarians are available. This is important among other things to meet the needs of my Department's veterinary service and to ensure that animal health requirements are enforced.

The recommendations of Sir Ralph Riley's report on veterinary education are not about the availability of veterinary manpower but concentrate on the structure of veterinary schools.

These matters are primarily for the Universities Funding Council and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

42. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the implications for the supply of veterinary surgeons for the agricultural industry of plans for the future of the United Kingdom veterinary schools.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received representations from the veterinary profession on this subject.

Meat Products

27. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the Shropshire county council trading standards officer regarding compositional standard in meat products.

Mr. Ryder: The trading standards department of Shropshire county council wrote to my Department in April 1985 concerning the labelling of meat products which contain mechanically recovered meat, and again in December 1986 about the meat content of various meat products.

We received yesterday a further letter on the former subject and are examining its content, carefully. The chief trading standards officer has also written to officials about water in poultry meat.

Nature Conservancy Council

28. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Ryder: I met the chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council on 7 November last year when we discussed a wide range of subjects.

Scrapie

29. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to make scrapie a notifiable disease.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no plans to make scrapie a notifiable disease.

Food Safety

30. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what particular research projects his Department has commissioned, or is assisting, into the cleanliness and safety of food for human consumption.

Mr. Ryder: Those projects sponsored by MAFF, in its 1988-89 food R and D programme, that are relevant to food hygiene and the microbiological safety of foods are as follows:

Title	*Contractor*
Bacteriological hazards in cooling meats in catering and long storage life chilled foods in catering	Huddersfield Polytechnic
Heat induced thermotolerance in food poisoning organisms	IFRB
Pasteurised milk imports	MAFF (FSL)
Listeria survey	MAFF (FSL)
Nucleic acid hybridisation for hepatitis A virus	PHLS
Epidemiology of camplylobacter jejuni in broiler chickens	Bristol University/ PHL Exeter
Survey of the incidence of listeria species in food in the United Kingdom	Leicester University
Low sodium chloride foods/microbiological safety and technological characteristics	BFMIRA
Shelf life prediction of chilled food	BRMIRA
Spore studies in relation to heat processed foods	CFDRA
Resistance of bacterial spores to sterilisation of packaging materials	CFDRA
Growth characteristics of food poisoning organisms at sub-optimal temperatures	CFDRA
Survival and growth of salmonellae and bacillus subtilis in bakery ingredients, products or fillings	FMBRA
Influence of food components and preservative factors on food borne pathogens	IFRN
Development of rapid methods for the detection of pathogenic Aeromonas species in food	Reading University
Bacteria and hygiene in abbatoirs	IFRB
Bacteria in meat and food borne illness	IFRB
Define factors controlling microbial growth and develop predictive models	IFRB
Manipulation of the microbial flora of the gut of young chicks to control salmonellas in broilers	IFRB
Safety and quality of poultry products in relation to processing	IFRB
Microbiological hazards in domestic and institutional handling of food	IFRN
Extension of shelf-life of pre-cooked chilled foods	Huddersfield Polytechnic
The modes of action and interaction of preservatives on micro-organisms	BFMIRA
Microbial antagonism to increase the safety and stability of chilled foods	BFMIRA/CFDRA

Title	Contractor
Investigation of combinations of sub-lethal treatments to preserve processed foods	CFDRA
Physiological basis of the resistance of food spoilage yeasts to SO2	Bath University
Fruit and vegetable preservation by natural mixed acid systems	Surrey University
Microbiological safety of chilled foods including salads	IFRN
Micro-organisms in food and beverage spoilage	IFRR
Effect of eugenol on heat treated yeasts	Bath University
Food hazard analysis and assessment of operational risks	Bath University
Rapid test for quality and shelf life in catering	Surrey University
Gradient plate techniques in the multifactorial control of microbial growth in foods	University of Wales, Cardiff
Rapid methods to assess the microbiological quality of foods	BFMIRA
Enzyme-linked immunological biosensors for the detection of pathogenic bacteria in food	IFRR
Limulus assay on UHT milk to determine raw milk quality	MMB
Detection of sub-lethal injury in micro-organisms	Portsmouth Polytechnic
Use of non-radioactive DNA probes for the detection and identification of food borne pathogens	Nottingham University
Develop objective indices of spoilage from chemical, microbiological and sensory changes	IFRB
Improve existing and develop new methods to assess hygienic quality of foods	IFRR
Electron transfer coupling as a rapid method for assessment of bacterial contamination	IFRR

Key:
BFMIRA—British Food Manufacturing Industry Research Association (Leatherhead Food RA).
CFDRA—Campden Food and Drink Research Association.
FMBRA—Flour Milling and Baking Research Association.
IFRB—Institute of Food Research, Bristol (AFRC).
IFRN—Institute of Food Research, Norwich (AFRC).
IFRR—Institute of Food Research, Reading (AFRC).
MAFF (FSL)—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Food Science Laboratory.
MMB—Milk Marketing Board.
PHLS—Public Health Laboratory Service.

51. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals to set up an independent body to monitor food health.

Mr. MacGregor: Food and Health Ministers already receive advice on this subject from a number of independent scientific committees of the highest standing. In addition we are extending the present arrangements by setting up an expert committee, chaired by Sir Mark Richmond, vice chancellor of Manchester university, to provide authoritative advice on microbiological aspects of food safety; the committee will publish reports both on specific issues referred to it by the Government and on such matters as it considers need investigation.

57. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration is given to food safety by his Ministry.

Mr. MacGregor: The safety of foodstuffs is central to the Government's food policy. From this point of view all aspects of the nation's food supply are kept under continuous surveillance, and the results of that work are carefully assessed by independent experts who advise the Government on any action that may be necessary.

Fishing Industry

31. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the current state of the fishing industry in north east England and the likely impact on that industry of conservation proposals now under consideration.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Current fishing opportunities for north-east England fishermen remain broadly unchanged from those in 1988 with the exception of cod and haddock, the stocks of which are giving rise to concern.

We are actively discussing with the industry, including representatives of the fishing industry in north-east England, and in the Community, ways in which the present technical conservation measures might be adjusted to assist the improved conservation of these stocks. Any proposals which emerge will take into account their likely impact on the industry.

Discussions (EC)

32. **Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met his European Community counterpart Mr. McSharry; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I last met the Agriculture Commissioner, Mr. McSharry, at the Agriculture Council on 6-8 March, on which I reported to the House on 9 March at columns 621-22.

Agriculture and Food Council

33. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of employees in the Agricultural and Food Research Council.

Mr. Ryder: I have not had any meetings with representatives of employees in the Agriculture and Food Research Council, but my noble Friend Baroness Trumpington attended the annual delegate conference of the Agriculture and Food Research Council branch of the Institute of Professional Civil Servants on 9 February this year.

Green Top Milk

34. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the Government have any plans to ban the sale of unpasteurised green top milk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Minister gave to the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 23 February at columns *712-3*.

Consumer Protection

35. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the size of the budget within his Ministry for work related to consumer protection; and what plans he has to vary it.

Mr. Ryder: Many of the Ministry's programmes relate wholly or partly to consumer protection. In 1987-88 the programmes devoted entirely to this area of work took up an estimated 5 per cent. of the Ministry's total budget, and 8 per cent. of its running costs. Further details are given in our publication "Ministerial Information in MAFF (MINIM) 1988", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Near Market Research

36. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce the level of future funding for research and development in near market research in horticulture.

Mr. Ryder: The level of future funding for research and development in horticulture will not be decided until after our consultations with industry on near-market research have been completed.

Fish Discards

37. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for reducing the scale of fish discards by fishing vessels in British waters.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are actively discussing with our fish industry and in the Community possible measures which are practicable and do not have unwanted consequences to increase the conservation of fish stocks in the North sea, including reducing discards.

Countryside Commission

38. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the Countryside Commission; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Ryder: I met the chairman of the Countryside Commission on 7 November when we discussed many issues of concern to the countryside. I am always ready to discuss matters of mutual concern with the Countryside Commission.

Country Landowners Association

39. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the Country Landowners Association; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I met the president of the Country Landowners' Association on 15 February when we discussed various matters relating to the tenanted sector, and I also met him on 1 March at a dinner given by Mr. J. Clayton the chairman of the agricultural training board.

Infant Food

40. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why he has chosen to prohibit the inclusion of certain beef products in infant food.

Mr. Ryder: As my right hon. Friend announced on 27 February, following the publication of the Southwood report on bovine spongiform encephalopathy, the measures that we propose to take to restrict the composition of baby foods are purely precautionary.

Veterinary Officers

41. **Mrs. Maria Fyfe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates he has of his future requirements for veterinary officers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The requirements for staff are under constant review in the light of changing demands and where an increasing need is identified recruitment is undertaken.

Intervention Board

43. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to extend the responsibilities and duties of the intervention board for agricultural prices, Reading, Berkshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no such plans.

Veterinary Service

44. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the future of the state veterinary service.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I consider it of great importance that this country should have a veterinary service dedicated to the maintenance of our high health status. The structure of this service, along with other, similar Government services, is kept under review.

45. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has had discussions with the Institution of Professional Civil Servants about the future of the state veterinary service.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My officials are in frequent contact with the Institute of Professional Civil Servants about matters concerning their members, including those employed in the state veterinary service.

48. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many veterinary officers he currently employs in the state veterinary service.

Mr. Donald Thompson: From information available at 1 February 1989 there are 439 permanent veterinary officers in all grades employed in the state veterinary service.

British Veterinary Association

47. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the British Veterinary Association; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have not met the British Veterinary Association recently but my officials are in frequent contact with them.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

49. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will increase the compensation payable on cattle found to be suffering from bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I believe the compensation paid is fair, given that the animals are suffering from a terminal illness but are valued as though unaffected by the disease.

11. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ban the sale of those organs from all cull cows and sheep that are known to carry the viral agent which causes bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today to the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

Cheese

50. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the use of mineral hydrocarbons in cheese wares.

Mr. Ryder: I have spoken with the Dutch Minister of Agriculture. My officials have met various representative groups, including the Dairy Trade Federation, the Creamery Proprietors Association, the European Wax Federation, the United Kingdom Provision Trade Federation and Dutch Ministry of Agriculture officials. All representations related to the use of mineral hydrocarbons in cheese rind.

EEC Policies

52. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the present agricultural policies within the European Economic Community.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission's most recent statements about the CAP emphasise the need to respect the decisions on budgetary discipline and CAP reform taken by the European Council last February, to promote more market-orientated management of the CAP, to make Community agriculture more competitive, to pursue environmental objectives, and to tackle CAP fraud.

Hedges

53. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many new miles of hedges have been created in England and Wales in each of the last three years.

Mr. Ryder: Figures for new hedge planting carried out without grant aid are not available. However, grants paid in England and Wales under the agriculture improvement scheme for hedge planting, hedge laying and associated gates and stiles broadly equate to 320 miles of hedge in 1986, 1,000 miles in 1987 and 1,450 miles in 1988 (to September only).

Set-aside Scheme

54. **Mr. Moate:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many hectares of arable land will be set aside in 1989; and how many hectares have been registered for possible future set-aside.

Mr. MacGregor: Nearly 58,000 hectares (143,000 acres) of arable land is being set aside in the United Kingdom during the current crop year; and about 3 million hectares (7 million acres) have been registered by farmers not yet setting aside land in case they should wish to apply to join the scheme later.

CAP

55. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met European Community Agriculture Ministers to discuss common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: I last met European Community Agriculture Ministers at the 6-7 March Agriculture Council in Brussels on which I reported to the House on 9 March at columns *621-2*.

58. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to reduce de facto discrimination against British producers within the European common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: I have always argued that measures adopted by the European Community should be non-discriminatory, and that the burden of CAP reform should be borne equally by all member states. In current negotiations on the Commission's 1989 price proposals I am opposing two measures which would disadvantage United Kingdom producers; the preferential treatment proposed in the agrimonetary arrangements for member states which are members of the exchange rate mechanism; and the proposed timetable for tightening the definition of double-low rapeseed which I believe should be delayed until there are varieties available to our growers which will meet the new definition. The review of the sheepmeat regime and operation of coresponsibility levies are among the other areas where I shall be particularly vigilant to ensure equitable implementation throughout the Community.

Animal Feed

56. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to extend the ban on the inclusion of animal protein derived from ruminants in animal feed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The ban on the inclusion of ruminant-derived protein in ruminant feeds will remain in force until processing methods which are sufficient to destroy the agent which causes BSE have been developed and are widely available.

GATT

59. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made on agricultural trade issues in the current general agreement on tariffs and trade round.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster reported to the House on 12 December 1988 at column *400* the outcome of the ministerial mid-term review of the GATT negotiations, including the absence of agreement on agriculture at that stage.

Since then informal consultations have been taking place on agriculture and three other unresolved issues under the auspices of the GATT director general. A meeting at official level of the trade negotiating committee of GATT is to be held in Geneva in the first week of April. The Government hope that firm agreement will be reached there on a framework for action and further negotiation on agricultural reform and will be working to that end from within the Community.

Salmonella

61. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his response to the Agriculture Select Committee report on feed salmonella problems, published on 1 March.

Mr. MacGregor: As I have already indicated the Government will be considering the Agriculture Select Committee's report and will respond formally in due course.

Thames Flood Barrier

62. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many times the Thames flood barrier has been *(a)* tested and *(b)* used in the last five years.

Mr. Ryder: During the five years, the Thames barrier has been closed 59 times for tests and used for flood protection purposes four times.

Milk Marketing Board

63. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board; and what was discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I have regular contacts with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss various issues affecting the dairy industry.

National Consumer Council

64. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the National Consumer Council; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 16 February, *Official Report*, column *356*.

Land Release

65. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the release of grade 1 agricultural land for residential building in environmentally non-sensitive areas.

Mr. Ryder: Government policy on development involving agricultural land was explained in Department of the Environment Circular 16/87 (Welsh Office Circular 25/87) issued on 8 May 1987. Grade 1 agricultural land is a national resource which should, in general, be protected from irreversible development. Government advice to planning authorities is that such land should not be built on unless there is no other site suitable for the paticular purpose. Responsibility for development control rests primarily with local planning authorities.

Sheepmeat Regime

66. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest developments regarding the reform of the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. MacGregor: Discussions on the Commission's proposals to reform the sheepmeat regime have made little progress. The revised voluntary restraint agreement with New Zealand will be considered again by the Agricultural Council next week.

67. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the sheepmeat sector of the agriculture industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall continue to maintain regular contacts with all the farming unions on matters relating to the sheepmeat sector.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

68. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many hectares have been entered into the environmentally sensitive areas initiative; and what proportion of suitable land this represents.

Mr. MacGregor: To date 103,640 hectares have been put forward into the ESA scheme representing some 87 per cent. of the land we considered suitable.

Research (Funding)

69. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on the funding of agricultural research.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 7 March at column *463*.

Lug Worms

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the threat posed by the recent increase in the gathering of lug worms in the Burry estuary to the Penclawdd cockle industry and the whole area.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have been asked to reply.

Responsibility for the management of the Burry inlet cockle fishery rests with the south Wales sea fisheries committee which has introduced a byelaw to limit the level of bait digging within the fishery. The Committee are currently reviewing the effectiveness of the byelaw.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will arrange for the lug worm, arenicola marina, to be included in the list of commercial maritime species to enable it to be included in the bye-laws of sea fisheries committees.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No.

Oils

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations have been received by his Department's food advisory committee on the use of tropical oils or vegetable oils from unspecified sources which have increased saturation through hydrogenation processes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The food advisory committee has received no such representations; I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 13 March 1989 at column *833*.

Laboratories

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many veterinary and other laboratories were directly under the auspices of his Department in each year since 1979; what proposals he has to maintain these laboratories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 March 1989]:* The information requested is shown in the table:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
1. *Veterinary laboratories* (including the central veterinary laboratory, outstations and veterinary investigation centres)	28	28	28	27	27	27	27	27	22	22	22
2. *Other laboratories*											
(a) ADAS-farm and countryside service (excluding some minor facilities for milk testing etc.)	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	16	16	16
(b) ADAS-research and development service[1]	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6
(c) Fisheries	8	8	8	7	7	7	6	6	6	6	6
(d) Food science[3]	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
(e) Royal botanic gardens	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	[3]2	—	—	—
TOTAL	39	39	39	38	38	38	37	37	31	31	31

[1] In 1988 the RDS laboratories became known as the central science laboratory in anticipation of their co-location as Wellesbourne in 1992-93.
[2] The 3 Food Science Laboratories are to be co-located at a purpose built site during 1989-90.
[3] Royal botanic gardens transferred to a board of trustees on 1 April 1986.
Note: My Department will continue to maintain an apropriate number of facilities.

Exports

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what dates the Commission of the European Economic Community has considered proposals for a Council regulation on the monitoring of payments of amounts granted on export of specified quantities of agricultural products to third countries; if this has been considered by the Council of Ministers; and when it will next consider these proposals.

Mr. MacGregor: Following a request from the United Kingdom, the Commission stated at the ECOFIN Council on 13 March that they would bring forward a revised proposal on the monitoring of export refunds which would take account of the points made by the Court of Auditors.

Dog Licences

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of attacks on livestock in the 12 months preceding the abolition of dog licences; what change in the number of attacks on livestock there has been since the abolition of dog licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: National statistics on attacks on livestock by dogs have not been collected centrally since 1978. There is no doubting that such attacks are a serious and continuing problem, but there is no evidence that they have increased recently. The Ministry campaigns continuously to encourage owners to take a responsible attitude and keep their dogs under control in livestock areas.

Poultry Farmers

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will apply the balance of the funds made available for the scheme for compensating poultry farmers for egg production destroyed towards compensating producers in full for their losses from slaughtering of poultry stock.

Mr. Donald Thompson: An order under section 29 of the Animal Health Act 1981 came into operation on 1 March, providing for the compulsory slaughter where necessary of flocks in which salmonella has been confirmed. Compensation will be paid as required under the provisions of the Act.

Import Levies

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money the International Board has owed for over 12 months to ships store merchants by way of repayment of import levies.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Under Community regulations, no payments are due in respect of repayment of import levies for ships' stores. Delays have occurred in the payment of export refunds but no claims upon which all necessary information has been properly submitted are delayed as long as 12 months. Compensation is payable on delayed payments under the scheme announced to the House on 28 July 1988.

Food (Destruction)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list each food item, and the quantity of it, destroyed during 1988 under the European Community farm regulations.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The following were the types and amounts of produce withdrawn from the market in the United Kingdom in 1988 under European Community arrangements, together with the quantitites of each product marketed in the same period.

(Tonnes)

Commodity	*Marketed*	*Withdrawn from the market*	
		Used for animal feed	*Dumped*
Cauliflowers	373,727	1,517	4,046
Apples	240,447	1,711	1,702
Pears	45,342	1,587	387
Fish	[1]643,259	6,380	130

[1]Derived from the total catch of eligible species of 649,769.

EC Price Negotiations

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set out for each commodity the Government's objectives in the forthcoming EEC agricultural price negotiations; and if he will specify the Government's overall objectives in the negotiations.

Mr. MacGregor: I indicated the Government's reactions to the Commission's 1989 price proposals during the agriculture debate on 27 February. I am seeking to build on the reforms of the CAP achieved so far, to ensure compliance with budget discipline, and to obtain an equitable outcome for United Kingdom producers.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 17 March 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the proposed grant allocation from his Department to the two city technology colleges in Cleveland and Gateshead for each of the next five years and the proposed grant allocation for secondary schools within Durham local education authority for each of the next five years.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend will pay an annual per capita grant to meet the normal running costs of each CTC in line with average costs in LEA-maintained secondary schools in similar areas. The grant for each CTC will depend on a number of factors and the precise levels for the colleges in Cleveland and Gateshead are still under consideration.

The rate support grant is paid in support of local authority services on the basis of an annual settlement. It is not hypothecated to particular services or components of those services. Revenue support grant will operate on similar principles, and it is therefore not possible to define a grant allocation for an authority's secondary schools over a five-year period.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of the capital investment allocation from his Department to the two city technology colleges in Cleveland and Gateshead and of the capital allocation for secondary education for Durham local education authority.

Mr. Butcher: The cost of the Macmillan CTC in Middlesbrough, Cleveland will be not more than £7·5 million of which the maximum contribution from the DES will be £5·625 million. A design and cost study is at present in hand on the Gateshead CTC and decisions on the level of capital funding will be taken in the light of this work.

Durham's allocation of prescribed capital expenditure for 1989-90 is £2·133 million of which £2·116 million is for schools. Within that sum no separate allocation is made for the secondary sector.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the expected number of pupils of each of the two city technology colleges in Cleveland and Gateshead for each of the next five years and the expected number of pupils attending secondary schools within Durham local education authority for each of the next five years.

Mr. Butcher: The Macmillan CTC in Middlesbrough Cleveland will open in September 1989 and places have been offered to 195 first-year pupils. The college will admit around 180 first-year pupils in each of the four succeeding years. No decision has yet been made on early recruitment of a sixth form. No decision has yet been taken on admissions to the proposed Gateshead CTC.

Projections of pupil numbers for individual local education authorities are not available centrally.

Public Service Broadcasts

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the likely implications on public service broadcasts emanating from his Department of the White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition Choice and Quality".

Mrs. Rumbold: As education information normally falls outside the guidelines for what can be included in public service broadcasts, these do not emanate from the Department.

Teacher Shortages (South Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by the four district authorities in South Yorkshire, how many vacancies exist currently in primary, junior, middle, high and secondary schools for teachers in English, mathematics, languages, science, craft and arts subjects.

Mrs. Rumbold: Numbers of vacancies in January 1988 for full-time permanent teacher posts in maintained schools of the four authorities in South Yorkshire are listed in the table. Primary school vacancies are not broken down by subject specialism, and they include middle deemed primary and nursery. Middle deemed secondary and high school vacancies are incorporated in the secondary figures.

	Barnsley	*Doncaster*	*Rotherham*	*Sheffield*	*All South Yorkshire*
Primary vacancies	3	8	16	8	35
(percentage of teachers in service)					0·7
of which, number in:					
Junior	2	1	9	1	13
Other	1	7	7	7	22
Secondary vacancies	2	8	4	6	20
(percentage of teachers in service)					0·3
of which, number in:					
English	0	1	1	0	2
Mathematics	0	1	0	0	1
Languages	0	0	0	0	0
Sciences	1	1	0	0	2
Craft Design and Technology	0	0	0	0	0
Arts	0	2	1	0	3

Primary School Closures (Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by location and date for the three counties of Yorkshire, the number of primary schools that have closed since 1979; how many were in a rural area; what schools are at present under review; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Since January 1985 the following schools have closed in North Yorkshire and in the local education authorities situated in South and West Yorkshire:

1985

Barnsley
- St. Edwin's Junior School
- Dunford Hazelhead Junior and Infants School
- Crane Moor CE Junior and Infants School
- Darfield Shroggs Head Infants School

North Yorkshire
- Silton and Kepwick CE Primary School

Bradford
- Horton Percy Nursery School

Kirklees
- Longcroft Junior School

Leeds
- Barwick in Elmet Infants School

1986

Wakefield
- East Hardwick Cawoods Junior and Infants School
- Knottingley Simpson's Lane First School
- Knottingley Tithe Barn First School
- Knottingley Throstle Farm First School

North Yorkshire
- Askrigg CE Primary School
- Reighton and Speeton Primary School
- Bilborough Fairfax Primary School
- Hunsingore Primary School
- Constable Burton CE Primary School

1987

North Yorkshire
- Flaxton on the Moor CE Primary School
- Wighill CE Primary School

Leeds
- Pudsey Littlemoor Infants School

1988

North Yorkshire
- Willerby Staxton Primary School
- Ganton CE Primary School
- Galphay County Primary School
- Grantley CE Primary School

Doncaster
- Thorne Fieldside First School

Leeds
- Brownhills Primary School
- Harehills Primary School
- Cross Gate St. Theresa's RC Primary School
- Holy Rosary RC Primary School
- St. Anne's RC Primary School
- St. Charles RC Primary School
- St. Gregory's RC Primary School

Wakefield
- Holy Trinity CE Primary School

Bradford
- St. Paul's First School
- Grosvenor First School

1989

Sheffield
- St. Vincent's RC Junior and Infants School

Fifteen of these schools were in rural areas.

Information for previous years is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The following proposals under sections 12 and 13 of the Education Act 1980 to close primary schools in Yorkshire local education authorities are at present under consideration by my right hon. Friend:

Sheffield
- Hackenthorpe Village Infants School
- Grimethorpe Springvale First School

Leeds
- East Keswick CE Junior and Infants School
- Garforth Parochial CE Junior School
- Horsforth Woodside CE Infants School
- Ledston Lady Elizabeth Hastings CE Junior and Infants School
- Morley St. Peter's CE Infants School

North Yorkshire
- Aldbrough St. John CE Primary School

Kirklees
- West Slaithwaite CE Junior and Infants School

Under-Fives

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish a table showing, for each year 1981-82 to 1987-88 the amount of grant-related expenditure assessment in respect of the additional educational needs of under-fives as a percentage of the total recurrent spending by local authorities on under-fives; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what has been the difference in cash terms, for each year 1981-82 to 1987-88, between the control total for recurrent spending by local authorities on under-fives and the outturn total spending in this category; if he will estimate the amount of any such difference for 1988-89 and 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not available in the form requested. Grant-related expenditure for the education of under-fives falls under two separate control totals of the grant-related expenditure assessment for education. The nursery control total has 49 per cent. distributed by reference to the additional educational needs index, while the primary total, which includes an allowance for under-fives in primary classes, has 11 per cent. distributed by reference to the additional educational needs index. The under-fives element of the primary control total is not separable from the rest of the total and it is not therefore possible to make the comparison requested.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the grant-related expenditure assessment in respect of primary schools takes account of the numbers of under-fives *(a)* in nursery classes of primary schools or *(b)* in ordinary classes of primary schools; what adjustments were made to the grant-related expenditure assessments in respect of primary schools in the years 1981-82 to 1987-88 in connection with the numbers of under-fives in primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The grant-related expenditure assessment for primary education takes account of expenditure on under-fives in primary classes. Nursery classes in primary schools fall within the grant-related expenditure assessment for nursery education. The relevant control totals for these GREAs have been increased by 9·7 per cent. and 6 per cent. respectively in real terms between 1981-82 and 1987-88; movements in pupil numbers have been one of the factors taken into account.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the proportions, for each year 1988-89 and 1989-90 of the present grant-related expenditure assessments in respect of the additional educational needs of under-fives in relation to the control totals for recurrent spending by the local authorities on under-fives; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Of the grant-related expenditure assessment for nursery education in 1988-89 and 1989-90, 49 per cent. is distributed by reference to the additional educational needs index for each authority. Under-fives being educated in primary classes fall within the primary total for grant-related expenditure, of which 11 per cent. is distributed by reference to the additional educational needs index for each authority.

Women Teachers (Career Breaks)

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the implications of career breaks for women teachers for the problems of teacher shortages identified by his Department.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department's memorandum to the Education, Science and Arts Committee, a copy of which is in the Library, explains the importance of continuing to secure a high rate of teachers returning to the profession, both women and men. I commend to all local authorities the supportive career break schemes developed by some, which provide information and training for teachers out of service and which can ease their return to the profession.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the implication of the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 on delegation of staffing responsibilities to governing bodies for the level of adoption of career break schemes for women teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government do not expect the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988 to affect the level of adoption of career break schemes for women teachers.

English Teaching

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to publish for consultation the draft order with attainment targets and programmes of study for English in the national curriculum for pupils aged five to seven years.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today published for consultation a draft order with an associated document setting out the attainment targets and programmes of study for English in the national curriculum, as I am required to do by section 20(5) of the Education Reform Act. The order relates to key stage 1—pupils aged five to seven. Those consulted are asked to respond no later than 21 April. I aim to make the final order in May and implementation will begin in schools this autumn. Copies have been placed in the Library.

The draft order reflects the recommendations of the National Curriculum Council, following consultations on our proposals for English for ages five to 11. I am most grateful to the council and to its officers for their work on this report. The attainment targets and programmes of study I am publishing today relate to key stage 1 pupils aged five to seven only, since requirements for pupils aged seven to 11 will not be implemented until 1990. They build upon the council's recommendations so as to set rigorous objectives, such as the council and I both wish to promote. I am also publishing a statement of reasons why the draft order differs from the precise terms of the council's recommendations, in accordance with section 20(5)(a)(ii) of the Act.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is consulting on the draft order under the provisions of section 21(3) of the Act.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time *(a)* before cases come to court and *(b)* for which remand prisoners are held before trial (i) in the Nottingham area and (ii) in England and Wales as a whole.

Mr. John Patten: National estimates of the time taken to process criminal cases in magistrates courts are published regularly in Home Office statistical bulletins—the most recent being issue 2/89 of January 1989. The table also gives the estimated number of days from offence to the date of first listing at magistrates court for Nottingham.

Information is not available centrally on the average time spent on remand in individual establishments. The information available relates to the average time spent on remand in all prison service establishments by untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners and is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (table 2.1 of the latest issue for 1987, Cm 547). Copies of both the bulletin and the Command Paper are in the Library.

Time between offence and first listing at magistrates court

Days

	England and Wales	*Nottingham*
Indictable off nces 1987	63	77
Summary non-motoring offences June 1987	103	93
Summary motoring offences June 1987	117	134

Butane Gas Sales

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many retailers have been prosecuted in the last year for failing to obey the law in respect of selling butane gas canisters or gas refills to minors; and whether he has given any advice to police forces about pursuing a more vigorous prosecution policy in this area.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Statistics of prosecutions brought under the Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985 do not distinguish between the supply of butane gas canisters and of other volatile substances. In 1987—the latest year for which information is available—15 people were prosecuted for supplying such substances to minors, and 11 of them were found guilty. Circulars have been issued to police forces giving guidance on solvent misuse and

drawing attention to the provisions of the 1985 Act. Enforcement of the Act is an operational matter for chief officers of police.

Senior Police Officers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has for each police force of the number of *(a)* senior management, *(b)* detective inspectors and *(c)* officers in specialist crime squads, and as to the numbers of men and women in each group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on the sex of detective inspectors and officers in specialist crime squads is not held centrally. Information on the senior officers down to chief superintendent level in each force is set out in the table.

Police forces in England and Wales

	Male				Female	
31 December 1988	*Chief Constable*[1]	*Deputy Chief Constable*[2]	*Assistant Chief Constable*[3]	*Chief Superintendent*	*Assistant Chief Constable*[3]	*Chief Superintendent*
Avon and Somerset	1	1	3	36	—	1
Bedfordshire	1	1	1	5	—	—
Cambridgeshire	1	1	1	5	—	—
Cheshire	1	1	2	8	—	—
City of London	1	1	1	6	—	—
Cleveland	1	1	2	7	—	—
Cumbria	1	1	1	7	—	—
Derbyshire	1	1	2	8	—	1
Devon and Cornwall	1	1	3	13	—	—
Dorset	1	1	1	5	—	1
Durham	1	1	2	6	—	1
Dyfed-Powys	1	1	1	7	—	—
Essex	1	1	3	11	—	—
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	6	—	—
Greater Manchester	1	1	6	26	—	1
Gwent	1	1	1	5	—	—
Hampshire	1	1	3	10	—	—
Hertfordshire	1	1	2	9	—	—
Humberside	1	1	2	7	—	1
Kent	1	1	4	10	—	—
Lancashire	1	1	3	13	—	—
Leicestershire	1	1	2	7	—	—
Lincolnshire	1	1	1	5	—	—
Merseyside	1	1	3	19	1	—
Metropolitan	6	16	36	155	2	3
Norfolk	1	1	1	7	—	—
Northamptonshire	1	1	1	6	—	—
Northumbria	1	1	3	13	—	—
North Wales	1	1	1	7	—	—
North Yorkshire	1	1	1	7	—	—
Nottinghamshire	1	1	2	8	—	—
South Wales	1	1	3	14	—	—
South Yorkshire	1	1	3	11	—	—
Staffordshire	1	1	1	11	—	—
Suffolk	1	1	1	6	—	—
Surrey	1	1	2	7	—	—
Sussex	1	1	3	12	—	—
Thames Valley	1	1	3	11	—	1
Warwickshire	1	1	1	5	—	—
West Mercia	1	1	2	10	—	—
West Midlands	1	1	5	21	—	—
West Yorkshire	1	1	4	19	—	1
Wiltshire	1	1	1	6	—	—
Total	48	58	125	577	3	11

[1] Includes ranks of assistant commissioner and above in metropolitan police and commissioner in City of London police.
[2] Includes deputy asistant commissioner in Metropolitan police and assistant commissioner in City of London police.
[3] Includes commanders in Metropolitan police and City of London police.

Mentally Disturbed Prisoners

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to institute a system of psychiatric bail hostels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: A consultation paper "Bail Accommodation and Secure Bail Hostels" was issued on 13 February 1989. Among other issues, the paper raises the question of bail hostels for the mentally disturbed and invites comments by the closing date of 9 May 1989.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to keep mentally disturbed individuals remanded in custody out of prison or police cells for minor offences when those individuals declare they have no fixed abode; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Bail hostels and other accommodation for bailees are available for mentally disturbed individuals who have no fixed abode as for any other individual at risk of remand in custody. Courts have information about such accommodation drawn regularly to their attention.

Armed Forces (Personnel)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the percentage of service personnel who take up employment in *(a)* the police force and *(b)* the prison service after leaving the armed forces; and what percentage of these are armed forces personnel who left before fulfilling their contract of engagement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the purposes for which 111,313 classic lethal dose 50 or lethal concentration 50 tests were undertaken in 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The figures, under the headings used in table 2 of the Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Living Animals, Great Britain, 1987 (Cm. 515), are as follows:

Primary purpose	*Scientific procedures Thousands*
A. *Body-system studies (fundamental and applied)*	
Respiratory or cardiovascular	6
Alimentary	4
Other system of body, multiple, or system not relevant	39
B. *Applied studies or purposes*	
Diagnosis	2
Safety	59
Production	1
Total	111

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to remove the requirement for LD50 tests where he considers these no longer necessary.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Secretary is not responsible for any such requirements.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what severity level was permitted in toxicity tests involving 1,902 beagle dogs in 1987 for substances used in agriculture, substances used in households, testing of food additives and testing for cosmetics and toiletries.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not available centrally.

"The Satanic Verses"

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he received from Moslem organisations concerning Mr. Salman Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses" prior to 14 January.

Mr. John Patten: About 90 letters. In addition, I met a delegation of ambassadors from three Islamic countries and the director of the Islamic cultural centre of London.

Bristol University Bombing

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable for Avon and Somerset as to the section of the Prevention of Terrorism Act under which the 10 people arrested following the recent bombing at Bristol university were held.

Mr. Hurd: I am informed that 10 people were arrested in connection with offences of criminal damage and detained under the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

"Punishment, Custody and the Community"

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those organisations and individuals who have made written responses to date to the Green Paper entitled "Punishment, Custody and the Community"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have received over 160 responses to the Green Paper. These came from judges, the Magistrates Association, benches of magistrates and individual magistrates; from the Central Council of Probation Committees, the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, the National Association of Senior Probation Officers, some probation committees and chief probation officers; from police representative organisations; from the Justices Clerks Society and the Prison Governors Association; from the Association of County Councils, the Association of Directors of Social Services, the British Association of Social Workers, the Conservative Women's National Committee, the Labour party, the Law Society, NACRO, the Prison Reform Trust, Victim Support, and other organisations and individuals. We are considering these comments carefully and a further statement will be made in due course.

Gibraltar Inquest

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the number of Metropolitan police officers who were assigned to duties in Gibraltar in March 1988 unconnected with the circumstances which led to the deaths of three terrorists and as to what advice was given to them as to whether to appear as witnesses at the inquest into the deaths of the alleged terrorists.

Mr. Hurd: I understand that four Metropolitan police officers were assigned to duties in Gibraltar in March 1988 to carry out inquiries into criminal activities unconnected with the circumstances which led to the deaths of the three terrorists. They were there with the permission of the Gibraltar authorities. It was a matter for the coroner to decide whom to call as witnesses at the inquest. Those four officers were not called.

Drink Driving

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on blood samples taken in drinking and driving cases in the Greater Manchester police area since 1986.

Mr. Hurd: All forces in England and Wales, other than the Metropolitan and City of London forces, are supplied with blood sampling kits by the Home Office. Between March 1987 and December 1988, police stations in the

Greater Manchester police area were issued with kits in which the alcohol-free swabs had been replaced by the stores department of the force with swabs acquired from an independent source.

It was later found that these locally substituted swabs contained a solution with a very small percentage of alcohol. The blood analysis results in a number of these cases may therefore have been affected. The Home Office was notified by Greater Manchester police as soon as this knowledge became available. I am arranging to review as quickly as possible convictions which may be unsafe as a result and will also consider representations from individuals who believe that they were wrongly convicted.

This was a regrettable error within the Greater Manchester police. The unsuitable swabs were withdrawn from use in Greater Manchester immediately the problem came to light. This affects cases in the Greater Manchester police area only. Inquiries have established that no other force has substituted unsuitable swabs for those supplied by the Home Office.

Prisoners (Family Ties)

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to promote prison inmates' family ties.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have taken a number of steps in recent years to help prisoners in maintaining contact with their families, in particular through increased opportunities for home leave, the introduction of payphones in open prisons and the abolition and relaxation of routine censorship of inmates correspondence in open and category C establishments.

From April the prison department will for the first time be able to make grants towards the costs of running visitors' centres outside prisons. Such grants may be made either to help start up new centres or to help existing ones in financial difficulty. In some cases these grants are likely to be crucial to the survival of the centres concerned. The department is also encouraging the establishment of creches within prison visiting rooms wherever practicable, to improve the quality of visits for small children and for their parents alike. The assisted prison visits scheme, under which close relatives on low incomes may have the costs of their visits to prisoners paid by the Government, is to be extended so that assisted visits to sentenced prisoners may take place straight after reception. Cardphones for inmates' use are to be installed in all category C prisons and their equivalents in the female and young offender systems later this year. Revised prison standing orders which come into force on 1 April will abolish long-standing restrictions on the purchase of stamps by inmates from their own money and relax restrictions on the purchase of phonecards. All these measures will help prisoners to keep in touch with their families while in custody and, we hope, help them to stay clear of crime after their release.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on British Shipbuilders' external finance limit for 1988-89.

Mr. Newton: British Shipbuilders' external finance limit for 1988-89 was originally set and published in the 1987 Autumn Statement at £80 million. Against the background of the disposal and closure of British Shipbuilders subsidiaries, I have now set a revised EFL for 1988-89 of £145 million. This increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Tibet

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Chinese Government regarding the latest actions by Chinese troops in Tibet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Chinese Government are aware of our dismay at further violence and loss of life in Lhasa. We believe that the most promising solution to the problem of Tibet is through dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Tibetan people, including the Dalai Lama. We have called for the early start of such a dialogue which the Chinese Government have themselves proposed.

Brazil (Debt Rescheduling)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his discussion with Sir Kit McMahon, chairman of the Midland bank, about the rescheduling of debt to Brazil, and the consequences for Amazonia.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has not discussed Amazonia or the rescheduling of Brazil's bank debt with the chairman of the Midland bank.

WALES

Roads

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will show 1986-87 outturn expenditure, 1987-88 estimated expenditure and 1988-89 planned on (i) trunk roads, broken down into *(a)* new construction and improvement, *(b)* structural maintenance, and *(c)* routine maintenance, and (ii) local authority roads broken down into *(a)* new construction and improvements, and *(b)* maintenance, (iii) public transport administration and (iv) local authority car parks, broken down into *(a)* capital and *(b)* current (net), and *(c)* road safety in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

£ million

	1986-87 Outturn	*1987-88 Outturn*	*1988-89 Planned*
Trunk Road Expenditure			
(i) New construction and improvement	99·829	119·090	141·878
(of which renewal of roads and bridges)[1]	19·760	15·925	16·150
(ii) Current maintenance[2]	14·632	13·341	13·865
Local Authority Expenditure			
(i) New construction and improvement of roads	66·867	*81·523	58·352
(ii) Maintenance of roads	81·925	*94·074	89·539
(iii) Professional and technical services[3]			

	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Outturn	1988-89 Planned
Highways, lighting, parking and road safety[4]	14·744	[6]14.230	19.334
Public passenger transport[5]	1·057	[6]1.019	
(iv) Car Parks			
Capital	1.602	[6]1·689	0·785
Current (net of receipts)	−2·006	[6]−1·873	−2·189
(v) Revenue support for public transport and concessionary fares	14·494	[6]14·177	17.806
(vi) Road safety	0·673	[6]0·720	1·209

[1] Formerly structural maintenance—capital.
[2] Formerly general maintenance—includes routine maintenance; winter maintenance; maintenance of road lighting and communications and maintenance of vehicles, depots and equipment.
[3] Used to be called "Local transport administration".
[4] All expenditure relating to the administrative costs other than publicity and training costs. This expenditure mainly covers the cost of the surveyors and engineers department, at all levels, providing technical support and which has not been allocated to the cost of individual projects. Not including administrative costs recoverable from central government for trunk roads.
[5] All expenditure relating to the administrative costs of planning, tendering for, awarding contracts and overseeing public transport service subsidies and concessionary fares schemes.
[6] Provisional.

Housing Sites

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how much of the 200 acres designated for housing in the valleys, housebuilding has started; at what sites; for how many dwellings; of what approximate final selling cost; and by what private companies or housing associations.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* The current total figure for Land Authority for Wales land designated for housing in the valleys programme area is 245 acres.

Since the start of the programme the authority has sold or contracted to sell sites totalling 27 acres at Penpedairheol and Pontypandy, which will result in approximately 170 new starts on dwellings in the first year of the programme and are as follows:

i. Penpedairheol (19 acres)—purchased by Wimpey.
Start 1st phase, 90 dwellings, week commencing 20 March 1989.
Selling price—complete range of dwelling types from 2 bedroomed terraced to 4 bedroomed detached from £40,000-£95,000.

ii. Pontypandy, 8 acres—purchased jointly by Eastlake and Deri Homes, Caerphilly.
Start 80 dwellings mid summer 1989.
Selling price 30 per cent. under £40,000; 40 per cent. £40,000-£55,000; 30 per cent. £60,000-£75,000.

The land authority anticipates bringing forward 40 acres per annum, mid-year to mid-year, to cater for all sectors of the housing market and envisage further sales will take place between now and the middle of the current year.

In addition to disposing of its existing land bank in the area, the authority is actively investigating the purchase of additional sites throughout the programme area, and are also discussing co-operative ventures with Tai Cymru and the WDA.

EMPLOYMENT

Passive Smoking

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Health and Safety Executive's advice on passive smoking.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive advises employers to limit the exposure at work of non-smokers to tobacco smoke. I welcome the publication by the executive in November 1988 of a free booklet, "Passive Smoking at Work", which recommends that employers, in consultation with employees or their representatives, develop and implement policies to control smoking in the work place. I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Training Boards

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what level of funding and what percentage of the training within each industry is provided by the statutory training boards;

(2) in each industry for which statutory training boards exist, what is the estimated amount of funding spent on training outside the training boards.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available in the forms requested. Details of the activities of industrial training boards are published in their annual reports, which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what relationships he envisages between statutory and non-statutory training boards and training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Cope: Industrial training organisations, whether statutory or non-statutory, have important sectoral training roles including standard settings which were set out in the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s". The TECs will not set their own standards. We expect that ITOs and TECs will seek to work together to promote training and enterprise among employers in particular sectors at local level.

Job Clubs

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for what period unemployed people are enabled to make use of the services of job clubs for the purposes of seeking employment.

Mr. Lee: There is no time limit on job club membership. Members can stay for as long as it takes to find a job, provided that they continue to comply with the terms of membership.

ENVIRONMENT

Gravelines Nuclear Plant (Leak)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he was informed by the French nuclear safety authorities about the leak in the reactor housing of the Gravelines nuclear plant on the Channel in February; and what assessment he has made of the danger it posed to members of the United Kingdom public.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We were not informed of this incident. We understand that there was no release of radioactivity to the environment, and consequently there was no need for Her Majesty's Government to be informed.

Historic Sites

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a breakdown of central

Government support for sites of historical interest by any convenient chronological classification of the date of the sites.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is not possible to analyse expenditure according to types or age of sites. Public funds for the recording, preservation or maintenance of sites of historical interest are provided through a number of channels.

English Heritage has powers to make grants for the repair or maintenance of individual buildings of outstanding architectural or historical interest and, where necessary, to acquire buildings or to assist local authorities or the National Trust to do so. It also funds rescue archaeology, aimed at making a record of important sites before development. Total central Government grant in aid for English Heritage's activities during 1988-89 was £66·1 million. Funds were allocated as follows:

	£ million
Properties in care	18·0
Grants for historic buildings and ancient monuments/buildings in conservation areas	24·0
Archaeology	7·3

Activities equivalent to those of English Heritage are carried out in Scotland and Wales by the Scottish Development Department and the Welsh Office respectively.

The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England exists principally to maintain the scholarly archive on architecture and archaeology. In 1988-89, it received £3·9 million from central Government funds. Similar activities to those of the English Commission are carried out by its Scottish and Welsh counterparts.

The National Heritage Memorial Fund is empowered to give financial assistance towards the cost of acquiring, maintaining or preserving land, buildings, works of art and other objects of outstanding interest which are also of importance to the national heritage. There must be some connection between the subject of an application for assistance from the fund and the United Kingdom. Grant in aid for 1988-89 amounted to £3 million.

The Redundant Churches Fund seeks to preserve certain Church of England churches of special historic, architectural or archaeological significance, which have become redundant. Central Government assistance for 1988-89 was £0·95 million.

The Department of the Environment has direct responsibility for managing and maintaining the royal parks and palaces estate. In 1988-89, the net provision for this purpose was £45 million.

In addition, the Property Services Agency has a large number of historic buildings and monuments in its care, including the Houses of Parliament and major government buildings.

Amazon Rain Forests

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will commission an urgent study of the effects on the climate of northern Europe of widespread destruction of the Amazon rain forest, particularly in relation to westerly air currents, originating in the area of the Andes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Work on the potential impact of Amazon rain forest destruction on global and regional climate change is already in hand as part of the Meteorological Office's research programme. An international review of all aspects of the science of climate change, of which rain forest destruction is only one, is currently being carried out by the inter-governmental panel on climate change, set up under UNEP/WMO auspices in November 1988. The science review is led by the director general of the Meteorological Office, Dr. John Houghton, with funding from the Departments of Environment and Energy and is expected to report in mid-1990.

Public Service Broadcasts

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the likely implications on public service broadcasts emanating from his Department of the White Paper, "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition Choice and Quality."

Mr. Ridley: There is no reason to suppose that the proposals in the White Paper will alter the present arrangements whereby public service messages are broadcast by the BBC. It will be for the new Channel 3 and 5 licensees to consider whether they will broadcast such messages. The arrangements for paid Government advertising on television will not be affected by the proposals.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will send guidance notes to community charge registration officers reminding them that any personal data held by them cannot be used or disclosed for any other purpose unless specifically allowed for by legislation or supporting regulations; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Detailed guidance on data protection and the community charge is contained in community charge practice note No. 4, which was published in August 1988, and in practice note No. 10, published in February 1989. Copies of all practice notes are in the Library.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, how many responses he has received to the regulations on students and the poll tax; what was the balance of opinion in these responses; and if he will list the organisations that have responded, and place their responses in the Library.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 7 March 1989]*: The Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. We have received 43 responses to the draft regulations on students and the community charge. Most of the comments concern the detail of the draft regulations and it is not therefore possible to attribute a balance of opinion to the responses. The organisations which have responded are listed in the table. Their responses were not submitted on the basis that they would be published although anybody who wished could make their own response known.

Practitioners' Working Group (incorporating ADC, AMA, ACC, ALA and LBA)
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
London Boroughs Association
Association of London Authorities
Rating Officers' Guild
Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

Council on Tribunals
Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom
Committee of Directors of Polytechnics
Standing Conference of Principals and Directors of the Colleges and Institutes of Higher Education
Heads of Research Councils
Churches Main Committee
Society of Education Officers
Association of Lecturers in Higher Education
Open University
National Union of Students
Cranfield Institute of Technology
United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting
English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting
United Kingdom Council for Overseas Student Affairs
Association for Recognised English Language Teaching Establishments in Britain

Aberconwy Borough Council
Alnwick District Council
Aylesbury Vale District Council
Blackpool Borough Council
Bolsover District Council
Cardiff City Council
Chester City Council
Dartford Borough Council
Dwyfor District Council
Eden District Council
Kettering Borough Council
Kingswood Borough Council
Lancaster City Council
Medina Borough Council
Middlesbrough Borough Council
Mid Suffolk District Council
North Norfolk District Council
Preston Borough Council
Tendring District Council
Wrexham Maelor Borough Council
Wycombe District Council
Wyre Forest District Council

Engagements

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for 4 January, the places visited by him, his travel arrangements and the mileage involved; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: No.

Parish Councils

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements exist to prevent *(a)* a chair of a parish council and *(b)* a parish councillor, also holding the post of clerk to the same council; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: By section 80(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1972, anyone holding a paid office (other than chairman or vice-chairman) under a local authority is disqualified for membership of that authority. Neither the chairman nor a member of a parish council may therefore be a paid clerk of the council. By section 112(5) of that Act, however, any member of a parish council may be appointed as an unpaid officer of the council. A chairman or member of a parish council may thus be an honorary clerk to the council.

Local Authority Assets

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to issue guidance to local authorities on the privatisation of local authority assets.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Specific guidance is issued on such matters as the transfer of local authority housing, as appropriate. The Audit Commission report on local authority property management published in February 1988 has already recommended that local authorities regularly review their property portfolio to ensure that it is being put to appropriate use and is not surplus to their requirements. Progress in implementing these recommendations is being monitored by the Department in consultation with the Audit Commission and the local authority associations.

Redbridge (Voluntary Transfer)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has received any representations on the London borough of Redbridge's intention to spend £500,000 on its proposals for voluntary transfer.

Mr. Trippier: The Department has received no such representations.

Asbestos Water Pipes

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what adverse effects have been identified from the use of asbestos pipes for water supplies; what is the total estimated use of such pipes; what is the current estimated cost of replacement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 15 March 1989]:* There is no evidence of a risk to health from the levels of asbestos found in drinking water in the United Kingdom, including any derived from the use of asbestos cement pipes.

About 10 per cent. of water mains in the United Kingdom are made of asbestos cement. The cost of replacing them is not known.

Thames Water Authority (Land)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Islington, North, *Official Report*, 14 December 1988, columns *904-5*, he will state what exclusive, or near exclusive, arrangement has been made by the Thames water authority concerning disposal of land it deems surplus to operational requirements.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 15 March 1989]:* The arrangements made by water authorities for the disposal of surplus land are a matter for those authorities subject to the statutory obligation to achieve the best price reasonably obtainable for the property they sell.

TRANSPORT

London Underground

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ask the railway inspectorate to examine whether

the design of passenger carriages in new trains proposed for any of London's Underground lines provide for either *(a)* fewer seats or *(b)* more people to stand, than the current carriages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The railway inspectorate examines as a matter of course all aspects of proposed designs for new underground rolling stock submitted to it by London Underground Ltd.

Exit Barriers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the annual year-on-year estimated cost of repairs and maintenance for the automatic exit barriers installed in London Underground stations following completion of the installation programme; and what is the estimated life of such barriers.

Mr. Portillo: These are management matters for the Underground, to which the questions should be addressed.

Transport Police

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the real unit cost of each additional officer recruited to the transport police.

Mr. Portillo: Additions to the complement of the BTP are estimated to add some £30,000 per annum per officer to the total cost of the force in a full year.

Ticket Machines

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to what items of information are held on the magnetic strips of the weekly, monthly and season tickets used in London Transport's automatic ticket machines.

Mr. Portillo: The magnetic strip holds data relating to the type and validity of the ticket but the precise details are commercially confidential to prevent fraud.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce legislation to prevent the installation of automatic ticket machines which can trace or monitor the movements of a particular ticket holder; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: No. The matter of compliance with or enforcement of the Data Protection Act is a matter for the Data Protection Registrar.

Milford Bypass (Sound Barrier)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost of the construction of sound barrier banks on the A3 Milford bypass; how many residents will benefit from them; and what compensation is being paid to those where no barrier is proposed.

Mr. Channon: Sound barrier banks will be provided at no additional cost. Some 70 properties will benefit by a noise reduction of 1dBa or more. Compensation will be payable under the relevant legislation. The amounts, which will be subject to negotiation with the district valuer, cannot be estimated at this stage.

High-Speed Rail Line

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department's financial evaluation of British Rail's high-speed line proposal will be expected to show, after using a commercial discount rate, a positive net present value in the year in which construction commences to ensure compliance with the provisions of section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act.

Mr. Portillo: Before this project can proceed, the Government will require any British Rail investment in it to show a positive net present value discounted at the discount rate agreed between the Department and British Rail. For the purpose of such calculations the year to which the costs and revenues are discounted is immaterial.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what he estimates will be the minimum discount rate that will be applied to his Department's financial evaluation of British Rail's high-speed line proposed to ensure compliance with the provisions of section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act.

Mr. Portillo: If the new line were to be financed by British Rail, the board would need to demonstrate that the project would produce a commercial return. The discount rate used to test this (currently 7 per cent.) will be agreed between BR and the Department. It will need to reflect the Treasury's required rate of return, which is intended to ensure that commercial public sector investment programmes (such as BR's) provide a rate of return which is broadly equivalent to that which could be achieved in the private sector. The required rate of return was set in 1978 and is currently under review.

Driver Licensing (Harmonisation)

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consult motoring and other transport organisations about the European Commission's proposals to harmonise driver licensing in member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are today consulting interested organisations about the Commission's proposals for driver licensing. A copy of the consultation paper has been placed in the Library.

Bringing our driver licensing system into line with other European countries makes sense. Drivers who go abroad will benefit from having an internationally recognised licence. There is still a good deal of work to be done on the details of the proposal. Our objectives in the forthcoming negotiations will be to ensure that:

- road safety remains the first priority of driver licensing and the transport needs of all United Kingdom citizens are fully recognised in the years ahead;
- licence holders from other member states who come to live in Great Britain are required to obtain a British licence;
- drivers of minibuses used for non commercial purposes and light goods vehicles up to 7·5 tonnes are not forced to take a second test;
- the degree of detail relating to disabilities required to be shown on the licence is reduced to a level that is compatible with our licensing arrangements.

Provided that we can get these important points satisfactorily resolved, the proposed European Community regulations should benefit drivers by ensuring that when they go abroad they have an internationally recognised licence, and do not face complications about their rights or abilities to drive different categories of vehicle.

Motorway Service Areas

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's policy and practice for providing new motorway service areas in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our general policy for motorways is to provide service areas at strategic sites roughly 30 miles apart. Motorway service area (MSAs) rank as Crown developments and the general policy is that their siting, planning, design and operation are arranged by the Department to ensure:

(1) The development of an adequate national network of MSAs;

(2) Genuine competition between prospective operators through the competitive tendering of sites;

(3) Road safety, by restricting access to the motorways; and by preventing inappropriate activities at MSAs, in particular consumption of alcohol;

(4) The maintenance of the necessary range of facilities for 24 hours a day, including facilities for the disabled and provision for heavy goods vehicles.

In practice, the Department identifies sites, seeks planning clearance for a proposal and acquires the freehold of a site, either by agreement or by compulsory purchase. Competitive tenders are then sought from the private sector for the development and a long lease of the site in return for a premium payment. The successful tenderer then builds and operates the MSA.

It is sometimes suggested that service areas would be developed more quickly if the Department were to withdraw from MSA provision. There is no reason to believe this would be the case. There would remain a need for careful choice of site subject to the normal planning processes, and delay would be likely to arise from the need to determine competing planning applications, particularly where public inquiries were necessary. There have already in fact been cases where competing applications have delayed provision of the Department's strategic sites.

To ensure the development of a national network and the other objectives of competition, road safety and range of facilities, it is essential for the Government to take the lead in the provision of MSAs.

TRRL (Research Marketing)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives exist for the transport and road research laboratory to market British research in the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* As part of the United States strategic highway research programme, the Department of Transport has co-financed (with the science and engineering research council) a representative to join the permanent staff in Washington.

This officer's duties include seeking opportunities for British research organisations to tender for contracts within the $150 million SHRP budget. The transport and road research laboratory has submitted a tender within this framework, together with several other United Kingdom organisations.

SCOTLAND

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will send guidance notes to community charge registration officers reminding them that any personal data held by them cannot be used or disclosed for any other purpose unless specifically allowed for by legislation or supporting regulations; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Data protection guidelines for community charges registration officers in Scotland which cover the disclosure of personal data have been prepared by the Scottish Assessors Association following discussion between themselves and the Data Protection Registrar. My right hon. and learned Friend does not propose to issue any additional guidance on this matter.

Taxi Driving Licences

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the frequency of subject access requests to police forces from drivers in connection with applications for taxi driving licences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. Applicants for subject access under the Data Protection Act are not required to state the reasons for their application.

Mentally Disturbed Prisoners

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in each year for the past five years the number of suicides in each establishment for which he is responsible; how many of those concerned were known to have had a history of mental disturbance; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the table below.

Penal establishment: Number of suicides

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Barlinnie Prison	2	3	3	3	5
Cornton Vale Institution	—	—	1	—	—
Dumfries Young Offenders Institution	—	—	—	1	—
Edinburgh Prison	1	—	1	1	1
Glenochil Institution	1	2	—	1	1
Perth Prison	—	1	2	—	—
State Hospital					
State Hospital, Carstairs	—	2	2	—	—

Of the 34 cases of suicide, 14 of the inmates were known to have had a history of mental disorder.

Wherever inmates are considered to be at risk preventive measures are taken in relation to their accommodation and observation. In the event of a suicide, careful consideration is given to the subsequent findings of the fatal accident inquiry or internal investigation and procedures reviewed. Although the greatest care is taken by staff to identify, protect and treat those who are thought to be at risk, deaths from unpredictable and determined acts of self-destruction do occur.

Roads

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will show 1986-87 outturn expenditure, 1987-88 estimated expenditure and 1988-89 planned expenditure on (i) trunk roads, broken down into *(a)* new

construction and improvement, *(b)* structural maintenance, and *(c)* routine maintenance and (ii) local authority roads broken down into *(a)* new contruction and improvements, and *(b)* maintenance, (iii) public administration and (iv) local authority car parks, broken down into *(a)* capital and *(b)* current (net), and *(c)* road safety in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

£ million cash	1986-87 Outturn	1987-88 Outturn[1]	1988-89 Estimate
1. Motorways and Trunk Roads			
(a) New construction and improvement	79·2	94·6	88·6
(b) Structural maintenance	15·9	18·2	22·9
(c) Routine and winter maintenance	19·3	17·8	18·7
2. Local Authority Roads			
(a) New construction and improvement[2]	130·5	115·5	130·8
(b) Maintenance	156·2	172·4	192·7
3. Public Transport Administration[3]	25·2	27·8	29·0
4. Road Safety in Scotland[4]	1·5	1·7	1·7

[1] Local authority outturn figures are provisional only.
[2] Includes local authority expenditure on car parks which is no longer separately identified.
[3] Local authority expenditure on administration of roads and transport services.
[4] Excludes expenditure by the Department of Transport on national road safety publicity. Expenditure on new construction and improvements and on maintenance also contributes to road safety.

Appledore-Ferguson Ltd.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received a letter from Mr. Hugh Hagen, convenor shop-stewards' committee, Appledore-Ferguson Ltd., Newark Shipyard, Port Glasgow on the negotiation on the disposal of the yard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend received a letter on 7 March from Mr. Hagen requesting a meeting with him to discuss the future of the Ferguson yard. In view of the statement made to the House on 24 February by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, when he announced that British Shipbuilders were inviting new bids for Fergusons by 31 March, it would be premature for my right hon. and learned Friend or me to meet representatives of the work force at this stage. My right hon. and learned Friend has written to Mr. Hagen accordingly.

Lurcher's Gully

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all inquiries which have been undertaken into the status and development of Lurcher's Gully since 1979, giving in each case the cost to public funds.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The inquiry held in 1982 is the only inquiry under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Acts which has been held into possible development at Lurcher's Gully. The cost of that inquiry to public funds could not now be established except at disproportionate cost. The Select Committee on Scottish Affairs made recommendations about future skiing development at Cairngorm in the report of its inquiry into the Highlands and Islands Development Board in 1985, but the cost of that inquiry is not a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend.

THE ARTS

Museum of Mankind

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will ask the trustees of the Museum of Mankind to mount an exhibition and seminar to promote Amer-Indian art from the Brazilian rain forest.

Mr. Luce: The exhibitions policy of the British museum, of which the Museum of Mankind is a part, is a matter for the museum's director and trustees and is not something in which I should intervene.

I understand, however, that between 1985 and 1987 the museum mounted a major exhibition entitled "The Hidden Peoples of the Amazon", which included two thirds of the Amazonian collections of featherwork, costumes, pottery and other everyday artifacts, many of which show a strong artistic inspiration. The exhibition was supported by a series of films and lectures at which contemporary environmental and cultural problems were discussed.

In 1978 the museum hosted a smaller exhibition on the art of the Brazilian Indians and it continues to provide many schools, specialists and general inquiries with information about the native peoples of Amazonia.

DEFENCE

Frequency Transmissions

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what studies his Department has undertaken to determine the effects of electromagnetic radiation at extremely low frequencies on human health;

(2) what studies his Department has undertaken to determine the effects of electromagnetic radiation at extremely low frequencies on plant life;

(3) what studies his Department has undertaken to determine the effects of electromagnetic radiation at extremely low frequencies on animal life;

(4) what information he has regarding the effects of extremely low frequency electric and magnetic radiation on plant, animal and human life.

Mr. Sainsbury: Long-term studies of the effects of ELF and power line frequencies have produced no evidence to suggest that there are adverse public health effects or adverse effects on plants and animals. The fields that would be produced by the proposed system are several orders of magnitude less than the National Radiological Protection Board's reference level figures for the protection of persons.

Frequency Transmissions

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the antennae for the planned trial extremely low frequency transmitter at Glengarry forest in Scotland will be mounted above ground or buried below ground;

(2) to which local authority application will be made in regard to planning permission for the planned trial extremely low frequency transmitter at Glengarry forest in Scotland.

(3) when planning permission will be applied for in regard to the planned trial extremely low frequency transmitter at Glengarry forest in Scotland;

(4) what is the proposed maximum power requirement for the proposed trial extremely low frequency transmitter at Glengarry forest in Scotland; and what will be its maximum power output;

(5) what areas of the United Kingdom have been identified as potential sites for operational extremely low frequency transmitters;

(6) if the exact site characteristics and possible cable routes for the proposed trial extremely low frequency transmitter at Glengarry forest in Scotland have now been identified;

(7) if he will state the conductivity, in mho per metre, of the underlying bedrock of the proposed trial extremely low frequency transmitter at Glengarry forest in Scotland;

(8) what will be the maximum range of the proposed trial extremely low frequency transmitter at Glengarry forest in Scotland;

(9) what area, in hectares, the proposed trial extremely low frequency transmitter at Glengarry forest in Scotland will cover.

Mr. Neubert: The present plan for the proposed trial ELF transmitter at Glengarry forest is that a notice of proposed development (NOPD) is to be produced with a view to submission to the Highland regional council later this year. The NOPD will be a comprehensive formal document containing information about the purpose of the ELF aerial, its proposed course, the unique features of the site, positioning of related facilities, technical and civil engineering concepts, design proposals and methods of construction.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the total cost to date of the proposed trial extremely low frequency transmitter at Glengarry forest in Scotland; what is the latest estimated construction cost of the project in the years 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993; and what is the current total estimated cost of the project;

(2) how much has been spent, to date, by his Department on the area of extremely low frequency communications; and how much it is planned to spend by the end of 1993.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our policy to give out details of expenditure on specific research projects.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the progress of the upgrading programme for the Royal Navy very low frequency communications system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member on 10 February 1989 at columns *859-60*.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any contracts have been awarded to Rediffusion Radio Systems, in regard to extremely low frequency communication systems.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has yet determined whether or not extremely low frequency communications systems will have an operation role to play in improving the operatinal effectiveness of Royal Navy submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: One of the functions of the ELF demonstrator programme is to investigate what operational capabilities such a system might offer. No decision on the use of ELF will be taken prior to the results of such research being available.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if there has been any co-operation between the United Kingdom and French Governments with regard to the use of extremely low frequency technology for the purpose of communicating with submarines;

(2) if there have been any agreements between the United Kingdom and French Governments regarding the use of extremely low frequency communications facilities for the purpose of communicating with submarines;

(3) if it is proposed that there will be any co-operation between the United Kingdom and French Governments with regard to the use of extremely low frequency technology for the purpose of communicating with submarines;

(4) if it is proposed that there will be any agreements between the United Kingdom and French Governments regarding the use of extremely low frequency communications facilities for the purpose of communicating with submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: While it is the policy of the United Kingdom Government to partake in research collaboration with other nations in order to make the most efficient and cost-effective use of our resources; it is not our policy to disclose specific topics which are the subject of such collaboration.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any agreement exists between the United Kingdom and United States Governments regarding the use of TACAMO very low frequency communications systems for communication with Royal Navy submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the United States TACAMO very low frequency communication system is used with a NATO role.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: TACAMO is a United States communication system. It could therefore be used to relay NATO messages to United States forces assigned to NATO.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if any Royal Navy submarines are currently equipped to receive extremely low frequency transmissions;

(2) how many Royal Navy submarines will be equipped to receive extremely low frequency transmissions from the proposed trial extremely low frequency transmitter at Glengarry forest in Scotland when it becomes operational in 1993.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to comment on operational matters of this kind.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any Royal Navy submarine has ever used the United States TACAMO very low frequency communications system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any agreements exist covering the use of the extremely low frequency transmitters in Wisconsin and Michigan, USA, for the purpose of communicating with Royal Navy submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no agreements between the United Kingdom and the United States Governments concerning the use of these transmitters.

Nuclear Disarmament

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the United Kingdom first entered into negotiations towards nuclear disarmament under the terms of article VI of the 1970 non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Article VI of the non-proliferation treaty requires the parties to it to pursue negotiations on effective measures connected with nuclear disarmament. Since the United States and the Soviet Union possess between them the overwhelming preponderance of nuclear weapons it is universally recognised that the primary responsibility for negotiations falls to them. The United States and the Soviet Union are currently engaged in such negotiations which aim at 50 per cent. reductions in their strategic nuclear weapons.

"Peace and Security"

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the book "Peace and Security" edited by Susan Forrester.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence library already has a copy.

Scientists Against Nuclear Arms

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any invitation has been received for officials in his Department to attend as observers at the annual conference of Scientists Against Nuclear Arms on 22 and 23 April.

Mr. Sainsbury: To the best of my knowledge, no invitations have been received for officials in my Department to attend as observers at the annual conference of Scientists Against Nuclear Arms.

Condor 2

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the range of the Condor 2 ballistic missile system under development by Argentina.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We have no reason to doubt recent press reports which suggest that the Condor missile could have a range in the region of 600 miles (1,000 km).

Nuclear Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role was played by Her Majesty's Government in the drafting of *(a)* the 1983 Montebello agreement and *(b)* the 1987-88 intermediate nuclear land forces treaty of Washington.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On the first part of the hon. Member's question, Her Majesty's Government were fully involved in both the preparation of the high level group report and in the subsequent ministerial meeting at Montebello in October 1983.

On the second, the 1987-88 intermediate land nuclear forces treaty is a treaty between the Governments of the United States and the Soviet Union. However, as one of the five European basing countries, Her Majesty's Government were kept fully informed at all stages of the negotiations.

Calder Hall and Chapelcross

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts his Department has with *(a)* British Nuclear Fuels plc and *(b)* any other corporate organisations in respect of Calder hall and Chapelcross; and what is their value.

Mr. Sainsbury: British Nuclear Fuels plc produces and processes special nuclear materials for the Ministry of Defence, but for security reasons and in accordance with the practice of successive Governments, details and costs of the programmes undertaken by the company cannot be disclosed.

Vehicle Testing

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on what criteria roughly 470 miles of cross country use on each of two medium mobility DROPS validation vehicles is considered adequate troop trialling;

(2) what mileage onroad, offroad, and cross country he will expect future medium mobility vehicles to complete in trials; and what similar mileages have been demanded of other medium mobility vehicles in the past;

(3) why he has not so far submitted the performance and reliability of the latest design of MMLC DROPS to protracted cross-country trialling; and if he will make a statement on the implications for the confidence of soldiers and the general public in such equipment of the absence of such trials.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* Trials requirements for medium mobility vehicles vary according to their roles and battlefield missions. In the case of the DROPS medium mobility load carrier they are particularly demanding, but the programme is nevertheless ahead of schedule. In addition to troop trials, in the evaluation and validation phases the DROPS vehicle has so far covered some 146,000 km including some 10 per cent. cross-country and 20 per cent. off-road. The design of vehicle recently trialled by BAOR is essentially the same as that originally evaluated and has been accepted by the Army as meeting the operational requirement.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Desert Locust Control Organisation

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution has been made by Her Majesty's Government to the Desert Locust

Control Organisation in 1988; whether its work has been restricted in any countries; what action the Government have taken to maximise the Desert Locust Control Organisation's effectiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1988 we contributed a total of over £700,000 for the locust control activities of the Desert Locust Control Organisation in Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA), mainly in the form of emergency supplies. We also committed £1·75 million for its armyworm control project, of which we spent over £60,000 in 1988. We understand that conflict in northern Somalia and Ethiopia restricted DLCO-EA's ability to work in certain areas.

Following a review of DLCO-EA in 1987, carried out with the European Community, we are providing an operations adviser, two pilots and training for DLCO-EA staff to help to improve operational performance. We have also offered to provide expert advice in strategic planning, financial management and vehicle fleet management, together with a number of trucks. Only when we receive confirmation that DLCO-EA is implementing the recommendations of the 1987 review will we consider providing further long-term support.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Management Consultants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the total fees paid out by his Department to management consultants in 1979-80 and each year to date; and what is the estimate for the current year.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The estimate of fees to be paid to outside consultants in the current year and amounts spent in each of the last four years is as follows:

	£ thousand
1984-85	1,217
1985-86	2,041
1986-87	2,094
1987-88	2,347
1988-89	2.510

Comparable figures for the years 1979-80 to 1981-82 are not available because of machinery of Government changes and the figures for 1982-83 and 1983-84 could only be given at disproportionate cost. The figure for the the current year is a forecast outturn. Information distinguishing between different types of consultancies (for example, management and other) is not available.

Fish Farms

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to on what advice or research work, with respect to disease and parasite control stocking density and site separation, the Crown Estate Commissioners have based their revised guidelines for the siting and design of fish farms.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* In preparing revised guidelines on fish farming the Crown Estate Commissioners have drawn on a wide range of experience [illegible]esearch. Guidelines on the siting and design of marine fish farms in Scotland were published in 1987 following consultation with the relevant departments, agencies and interest groups. Further experience and commissioned research provide the basis now for an expansion of the locational framework and the advice on operating standards. One of the most important elements is the distance between fish farms and the indicative standards recommended in the guidelines reflect the range of expert opinion.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to which interested parties are being consulted over the Crown Estate Commissioners' revised guidelines for the siting and design of marine fish farms.

Mr. Lawson *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* The Crown Estate Commissioners have consulted the following bodies with a draft of their development strategy and area guidelines:

Scottish Office Departments
Highlands and Islands Development Board
Countryside Commission for Scotland
Nature Conservancy Council
Relevant Planning Authorities
National Farmers Union of Scotland
Scottish Salmon Growers Association
Association of Scottish Shellfish Growers

HEALTH

Child Abuse

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects his Department's study of child abuse to make its report.

Mr. Mellor: Perhaps the hon. Member would specify which study he is referring to.

"Working for Patients"

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to whom responses to the White Paper, "Working for Patients" from organisations representing patients should be sent; and by what date they should be sent.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Each working paper gives the name and address of a contact point in the Department. Where proposals depend on primary legislation the necessary discussions with interested parties need to be completed by May 1989.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from rural general practitioners since the publication of the White Paper, "Working for Patients."

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have received a very small number of representations from individual GPs.

Medical Audit

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on medical audit in other European Economic Community countries, including the cost thereof.

Mr. Mellor: Comprehensive information on EC work on medical audit could only be provided at disproportionate cost, but I have lodged a list of publications in English, compiled by the Kings Fund Centre, in the Library.

Malaria

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what conveniently available figures he has for the costs of research, work and treatment of malaria and related disease.

Mr. Freeman: There is no central figure available for the cost of treatment of malaria and related disease. The number of cases of malaria notified in England and Wales in 1986 (the latest year for which figures are available) was 1,663.

The main agency through which the Government support medical and related biological research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. In the financial year 1987-88, the total cost of projects with relevance to malaria supported by the MRC was approximately £1·8 million. The MRC is always willing to consider soundly based research proposals for funding in competition with other applications.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leyton, *Official Report*, 22 February, columns *671-72*, if he will list separately in the *Official Report* for *(a)* each district health authority and *(b)* each family practitioner committee the number of members from black and ethnic minority communities as at (i) 1 January 1979 (ii) 1 January 1984, and (iii) 1 January 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The appointment of district health authority members is the responsibility of the relevant regional health authority and local authorities. In our guidance about how these appointments should be made we encourage them to draw members from ethnic minority groups where appropriate.

We do not monitor the ethnic composition of family practitioner committees. However, FPCs are asked when seeking nominations to ensure that organisations representing ethnic minorities are encouraged to put names forward.

Broadcasting

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the likely implications on public service broadcasts emanating from his Department of the White Paper, "Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition Choice and Quality."

Mr. Mellor: There is no reason to suppose that the proposals in the White Paper will alter the present arrangements whereby public service messages are broadcast by the BBC. It will be for the new Channel 3 and 5 licensees to consider whether they will broadcast such messages. The arrangements for paid Government advertising on television will not be affected by the proposals.

Organ Transplants

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress he can report on the introduction of the Hoffenberg system of audit of brainstem deaths; whether there has been any increase in the number of transplanted organs since previous years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The national audit of deaths in intensive care commenced on 1 January 1989. We shall shortly be assessing its operation; it is too early to draw general conclusions from the study.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients are currently on the waiting list for kidney and other transplants.

Mr. Freeman: According to information provided by the United Kingdom transplant service the number of National Health Service patients waiting for organ transplants in the United Kingdom on 12 March 1989 was:

Organ	*Number*
Kidney	3,556
Heart or Heart/Lung	442
Liver	47

Decade of Disabled Persons

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what support his Department is giving to the United Nations global project to promote the decade of disabled persons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor : The Department of Health is providing rent-free office accommodation at its premises in London for the project manager of the global secretariat of the United Nations global project.

South Cumbria District Health Authority

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes in front-line staff in South Cumbria district health authority have been achieved since 30 September 1982 in both numbers and percentages.

Mr. Mellor: The information is shown in the table:

NHS staff in post in South Cumbria district health authority at 30 September: Front line staff[2]

Whole-time equivalents[1]		*Change 1982 to 1987*	
1982	*1987*	*WTE*[1]	*Percentage*
1,280	1,330	+50	+3·9

Source: Department of Health Annual Census of NHS Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole time equivalents. Changes calculated on unrounded figures.

[2] Includes medical and dental (permanent paid, honorary and locum staff, nursing and midwifery [including agency] and professional and technical [excluding works]) staff.

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes there have been in the numbers of both in-patients and out-patients treated since 30 September 1982 by South Cumbria district health authority, including percentages.

Mr. Freeman: The information is shown in the table:

In-patients and out-patients treated, South Cumbria District Health Authority 1982 and 1987-88

	1982[1]	*1987-88*	*Percentage change*
In-patient cases	17,313	22,088	27·6
New out-patients	24,291	30,720	26·5
Total out-patients attendances	107,419	129,961	21·0

[1] Data prior to 1987-88 was collected on a calendar year basis, and since then on a financial year basis.

Doctors (Contracts)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will summarise the responses he has so far received to his proposals to change the doctors' contract.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government's plans for improving the family doctor service and making it more responsive to patients were set out in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health". The objectives of this White Paper were widely supported in many quarters including the representatives of general practitioners, the general medical services committee. Following 12 months' consultation with the GMSC negotiators, I recently set out the Government's plans in more detail in the report "General Practice in the National Health Service—A New Contract", which I sent to all general practitioners.

I have received a variety of responses in person, in writing and through the helpline set up for GPs in my Department. The response of individual GPs depends to some extent on their circumstances. Those who provide fully comprehensive services and are attracting patients to their lists are able to see how their practice incomes can increase as a result of the reforms we advocate. Others are recognising the need to change the way they run their practices if they are to maintain practice incomes at present levels. To summarise, the responses vary, but a number of important changes are enthusiastically welcomed, such as the greater emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention and on health care in areas of deprivation.

I intend to have a further meeting with the GMSC negotiators myself and I still regard myself as engaged in a process of consultation with them, despite the outspoken comments of some of their leaders and of some of their local medical committees.

NHS (Pay)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from National Health Service staff regarding the new pay round; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have received almost 700 letters since the beginning of August about the 1989-90 pay round of staff groups covered by Whitley councils; mostly about the pay of professional and technical staff.

Social Workers (Training)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work has provided guidance to local authorities about refresher training for social workers approved in connection with the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Mellor: The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work is to publish guidance on refresher training for local authorities for approved social workers later this year, following widespread consultation.

M. and I. E. Dentsply

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make it his policy to re-examine the allegations that Mr. Richard Gibson, formerly an employee of M. and I. E. Dentsply, has made in relation to the manufacture of hospital anaesthetic equipment; (2) whether, in the light of the allegations made by Mr. Richard Gibson, he will order an immediate inspection of all the medical equipment the National Health Service has purchased from M. and I. E. Dentsply.

Mr. Freeman: No. I am satisfied that the allegations have been properly investigated and evaluated.

Occupational Therapists

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how short of its official establishment of occupational therapists, expressed in percentage terms, is *(a)* the National Health Service, *(b)* the Trent region and *(c)* the Leicestershire health authority.

Mr. Mellor: The most recent survey data published in the evidence to the pay review body indicate that nationally just over 14 per cent. of occupational therapy posts are unfilled after three months. The figure for the Trent region is 19·3 per cent. We do not hold centrally data on unfilled posts at district level.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the waiting time for a first visit by an occupational therapist in *(a)* the Market Harborough area, *(b)* the Leicester area, *(c)* the Trent region and *(d)* nationally, today; and what were the comparable waiting times (i) five years ago and (ii) 10 years ago.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect this information centrally. Local authorities are responsible for the provision of domicilliary occupational therapy. My hon. Friend may care to write to the relevant local authority for the details he requires.

Stair Lifts

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average delay in assessing a request for the installation of a stair lift *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the Trent region and *(c)* in the Leicestershire health authority area.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally. Assessments of need for the installation of a stair lift are the responsibility of local authorities who are required under section 4 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 to make an assessment when requested to do so by a disabled person or their carer.

Mechanical Equipment (Safety)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many anaesthetic machines were recalled during August, September or October 1988; by which companies they were manufactured; and what were the circumstances behind the decision to recall.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) on how many occasions in the last five years metal particles or swarf have been discovered in anaesthetic gas systems; and by which companies the machines were manufactured;

(2) what information he has on the effect the presence in an anaesthetic gas system of metal particles or swarf could have on the machine and the anaesthetised patient.

Mr. Freeman: No such incidents have been reported from the NHS to the Department in the period in question under our defect reporting system. The scale of any problem would depend on the size, shape and distribution of particles within the system, the type of breathing system in use, and the positioning and type of filter within the gas system.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health under what circumstances an order is issued by his Department to recall a piece of medical equipment; and what criteria are used when deciding whether to issue such an order.

Mr. Freeman: The circumstances under which medical equipment is recalled vary with the type of equipment, the nature of its use and the potential hazard involved. It is recalled primarily where there is an unacceptable risk to the safety of patients or staff.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any faults were found by his Department's inspectors with the quality assurance systems of M. and I. E. Dentsply in 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Freeman: A small number of points were raised as a result of the inspections and were remedied by the company shortly afterwards. The company remains registered under the Department's manufacturer registration scheme.

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department's guidelines allow the purchase of anaesthetic tables for the National Health Service to contain certain industrial valves which have had to be modified for medical use.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. International standard ISO 5358 is the relevant standard and health authorities purchase to this standard.

Kidney Disease

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the incidence of kidney disease in the Norwich health district and nationally in the most recent year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Freeman: Information on the incidence of disease is not collected centrally. The estimated number of in-patient cases treated in 1985 (the latest year for which statistics are held centrally) are shown.

Estimated number of in-patient cases treated with main diagnosis of kidney disease in NHS non-psychiatric hospitals, England, 1985

	Number
Kidney Disease[1]	35,160
Cancer of Kidney[2]	5,130

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) Codes.
580-591.
592.0.
592·9.
593.0-593.2.
593·9.

[2] ICD Codes.
189.0-189.1.
223.0-223.1.

The sample numbers held in the Department's database are too small for reliable estimates to be made for Norwich health district.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide a detailed breakdown of his Department's expenditure on the launch of the White Paper, "Working For Patients."

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* The costs of the launch of the "Working for Patients" White Paper were as follows:

	£
Initial Concept and Designs	31,265·30
Videos	174,615·69
Teleconference (8 venues)	440,235·91
Roadshows (6 venues)	179,227·83
Communications Packs, 3000	302,324·32
'Popular' leaflet (3 million)—printing and distribution	119,817·50
Management Summary (350,000)—printing and distribution	111,830·00
Invitations, Letterheads, Compliment Slips, 3000	14,397·35
Catering, Transport, Crew Expenses, Signs and Badges	21,757·15
Total Cost	1,395,471·05

Operating Department Assistants

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals the Whitley council is considering in relation to improvements in the pay and conditions of operating department assistants; what consideration the Bevan committee is giving to recommendations concerning operating department assistants; and what grade operating department assistants are currently employed on.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* A Department of Health study on staffing and utilisation of operating theatres is being overseen by a steering group chaired by Professor Peter Gilroy Bevan. A final report is due shortly. It is expected that the report will contain some recommendations on the grading and deployment of operating department assistants.

Operating department assistants are employed in 3 grades, trainee, basic and senior. Their pay and grade structures are being examined by a working group of the management side of the professional and technical staff B Whitley council.

Benzodiazepines

Dr. Owen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether, in the light of large-scale addiction to benzodiazepines, he proposes to change the present system of regulating the pharmaceutical companies; and what measures have been taken to ensure that such addictive drugs cannot be introduced in future.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* I have no plans to change the present regulatory system which pharmaceutical companies must follow before a medicinal product can be licensed for sale or supply in the United Kingdom. Benzodiazepines are only available on prescription, and doctors have been issued with guidance on prescribing these drugs in the light of the latest evidence

on addiction. When considering whether to advise that a new medicinal product should be licensed on the basis of safety, quality and efficacy, the Committee on Safety of Medicines takes account of all relevant factors including any evidence there may be that the product may be addictive. Its advice would be given only after weighing very carefully the likely benefits of the product against anticipated risks. Where appropriate, suitable advice would be issued to prescribers.

Dr. Owen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action has been taken or is going to be taken following the chief medical officer's meeting with the leaders of the medical profession to discuss benzodiazepine prescribing.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* A number of useful suggestions were made at the meeting including the development of guidance on good practice which could be used at practice level. A research study has been funded to fill some existing gaps in our knowledge with the aim of giving doctors a practical means to improve their prescribing of benzodiazephines.

ENERGY

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has received the report, "The Transport of Plutonium by Air and Sea", written by Jonathan Spink and Paul Helliwell for the European Proliferation Information Centre on behalf of the national steering committee of the nuclear free zone authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has received a copy of the report. A copy of my Department's reply on the security and proliferation issues raised in the report has been placed in the Library of the House.

Historical Mine Equipment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, what steps are being taken to preserve historical mine equipment in particular when a pit is being closed and the site cleared; and whether he is aware of any records of the original fire engine at Barnburgh pit, Doncaster.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

CEGB (Capital Investment)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is the current rate of return sought by the Central Electricity Generating Board on new capital investment;

(2) by how much he has increased the rate of return as new capital investment by the Central Electricity Generating Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The current required rate of return on new investment by nationalised industries is 5 per cent.

Lea Hall

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will discuss with the Central Electricity Generating Board when Lea Hall power station at Rugeley, Staffordshire, will be retrofitted with flue gas desulphurisation equipment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is for the Central Electricity Generating Board and its successors to determine the order in which large coal-fired power stations should be retrofitted with flue gas desulphurisation equipment in order to meet their share of the United Kingdom's commitment to reduce sulphur dioxide emissions. The board recently announced the award of a contract to retrofit flue gas desulphurisation equipment to the Drax coal-fired power station.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veterinary Graduates

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment his Department has made of the likely demand on a national basis, for veterinary graduates in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Sir Michael Swann's committee of inquiry into the veterinary profession recommended in 1975 that the manpower needs of the profession should be reviewed by the Government at intervals of approximately five years. The last review, chaired by Lord Stodart of Leaston, recommended in 1985 that the annual intake of students by veterinary schools between 1986 and 1990 should be 302 per annum.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and I are currently considering whether to carry out another review.

Green Product Labelling

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations his Department has received concerning the creation of an independent expert investigative body to examine green product labelling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* No representations have been received concerning the creation of an independent body to examine green product labelling.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Household Incomes

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the rise in real household income between 1979 and 1985, broken down by economic type, for all decile groups and the average, in the manner of his answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh South, 29 July 1988, *Official Report*, columns *819-20*.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A table providing this information has been put in the Library. It should, however, be noted that the principal objective of the "Households Below Average Income" statistics is to measure improvements in living standards in different parts of the income distribution for the population as a whole. The tables are not designed to measure the living standards of individuals by economic

status within each decile of the population. Although compositional figures by economic status are included in the main "Households Below Average Income" statistics, it should be noted that the information on real income increases by economic status within each decile provided in reply to this question does not provide a meaningful guide to improved living standards.

Hostels

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, pursuant to the answer given to the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on 27 October, *Official Report*, column *337*, he intends to defer any change in hostel dwellers' benefits until after April 1990; and when he expects to make an announcement of any new system of benefits.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 16 March at columns *546-48*.

Statistics

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the scope of statistics recorded by receptionists at his Department's local offices; and what details are included.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Local social security office receptionists keep a simple tally of all callers plus, in the case of some income support and social fund callers, information about identity, residence, and reasons for the call and its outcome. The information about numbers is required for staffing purposes, and about individuals for claim processing purposes. A statistical exercise is conducted for a short period each year to establish caller waiting times. This information is not necessarily recorded by receptionists.

Pensions (Canada)

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions have been held between his Department and the Canadian Government regarding the uprating of pensions payable to pensioners residing in Canada; and when the most recent meeting took place.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The most recent meeting between officials of the Department and Canadian officials to discuss a possible agreement to include the uprating of pensions payable to British pensioners in Canada was in 1983. Further progress has not been possible because of the considerable public expenditure implications—about £48·5 million a year at April 1988 pension rates—of such a change to a policy consistently followed since 1955.

Family Credit

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he estimates family credit take-up to have been in 1988 in terms both of expenditure and caseload; and if he will explain the basis on which those estimates have been calculated.

Mr. Moore: For employees, the estimated family credit expenditure take-up during 1988 was 65 per cent. Take-up by caseload was about 50 per cent.

Figures obtained by modelling 1985 and 1986 family expenditure survey data suggested that caseload take-up was approaching 50 per cent., but we wanted to substantiate this with a direct estimate from up-to-date information. We therefore asked the social survey division of the OPCS to carry out a manual examination of FES returns for the period April to December 1988. Five thousand three hundred and six returns were examined. All family credit recipients were identified. Households with no dependent children or no adult in full-time work were eliminated and those families whose income clearly made them ineligible were also excluded. A detailed calculation of family credit entitlement was carried out for the remainder. The results of this exercise indicate a lower total eligible employee population than the assumption originally made in October 1987, and show that in 1988 it was about 500,000. This compares with an average live load during 1988 (including eligible cases awaiting award) of about 253,000. The basis of this estimate is the same as that which was always used to estimate family income supplement take-up. Families which include someone who is self-employed are also eligible for family credit. During 1988 the average number of such families receiving family credit was about 24,000.

Whilst the sift and calculations were carried out to a very high standard, the results are subject to the uncertainties of small sample sizes. This exercise provides the best and most up-to-date information available, and supports the results we had already obtained from modelling 1985 and 1986 FES data.

These estimates show that during 1988 there were probably still over 250,000 families who were eligible to receive family credit but who did not claim it. This underlines the need for the major advertising campaign which my Department is planning to start in April to ensure that these people who are, or may become, eligible for family credit are made aware of that eligibility and given every opportunity to claim.

Transport Disasters (Social Fund)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) whether there have been any demands on the social fund contingency reserves following the series of transport disasters; and if there is a fixed sum set aside;

(2) how much has been paid out in social fund crisis loans by the Department of Social Security offices covering the Lockerbie area following the air crash and in Inverness following the recent floods; and if any other Department of Social Security offices have call on this contingency fund.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The local office which serves the Lockerbie area is Dumfries. To date no applications to the social fund have been received as a result of the air crash.

The local office at Inverness has received four applications to the social fund in respect of the recent flooding in Inverness. These applications resulted in three awards of community care grants totalling £1,571 and one award of a budgeting loan of £260·52. There were no applications for crisis loans.

A contingency reserve of £2 million is held centrally and is primarily intended to meet additional and unforeseen expenditure arising from disasters and emergencies which individual local offices cannot meet. There are no specific sums set aside within this reserve. To date there have been no applications for additional amounts from the contingency reserve.

Pensioners (London)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the additional living costs of pensioners in London.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Transitional Protection

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details of how claimants' benefits will be affected by the £2 a week reduction in housing benefit transitional protection in April; which groups will have their payments reduced; and in what circumstances the reduction will not apply.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It has been made clear from the outset that housing benefit transitional payments would be reduced as increases in other benefits make them less necessary. The flat rate deduction of £2 in April 1989 will apply to the majority of recipients, but will ensure that the majority of them gain in cash terms from the uprating. There will be special arrangements to protect the small number of people dependent on social security benefits who would otherwise see a cash loss.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much of the predicted income support increases from October of £95 million in 1989-90 and £195 million in 1990-91 will be offset by savings in expenditure on income support transitional protection.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available. Transitional protection will not be affected when the increases are introduced in October.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much of the allocated funds for transitional protection will be spent in the current year, based on the number of claims received, the proportion of successful claims and the average award; and if he will give an indication of the expected expenditure on the scheme in 1990 on this basis.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Of the 445,885 applications for housing benefit transitional payments received at 13 March 185,726 (45·6 per cent. of those assessed) have been successful, 219,314 refused and the average award is currently £3·91 a week. The majority of cases outstanding are because of inquiry forms not having been returned from local authorities. In view of the recent decision to defer the closing date for applications until 30 June 1989 and the number of applications still being received, it is not yet possible to estimate the expenditure in 1988-89 or 1989-90.

Social Fund

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will list, for each social security office in Scotland, for each month of the current financial year, the number of *(a)* successful claims and *(b)* unsuccessful claims for assistance from (i) social fund grants and (ii) social fund loans; and if he will give a breakdown of the number of unsuccessful claims at each office into categories of reasons for refusal.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information about the number of successful and unsuccessful claims and applications is available in the Library. Information about unsuccessful claims and applications broken down into categories of reasons for refusal could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will list, for each social security office in Scotland, the amounts allocated for *(a)* social fund grants and *(b)* social fund loans for the current financial year and the total amounts spent from *(a)* and *(b)* at the end of each month of the current financial year, expressing the latter figures also as percentages of the total allocations for the current financial year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Such information is available from the details in the Library.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, in view of the effect of the Housing Act 1988 on rental levels, he has any plans to impose cash limits on housing benefit payments for 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no such plans. Housing benefit will continue to be available to help those on low incomes with their reasonable housing costs up to market rent levels.

Peto International Institute

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions he has had about providing some financial assistance for the Peto international institute in Budapest; and whether he has yet made a decision.

Mr. Scott: Ministers received an invitation from the Hungarian Government in December 1988 to participate in developing an international Peto institute. I met a delegation from the Hungarian Government in London on 17 January to discuss the Hungarian plan in greater detail, and ways in which any financial contribution from the United Kingdom could benefit children in this country, both through their use of the international institute, and through continued Hungarian support for related developments in the United Kingdom. These discussions are continuing.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table of each social security change since the major reform of social security in April 1988 including changes as part of the April 1989 uprating, showing the gainers and losers and the spending and savings as a result of each measure.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 February 1989]:* The majority of the changes made in social security since April 1988 are set out in the amendments to the regulations made under the Social Security Acts. Major changes have been announced in statements to the House by my right hon. Friend. These include the changes to the capital rule and transitional protection on housing benefit, announced on 27 April 1988 at columns 356-61; the uprating of social security benefits on 27 October 1988 at columns 455-58, which included details of the additional resources available for low-income families with children

from April of this year and the extra help for poorer pensioners announced on 24 November 1988 at columns 241-49.

Other changes have been given in written answers, in particular the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on 18 July 1988 at columns *487-88*, which detailed changes to board and lodging arrangements; the reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 28 February at columns *161-62* concerning widows' benefits and the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 13 March at columns *27-28* which gave details of additional help to vulnerable 16 and 17-year-olds. Precise estimates of the effect of every change in social security since April 1988 are not readily available. Estimates of the numbers affected by individual changes, where available, were included in the announcements. The "Impact of the Reform Structure of Income-Related Benefits" shows the estimated effects on claimants of the changes that took place in April 1988.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 20 March 1989

TRANSPORT

Britannia Bridge

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has made any assessment of *(a)* the cost or *(b)* the effects on safety of a reversible lane on the Britannia bridge on the Commercial road (A13) at Limehouse.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The provision of a reversible lane, while the repair works are being carried out, was ruled out for safety reasons.

Engineering Materials

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the progress of the inquiries by British Transport police into contracts for engineering materials; when they are likely to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the involvement of any managerial staff.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that inquiries by the British Transport police are continuing and are likely to take some time to complete. These are matters for the British Transport police, the Attorney-General and the Lord Advocate.

Catalytic Converters

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's policy towards encouraging the use of catalytic converters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply he received from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on 16 March at column *319*.

Hazardous Substances (Road Transport)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to increase the fines payable by haulage firms failing to comply with regulations on the safe transportation of dangerous substances by road; and if he will make a statement on the EEC report on long-distance drivers and safety.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no plans to do so.

Most relevant offences under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 are dealt with summarily in magistrates' courts, where the maximum penalty for each single offence is £2,000. Magistrates can refer serious cases on indictment to the Crown court, where the maximum fine is unlimited.

The study of hours worked by drivers engaged in international road transport was carried out in Holland in 1984-85. It recommended that drivers should work fewer hours, and that there should be increased enforcement.

The 1986 EC drivers hours regulations include provisions for increased weekly rest and a recent EC directive setting minimum levels of enforcement came into effect on 1 January 1989.

Fissile Materials

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the regulations to be met by consignors of plutonium and other fissile materials exported by sea.

Mr. Portillo: The regulations and conditions for the transport of all radioactive materials (including plutonium) are based on the internationally accepted standards of the International Atomic Energy Agency safety series No. 6. A copy is held in the Library.

For United Kingdom sea consignments these are given effect by:

The Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) Regulations 1981 (SI 1981 No. 1747).

The Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (SI 1986 No. 1069).

In addition, the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 (SI 1985 No. 1333) apply to all modes of transport.

City of Westminster (Coach Parking)

Mr. Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has had with the City of Westminster council regarding parking arrangements for coaches in London SW1; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: I met the chairman of Westminster City council's planning and development committee in December last year as part of my continuing effort to support the council with its coach parking responsibilities. Our discussions concentrated on how illegal on-street parking by tourist coaches might be discouraged and how legal parking arrangements might be improved.

These discussions have been taken forward by my officials. Westminster have met the Metropolitan police, who have written to the Bus and Coach Council explaining that in a bid to minimise illegal coach parking, especially in streets surrounding Buckingham palace, the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, they will be carrying out an advice and enforcement campaign starting this month and continuing throughout the summer.

My officials also attend Westminster's coach working party, which discusses a range of coach parking issues across London; and the Department has commissioned a major comprehensive study of tourist coach traffic in London, which is due to report later this year.

Bus Lanes

Mr. Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce legislation to abolish bus lanes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no plans to abolish the power of local highway authorities to install bus lanes. My hon. Friend will know from my answer to his question on 10 February that we believe that bus lanes can be justified when the benefit to bus users exceeds the cost to other road users. I am writing to him enclosing a copy of our current technical advice on the subject.

City of Westminster (Traffic Flow)

Mr. Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet officials of the City of Westminster council to assess the bus lanes and the traffic flow between Vauxhall bridge road and Drummond gate, London SW1; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are not aware of any particular reasons for an assessment of bus lanes and traffic conditions between Vauxhall bridge road and Drummond gate.

Freight (Continental Europe)

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the proportion of freight to continental Europe by *(a)* weight and *(b)* value which will be carried (i) through the Channel tunnel, (ii) by air and (iii) by sea, broken down where possible by individual port, on completion of the tunnel.

Mr. Portillo: The Department of Transport does not produce forecasts of cross-channel freight traffic in total or by mode. Instead, on certain occasions, when the pattern of future cross-channel freight traffic has implications for the public sector, it forms its own view on the available forecasts.

Air Services (Malta)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now designate British Island Airways as a British carrier for the Gatwick-Malta and Manchester-Malta routes commencing on 10 April.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: British Island Airways was designated for these routes on 10 March 1989.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive in his Department the written decision from the Civil Aviation Authority regarding the recent route licence applications by Air Europe, Air UK, Monarch and British Island Airways to Malta starting on 1 April.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department has received a copy of the decision, which was dated 10 March 1989.

Air Transport Licences

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many air transport licences have been revoked in each of the last 10 years other than for non-use;

(2) how many air transport licences have been revoked in each of the last 10 years for subsequent non-compliance with statements of intent given at Civil Aviation Authority route licence hearings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These are matters for the Civil Aviation Authority. I will ask the chairman of the authority to write to my hon. Friend.

Coastguard (Breeches Buoy Equipment)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by whom the line-throwing breeches buoy equipment withdrawn from Her Majesty's coastguard on 31 March 1988 has been purchased; if he will give details of the number of sets of this equipment sold and the moneys received in payment; and how the funds realised from the sale of this equipment will be invested.

Mr. Portillo: All line-throwing rockets and launching devices, which formed an integral part of breeches buoy equipment, were over age or obsolete and destroyed. Some ancillary equipment plus a variety of miscellaneous items, were purchased by the Department of Marine of the Republic of Ireland at a total cost of £6,940. The remainder will be disposed of as Government surplus. All receipts count towards departmental appropriations-in-aid, and are not available for direct use by Her Majesty's coastguard.

Sub-Post Offices (Vehicle Excise Duty)

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if there are any plans to add to the network of sub-post offices which issue vehicle excise licences.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Sub-post offices provide an efficient and convenient vehicle excise relicensing service, particularly in rural areas. There are currently 3,550 offices providing this service. Some 2,000 are sub post offices. Following negotiations with Post Office Counters Ltd. we are pleased to be able to announce that a further 60 sub-post offices will be added to the relicensing network over the next few months. The choice of offices will be made by the Post Office, but I shall be writing to right hon. and hon. Members in whose constituencies individual offices are situated.

Fishing Vessels and Submarines (Incidents)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on incidents which took place on 27 February and 3 March, involving fishing vessels and submarines; what investigations he is undertaking into the incidents; and what action he is proposing to take to avoid similar incidents recurring.

Mr. Portillo: On 27 February 1989 a near miss incident was reported involving three fishing vessels and a submarine near Little Cumbrae Island, Firth of Clyde. On 3 March 1989 the fishing vessel Seagull reported a near miss involving an unidentified unlit vessel near the Cock of Arran. The Department's marine surveyors are investigating both incidents. When their inquiries are completed appropriate action will be considered.

Vale of Rheidol Narrow Gauge Railway

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the purchaser of the Vale of Rheidol narrow gauge railway; when he expects the sale to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail is proposing to sell this railway to the Brecon mountain railway company, subject to my right hon. Friend's consent. We are considering the evidence on the case and we shall make an announcement as soon as possible.

Road Noise

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the Government's policy regarding provision of double glazing, secondary glazing and other measures in connection with noise from road traffic;

(2) what steps he takes to monitor noise levels on urban and suburban roads;

(3) if he will introduce a minimum noise level which would automatically attract grant assistance for noise insulation.

Mr. Bottomley: Government policy is to seek to reduce the effect upon residential properties of noise from new roads by careful design, including where appropriate the use of earth bunds and noise barriers. Under part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973, owner-occupiers can claim compensation from the Government in respect of depreciation in the value of their property arising from the use of a new road. Claims may be made as from 12 months after the road comes into use.

In addition, under the Insulation Regulations (1975 to 1988) the Government offer secondary glazing for eligible rooms of dwellings where it is estimated that maximum noise levels, during the 15 years after road opening, will be at least 68 dBA on the L10 18 hour scale, with a contribution of at least 1 dBA from traffic using the new road. Where insulation has been offered or installed, its benefit is taken into account when setting the level of part I compensation. These provisions apply to roads constructed on behalf of the Secretary of State. Local authorities follow similar procedures. The regulations also allow insulation to be provided on a discretionary basis in respect of noise insulation arising from road alterations.

For older, unaltered roads, there is no entitlement to compensation or noise insulation. In respect of trunk roads, the Department does occasionally exercise a discretion to provide noise barriers where the noise levels are high and where the benefits of barriers would be substantial.

We have no proposals to alter the qualifying noise levels under the noise insulation regulations or to seek to introduce qualifying noise levels for houses beside older roads. There is no general monitoring by the Department of noise levels on urban or suburban roads.

HM Coastguard

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications of the amount of overtime being undertaken by Her Majesty's coastguard and the hours worked, for safety in handling emergency rescues.

Mr. Portillo: Overtime working by individuals is voluntary but is strictly controlled to ensure that performance is not impaired. The average among watchkeepers is 4·7 hours/week and among sector officers is 1·4 hours/week. There is no indication that hours worked have had any adverse effect on the safe handling of emergency rescues.

A36 (West Wellow)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the contract for the study of the A36 through West Wellow was put out to competitive tender.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A study was commissioned in September 1986 without competition. The appointment of consultants for design announced on 14 March 1989 followed competitive tender.

Dr. Tony Ridley

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he can now announce the terms on which Dr. Tony Ridley resigned from London Regional Transport.

Mr. Portillo: London Regional Transport will pay to Dr. Ridley a sum equivalent to six months' pay in lieu of the notice provided for under the terms of his appointment, that is £30,000. LRT will pay sums to make up the difference between the immediate reduced pension which Dr. Ridley had already earned on 10 November 1988, and the actuarially reduced pension which would have been payable to him on retirement at the end of his appointment on 31 August 1991.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Irish Teachers

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether Irish teachers who qualified in the Republic of Ireland will become licensed teachers from September when employed by British local education authorities;

(2) whether Irish teachers who qualified in the Republic of Ireland will, from September, be fully and automatically recognised by his Department on application by the employing local education authority; and whether applications for recognition will be processed within a two-week period;

(3) whether route 2(b) application procedure for his Department's recognition by Irish teachers seeking qualified teachers' status will still be available from September as the self-advocacy route to his Department's recognition;

(4) whether route 2(e) application procedure for his Department's recognition by Irish teachers seeking qualified teachers' status will be abolished in September.

Mrs. Rumbold: We propose, subject to further consultation, to lay regulations before the House introducing the licensed teacher route to qualified teacher status from September 1989. This will replace all existing routes to qualified teacher status other than the successful completion of a course of initial teacher training in England or Wales. Local education authorities will then be free to employ teachers trained in Ireland as licensed teachers who will progress to qualified teacher status after up to 2 years' satisfactory performance as licensees.

Teachers (Shortages)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is his policy towards providing financial support for teacher recruitment and retraining initiatives by local education authorities in relation to the problems of teacher shortages identified by his Department;

(2) what information is available to his Department on any teacher recruitment and retraining initiatives being undertaken by local education authorities in relation to the problems of teacher shortages identified by his Department; what steps are being taken by his Department to promote good practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The recruitment, employment and deployment of teachers is the responsibility of local

education authorities and schools. It is for them to determine the level of recruitment and retraining necessary in the light of their own needs. The costs of retraining are eligible for support through the LEA training grants scheme. The Department is aware of good practice and special measures in a number of local authorities. The teaching as a career unit whose remit has just been extended for three years, promotes good practice in recruitment on the basis of guidelines agreed by my Department.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards future numbers of re-entrant qualified teachers, with appropriate retraining, in relation to the problems of teacher shortages identified by his Department; what actions he has taken in pursuit of this policy in recent years, and at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend recognises the great importance of encouraging former teachers to re-enter the profession. My Department's memorandum to the Education Science and Arts Committee—a copy of which is in the library—indicates the importance of re-entrants as a source of supply and highlights good recruitment practice to attract returners. In recent years the proportion of teaching posts filled by former serving teachers has risen steadily to about 50 per cent. This proportion has been achieved without the widespread use of special measures by local authorities who, as employers, have responsibility for the employment and re-training of re-entrants. With proper publicity for employment opportunities, good employment practices and support and training measures the proportion of posts filled by re-entrants can remain substantial. The costs of re-training are eligible for support through the LEA training grants scheme.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether there is any religious group from which he would automatically reject a proposal to sponsor a city technology college; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: All proposals put to us for the establishment of city technology colleges are considered strictly on their merits. My right hon. Friend would not, however, find any proposal acceptable which sought to provide exclusively for applicants from particular religious groups.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the criteria to be used in evaluating a proposal from a sponsor to support a city technology college based on the principles of any religion.

Mr. Butcher: In considering any proposal from prospective sponsors my right hon. Friend will first look at whether it meets the objectives and requirements of the CTC programme. A number of such sponsors have indicated that they would wish to place an emphasis on Christian values in their CTCs. This is entirely complementary to the fundamental CTC objective of preparing young people more effectively for their adult responsibilities and opportunities. But no CTC will admit pupils on the basis of their religious beliefs; and we shall ensure that all CTCs are fully representative in all respects of the communities they serve.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received any proposals or representations from companies or trusts to establish city technology colleges based upon religious principles other than Christianity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: No such proposals or representations have been received.

Universities (Public Funding)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all the administrative forms which universities have to fill in to comply with procedures for the control of public money they receive.

Mr. Jackson: The control of public money is not meaningfully separable from the range of dealings between the University Grants Committee and individual institutions. However, the committee's main source of information on financial matters is the annual return form 3 (finance).

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is, for each year, since 1974 the amount of public funds given to universities in *(a)* Austria, *(b)* Denmark, *(c)* France, *(d)* Germany, *(e)* Holland, *(f)* Italy, *(g)* Spain, *(h)* Sweden, *(i)* Canada, *(j)* the United States of America and *(h)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jackson: The readily available information covering higher education is shown in the table and is on a per capita population basis to enable comparisons to be made.

Public recurrent expenditure[1] on higher education in 1983 and 1984 (calendar years)

	Current expenditure per capita (£)	
Country	*1983*	*1984*
France	41	42
Germany	37	[2]58
Italy	25	26
Netherlands	98	95
United Kingdom[3]	57	58
United States of America[4]	168	165

[1] At purchasing power parity; data prior to 1983 and 1984 have been adjusted via consumer price indices.
[2] Revised coverage of source statistics.
[3] Excluding expenditure on nursing and paramedical courses at Department of Health establishments. Also excludes in-service teacher training secondment costs.
[4] Provisional.

"School Governors: A New Role"

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many copies of the booklet "School Governors: A New Role", have been supplied to the Conservative party; and what payment was made for them.

Mrs. Rumbold: Sample copies of "School Governors: A New Role" were distributed to a wide range of organisations, including representatives of political parties. Further copies are supplied free of charge to any

individual or organisation asking for them. So far over 750,000 copies have been distributed: the Department does not keep a record of the number supplied in response to each individual request.

Voluntary-aided Schools

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will give an indication as to the projected time scales for reaching a decision on proposals to establish voluntary-aided schools.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend's objective is to reach a decision within five months of the publication of such proposals.

Teachers (Salaries)

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to ensure that funding by local education authorities for schools through the local management scheme takes into account the actual salaries paid to teachers, rather than the average level of salary within that local authority area.

Mrs. Rumbold: The central determinant of schools' funding under schemes of local management should be the numbers and ages of pupils. Pupils of the same age should therefore attract the same resources, including the same element for teaching costs, irrespective of which school they attend within the local authority area. It will be for governing bodies to manage their costs, including salaries, from within their budgets as derived on this basis. In practice, variations from average salary costs will be limited. My right hon. Friend has made clear that schools with fewer than 10 teachers, excluding the head teacher and deputy, may receive enhanced funding where they have above average salary costs.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Medical Service

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide in the Library an updated report stating the extent to which Her Majesty's Government have implemented the recommendations relating to mentally disturbed inmates in the third report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1985-86 into the prison medical service and the Government's response thereto, Cm. 115; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am arranging for this to be done.

Mentally Disturbed Prisoners

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate the number of psychiatric reports prepared outside prison department establishments on persons remanded to all prisons and cells in England and Wales for each year from 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent and current studies he has commissioned into mentally abnormal and disordered offenders in prisons; whether they include those held on remand; whether any recommendations have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Two studies are under way and the Department expects to decide on a third shortly.

In October 1987 a contract was entered into with the institute of psychiatry, university of London, to produce over a three-year period a definitive statement of the dimensions of the problem of sentenced mentally disordered offenders in the prison system. This will provide a basis for the consideration of the development of policy in the medium and long term. In November 1988 the institute of criminology, university of Cambridge, was contracted to research into sentencing by the courts in relation to the use of sections 37 and 41 of the Mental Health Act 1983 in making hospital and restriction orders. The intention is to obtain reliable information on whether, and if so to what extent, the courts are unable to make hospital and restriction orders in all cases that they wish, and to examine the factors affecting their decisions.

The third study is currently under consideration. This would also be carried out by the Institute of Psychiatry. It would focus on the working of the procedures for courts to remand defendants to obtain medical reports.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many secure units are available to his Department for accommodating mentally disturbed offenders *(a)* specifically for such offenders and *(b)* along with convicted prisoners not so categorised; and where they are situated.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Prisoners who meet the criteria under the Mental Health Act 1983 may be transferred to special hospitals or regional secure units. Within the prison service there is a variety of provision for mentally disturbed prisoners. This includes the CRC special unit at Parkhurst C wing, which is intended exclusively for convicted prisoners with a history of psychiatric illness and who also pose persistent control problems.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when was the last full-scale review in his Department of out-of-prison alternatives for mentally disturbed prisoners who are *(a)* sectioned and *(b)* in other categories; and what plans he has for the provision of such alternatives.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: An interdepartmental working group of Home Office and DHSS officials on mentally disturbed offenders in the prison system in England and Wales which reported in May 1987 carried out a review of all alternatives to imprisonment for mentally disturbed prisoners. The provision of facilities for the treatment of the mentally disordered outside prison is a matter for the Department of Health. The consultation paper issued last month by the Home Office on bail accommodation and secure bail hostels included discussion of the use of bail hostel accommodation for mentally disturbed defendants.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he categorises *(a)* prisoners requiring psychiatric attention and *(b)* mentally disturbed offenders; how many are in each category; and what is the proportion of the prison population as a whole for each category and in total.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Prison medical officers, in examining inmates on reception, identify as a priority those who by reason of their mental state may require particular attention whether of a medical or general management nature. In such cases referral to a psychiatrist would be an early course of further action. Where an inmate is considered to be suffering from mental disorder of a nature or degree which would satisfy the criteria of the Mental Health Act 1983 for detention in hospital for medical treatment, the prison medical officer would use the procedures of that Act to seek the inmates removal to an appropriate hospital. Two hundred and ninety inmates of prison service establishments in England and Wales were on 30 September 1988, the latest date for which figures were available, considered by prison medical officers to meet those criteria. That figure represents 0·58 per cent. of the prison population of 49,922 on that date.

Information as to the total number of inmates in the much wider range of those considered to be mentally disturbed but not such as to satisfy the criteria of the Mental Health Act 1983 is not held centrally. Two censuses were undertaken by prison medical officers of inmates serving sentences of six months and more considered to require specialised therapeutic facilities by reason of mental disorder or abnormality. The censuses showed that on 4 December 1985 1,583 inmates and on 1 October 1986 1,340 inmates were in that category. Those figures represent respectively 3·38 per cent. of the prison population of 46,752 on 6 December 1985 and 2·85 per cent. of the prison population of 46,912 on October 1986.

The study being undertaken by the Institute of Psychiatry, referred to in the answer to another question by the hon. Member, is designed to produce a comprehensive psychiatric profile of the sentenced prison population.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of the prison population the number of inmates referred to National Health Service consultant psychiatrists and other National Health Service psychiatrists represented in the last year for which figures are available, and to what extent inmates may be referred to more than one psychiatrist.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During the period 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988 12,285 inmates were referred by prison medical officers to NHS psychiatrists appointed to visit establishments on a sessional basis or to NHS consultants for domiciliary consultations. In addition, psychiatric consultations were arranged for 4,151 inmates at the instigation of inmates' legal advisers.

On the imformation available it is not possible to calculate that the sum of those numbers represents a given proportion of the prison population since that population is not static. While the average prison population in 1987-88 was 49,300 (including an average of 750 prisoners in police cells) the number of first receptions to prison service establishments in the course of that year was in the order of 136,000.

Prison medical officers have unfettered clinical discretion to call other medical practitioners into consultation and are not restricted as to the number consulted in any individual case.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate the current extent, and regularity, of police training including that involving professional psychiatric expertise, in dealing with mentally disturbed individuals who create a disturbance; whether there are any plans to improve this training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Training for all ranks in the police service aims to develop oficers' interpersonal skills, knowledge and attitudes to enable them to deal effectively with all sections of the community, and to foster an understanding of the social context of policing and the role of other agencies. As part of this integrated approach, officers will study such areas as responding to illness—including mental disturbance—in the street, dealing with distressed persons and the social causes of crime.

Chief officers and commandants may invite members of the psychiatric profession to contribute to training in forces and at district training centres. The police staff college involves members of the psychiatric profession in a number of its courses. Police training is kept under regular review by the police training council, which seeks to ensure that all training meets the needs of the police service and the community at large.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether disturbances at Bedford prison during 1988 involved mentally disturbed prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No prisoners diagnosed as mentally ill (who would be held in the prison hospital) were involved in any incident of violent concerted indiscipline at Bedford during 1988.

Body Belts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate each prison establishment in which body belts were used during 1987, the number of inmates upon whom they were used for each establishment, the number of inmates fitted with body belts twice or more, and the extent of injuries or deaths arising as a result.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following information for 1987 relates to prison establishments in England and Wales. It is additional to the particular case of which the hon. Member has knowledge and which involved the use of a body belt in transit between establishments. The table shows, by establishment, the number of occasions on which a violent or refractory inmate was kept in an establishment under restraint by means of the application of a body belt, and the number of inmates:

Establishment	*Number of applications*	*Number of inmates*
Prisons and remand centres		
Albany	1	1
Bedford	1	1
Blundeston	1	1
Canterbury	2	2
Chelmsford	2	2
Frankland	6	[1]5
Hull	7	7
Leeds	1	1
Leicester	6	6
Lindholme	1	1
Long Lartin	4	[1]3
Oxford	1	1
Parkhurst	5	5
Pentonville	2	2

Establishment	*Number of applications*	*Number of inmates*
Reading	1	1
Stafford	3	3
Wakefield	2	2
Wandsworth	6	[1]5
Wormwood Scrubs	3	3
Youth custody centres		
Dover	7	7
Glen Parva	1	1
Guys Marsh	1	1
Hollesley Bay Colony	1	1
Northallerton	1	1
Onley	1	1
Rochester	7	7

[1] Includes one prisoner to whom a body belt was applied twice.

I am not aware of any case in which a causal connection between death and the application of a body belt has been proven. Such information as is available centrally about injuries to inmates does not enable injuries sustained in circumstances where a body belt was in use to be separately identified.

Michael Bettaney

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long Michael Bettaney has spent in solitary confinement; and what are the reasons for it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. Bettaney is not held in solitary confinement.

Street Lighting

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answer of 25 January, *Official Report*, column 588, what early action Her Majesty's Government propose to take substantially to improve lighting in public areas and streets to combat crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I announced today that the Home Office has undertaken to fund a major research study at Southampton university. The research will assess the impact of street lighting on crime and the fear of crime, and the study will be carried out in the London borough of Wandsworth.

Children's Television Programmes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his proposals for children's programmes.

Mr. Renton: Our broadcasting White Paper envisaged that the BBC would continue to be expected to provide high quality programming across the full range of public tastes and interests, and that Channel 4 would be required to cater for any interests under-represented by other parts of the independent television sector. It also envisaged a broadcasting environment in which there would be more outlets and opportunities for many different types of programming such as children's programming. We are now carefully considering the comments we have received on the White Paper.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment has been made of whether the level of policing on motorways is adequate to ensure compliance by heavy goods vehicles with road traffic regulations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is a matter for individual chief officers of police to determine how to deploy their resources. I have no reason to believe that the level of policing on motorways is unsatisfactory.

Correspondence

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to the hon. Member for Easington's letter dated 6 February concerning prisoner Ian Armstrong.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I replied to the hon. Member on 14 March.

Mr. Hafiz Ali Akbar

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to take a decision in the case of Mr. Hafiz Ali Akbar who has applied to enter the United Kingdom; when Mr. Akbar's case was referred to him by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; when Mr. Akbar, ref. A380937/2 and GV 100/2878, applied to enter the United Kingdom and when he last was interviewed in Pakistan; what inquiries he has made in the United Kingdom; and when Mr. Akbar can expect to be told whether his application has been granted.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* Mr. Akbar applied for entry clearance on 6 July 1987 and was interviewed in Islamabad on 5 October 1987. His application was referred to the immigration department on 6 March 1988. Further information and supporting evidence was sought from the secretary of the Burnett place mosque on 15 March 1989. I much regret the long delay in dealing with this case. Once our inquiries are complete the application will be determined as quickly as possible and Mr. Akbar will be notified of the decision by the entry clearance office. I shall write to the hon. Member in due course to let him know the outcome of the case.

Miss Michelle Renshaw (Imprisonment)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report on the facilities provided during the imprisonment of Michelle Renshaw for contempt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. I am satisfied that the normal facilities were afforded to Miss Renshaw during her imprisonment.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a recommendation on the application of Mr. Zulfiqar Khan ref. GV 100/5117, to enter the United Kingdom; and when Mr. Khan's application was referred to him.

Mr. Renton: Mr. Khan's application was referred to my Department on 6 April 1988 for an interview of the sponsor, Mrs. Yasmeen Akhtar. The immigration service at Hull interviewed Mrs. Akhtar on 19 February 1989 and its report dated 9 March was sent to Islamabad on 13 March. A decision on Mr. Khan's application will be made by the entry clearance officer in Islamabad.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when papers concerning the application to enter the United Kingdom by Mrs. Musarat Bibi, ref. GV100/5248, were passed to the Immigration Office at Leeds/Bradford airport; and when any report is to be sent to the European Community officer at the British embassy in Pakistan.

Mr. Renton: The papers were passed to the immigration office at Hull on 19 January 1988 so that the sponsor could be interviewed. Further investigations proved necessary and these were carried out first at Hull and then at Leeds/Bradford airport. A full report was sent to the immigration department on 22 February 1989.

The entry clearance officer in Islamabad was authorised on 16 March to issue entry clearance to Musarat Bibi.

Citizenship

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why, in the light of letters to him dated 7 December and 16 February from the hon. Member for Bradford, West, concerning an application for British citizenship by Mrs. Sarwar Begum, ref. IMP R 161633/3(S), the hon. Member was not informed until 13 March that a certificate of registration had been sent to Mrs. Sarwar Begum via the British embassy in Islamabad on 16 January.

Mr. Renton: The letter of 7 December was not referred to the nationality division for advice until the hon. Member responded on 16 February to my Private Office's request for additional details to identify the case. I then replied to the hon. Member as soon as possible. These events did not however delay the nationality division's action on the application, which was granted in January.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make inquiries into the position of Mr. Govinden Vythelinghad who submitted a nationality application to Lunar House (ref: V6/80/43) in October 1987; and when Mr. Vythelinghad can expect a decision.

Mr. Renton: I am writing to my hon. Friend.

Prisoners (Escape Attempts)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners attempted to escape from prisons in England and Wales in each of the years since 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Details of offences punished of attempting to escape or abscond are given in chapter 9 of the published prison statistics, of which copies are available in the Library.

Magistrates' Courts

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute a review of procedure in magistrates' courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: It has been apparent for some time that some aspects of criminal and domestic procedure in magistrates' courts are unwieldy or outmoded. I have, therefore, decided to initiate a thorough review. This will be carried out by a working party of officials and experienced practitioners under Home Office chairmanship. Its terms of reference will be:

"to review the criminal and domestic procedure of magistrates' courts; to consider what changes could be expected to make that procedure more effective, efficient and economical, consistently with satisfactory provision for due process; and to make recommendations".

EMPLOYMENT

Chlorofluorocarbons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will assess the employment creation potential of chlorofluorocarbons-free refrigerator production.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not possible to assess the employment creation potential of producing refrigerators free of chlorofluorocarbons. However, the eventual production in the United Kingdom of CFC-free refrigerators should benefit both our manufacturing industry and the world environment.

Parliamentary Constituencies

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the parliamentary constituencies of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in order of size, showing in each case the extent to which they are above or below the electoral quota.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is contained in "Electoral Statistics 1988" (HMSO) a copy of which is in the Library.

Statistics relating to the 1989 electoral registers are still being assembled centrally. They will be published in "Electoral Statistics 1989" (Series EL No. 16) at the end of May, and a copy will be placed in the Library.

ENERGY

Offshore Safety

30. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he proposes to take to improve safety in the offshore oil and gas industry.

Mr. Parkinson *[pursuant to the reply, 27 February 1989, c. 81]:* A consultative document containing our proposals for a set of regulations for pipeline safety valves on offshore installations has been issued today. Copies of this document are available in the Library of the House.

As a consequence of the technical investigation carried out by my Department into the Piper Alpha accident last July, my director of safety contacted all pipeline operators on 24 August 1988 to reassess the location and operation of their pipeline isolation systems.

Following a review by my Department of the operators' responses I have decided that it is necessary to introduce regulations requiring emergency shut-down valves on pipeline risers serving offshore installations together with the periodic inspection and testing of these valves and their control systems. In addition, it is proposed that an Order in Council will be made whereby these valves will become part of the certification process of the installation.

These proposed regulations represent an important further step in securing improvements in the safety of offshore pipeline systems. I shall in due course be laying further regulations to deal with subsea isolation systems,

however these present very difficult technical problems which require further study before I can make firm proposals.

Employment Training

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a breakdown of the target figures for employment training for *(a)* September 1988, *(b)* December 1988 and *(c)* March 1989 on (i) a national and (ii) an area office basis.

Mr. Nicholls: Targets both nationally and for Training Agency area offices for the number of filled employment training places are for internal management purposes only.

Wages

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much the average weekly wage in the north-west of England has increased since 1979.

Mr. Lee: The average gross weekly earnings of full-time adult employees in the north-west of England increased by 138 per cent. between April 1979 and April 1988.

Labour Force Survey

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment to which month the published results of the labour force survey apply in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Lee: Published estimates from labour force surveys are based on interviews conducted in the spring of each labour force survey year. In 1979, 1981 and 1983, the interviews took place between April and June. From 1984 onwards the labour force survey has been carried out annually and the interview period has been between March and May.

Time Off

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he intends to issue any guidance on the interpretation of reasonable amounts of time off for *(a)* trade union representatives and *(b)* safety representatives representing the same number of members.

Mr. Nicholls: In relation to *(a)*, guidance is already provided by ACAS in accordance with section 27(2) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978; in relation to *(b)*, no.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the projected number of *(a)* factory and *(b)* agricultural inspectors that will be employed by the Health and Safety Executive on 31 March.

Mr. Nicholls: At 1 March 1989, 608·5 factory and 165 agricultural inspectors were in post. The Health and Safety Executive's objective is to increase the numbers employed to 638 and 175 respectively as soon as possible.

Following the latest in a series of recruitment competitions, 12 successful candidates have been offered employment, (nine to the factory and three to the agricultural inspectorate). Offers are expected to be made shortly to some 20 further candidates subject to completion of medical and other checks.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many men were in employment in each standard planning region of the United Kingdom in June 1979 and September 1988; and how many of these were self-employed.

Mr. Lee: The available information is as follows:

Male civilian work force in employment

Thousand

	June 1979		*September 1988*	
	All	*of which self employed*	*All*	*of which self employed*
South East	4,839	544	5,039	815
Greater London (included in South East)	n.a.	n.a.	1,996	312
East Anglia	481	64	609	100
South West	1,032	111	1,135	221
West Midlands	1,462	124	1,416	180
East Midlands	1,013	99	1,062	154
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,302	107	1,223	176
North West	1,700	161	1,460	215
North	802	61	732	84
Wales	716	98	616	109
Scotland	1,333	128	1,218	170
Northern Ireland	359	56	320	53

Figures for Her Majesty's forces are not available below national level. Comparisons of data for June 1979 and September 1988 are affected by seasonal variations. The civilian work force in employment is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed, and participants in work-related Government training programmes.

Child Care Facilities

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will ensure that the local education authorities' development programmes for further education provision outlined in the White Paper "Employment for the 1990s", provide child care facilities which allow *(a)* parents, and *(b)* mothers, to attend colleges, further education institutes, polytechnics and universities.

Mr. Cope: The content of local education authorities' development programmes for further education provision is for authorities themselves to determine. The Training Agency encourages the further education service to provide easy access to vocational education throughout working life for all members of the work force, including those needing child care facilities.

Quality of Life

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the relationship between the quality of life in the north-west of England, Greater London and the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Lee: Any assessment of the quality of life is inevitably subjective and depends on the importance placed by individuals on a large range of factors such as income, local amenities and nearness to the countryside. I do not have the information required to make a comparison of the overall quality of life in different regions. However the Central Statistical Office annual publication "Regional Trends" has statistics on matters that might be thought to contribute towards the quality of life.

As far as the information available to me is concerned, I can report that all regions are benefiting from the success of the Government's economic policy; over the year to September 1988, the civilian work force in employment is estimated to have grown by 38,000 in the north-west, 61,000 in London and 736,000 across Great Britain as a whole. Furthermore, unemployment rates have decreased sharply, with falls over the past year of 2 per cent. in the north-west, 1·8 per cent. in London and 1·9 per cent. in Great Britain.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her discussions with the Federal German Chancellor in Frankfurt in February, she discussed the planned modernisation of the short-range nuclear forces in the context of articles I and VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her recent meeting with Chancellor Kohl in Frankfurt, she discussed issues to be discussed at the fourth review conference of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to be held in 1990.

The Prime Minister: No.

Commercial Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government have set an ultimate target for the area covered by commercial forestry in the United Kingdom, over and above the annual targets currently set for commercial forestry and the farm woodland scheme.

The Prime Minister: No. The amount of land that is devoted to forestry will depend on a number of factors, including the amount of land that comes out of agricultural use.

Lockerbie Air Crash

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Prime Minister if she will report to the House on the circumstances in which senior Government officials and others gave private briefings to journalists in which they stated that they knew both the identity and the whereabouts of those responsible for planting a bomb on Pan Am Flight 103 which exploded over Lockerbie.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate issued a statement to the press on Friday about progress in the investigation. He said:

"The type of item of baggage in which the tape recorder was contained is now known and that will allow the police to take a further step forward in the enquiries they are making, both on a national and international basis.

I can confirm that it appears that all the explosives were packed in the tape recorder and were not located elsewhere in the item of baggage.

If we can move forward from knowing not just the type of the item of baggage, as I have to put it, but to an identification of the owner of that bag, clearly, I think it can be appreciated that we would then have taken a further significant step forward.

Although the progress of the enquiry has been remarkable, the evidence which has been secured so far has not yet led to the identification of the person or persons responsible for placing the bomb in baggage on Pan Am Flight 103. Enquiries are continuing with that end in view.

Of course there are suspicions and of course a number of lines of enquiry are being pursued, but what I would not like people to believe at the moment is that I am holding something back, or that the British Authorities are holding something back, for some obscure or ulterior purpose.

My primary concern, because I am responsible not only for the investigation but also for the prosecution, is to ensure that there is no prejudice either to that investigation or ultimately to a prosecution. I appreciate that the public both nationally and internationally are very anxious to know what is going on but I think they should also appreciate, indeed I hope they do, that the ultimate success that we wish to achieve in this is the bringing to justice of those people who were responsible for this mass murder.

In association with the FBI, the West German BKA and the Metropolitan Police investigators are continuing to pursue and investigate all matters which have a possible bearing on this case. These include the finding of a bomb and a radio cassette player in Frankfurt in October 1988. As I indicated in my answer in the House of Lords yesterday the possible connection between that bomb and the Lockerbie disaster is being scrutinised with the greatest care. I should emphasise that the two persons held in custody in Germany have not been arrested in connection with Lockerbie.

I have to say, as I have said several times before, that the success of these enquiries is not likely to be assisted by the kind of wild, irresponsible speculation in some newspaper reports this morning. Although some of those reports purport to be based on 'Whitehall sources' they are not accurate. The only authoritative information about the progress of this investigation is that issued by me, or on my authority, by the senior investigating officer in charge of the enquiries.

I will authorise disclosure of relevant information about the progress of the investigation wherever possible and as soon as possible, as we all recognise the general interest of the public and the particular interest of the relatives of the victims to be informed about the matter".

That remains the position.

Special Advisers

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Prime Minister if she will show in the *Official Report* the previous employment of the special advisers listed in her answer to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), 29 July 1988, *Official Report*, column *628*.

The Prime Minister: The information is not readily available in the form requested. The previous employment of serving special advisers is as follows:

Previous employment	*Number employed*
Bank of Montreal Capital Markets	1
British Petrolem Company plc	1
Cazenove and Co.	1
City University Business School	1
Cluff Investments and Trading	1
Conservative Central Office	4
Conservative Research Department	2
Consolidated Goldfields plc	1
Council of European Communities	1
Daiwa Europe Ltd.	1
Department of Health and Social Security	1
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	1
Former Special Adviser	3
Fund-raising for charity	1
Good Relations Group plc	1
Hill Samuel and Company Ltd.	1
Institute of Directors	1
McKinsey and Co.	1
Milk Marketing Board	1
P and O	1
Phillips and Drew	1
Political Office, Number 10	1
RTZ Ltd	1
Secretary to MPs	1
Self employed	1
Student	1

This list covers special advisers who are on secondment from or are still employed, full or part-time, by other employers.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Prime Minister if she will state the total cost to public funds of *(a)* the special advisers on secondment and *(b)* the most senior special advisers not paid on the common pay spine.

The Prime Minister: The total annual reimbursement cost to public funds of special advisers on secondment is currently £147,333. The current annual cost to public funds of salary and employer's national insurance contributions for the most senior special advisers is £133,500.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Prime Minister what restrictions there are on the activities of ministerial political and special advisers in relation to their giving directions to career civil servants.

The Prime Minister: Apart from secretarial assistance, permanent civil servants do not work directly for special advisers except with my express permission.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Prime Minister what restrictions on political activities apply to Ministerial political advisers previously employed as career civil servants.

The Prime Minister: There are two areas of political activity where special advisers may be allowed more freedom than other civil servants. With the approval of the Minister they may attend party functions and maintain contact with party members; and they may take part in policy reviews organised by the party.

In addition, and subject to the approval of the Minister, special advisers are permitted to undertake all forms of local political activity provided they observe the rule of discretion applicable to civil servants. This does not include local activities in support of national politics.

There are no additional restrictions on special advisers who may previously have been career civil servants.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if she will establish an inquiry into co-ordination on immigration matters between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office, in the light of a letter from the hon. Member for Bradford, West, dated 1 March from the Secretary of State for the Home Department that the application by Mr. Bahad Singh for entry clearance to the United Kingdom, ref. S656383/4, was being considered after being passed to him by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and a letter to the hon. Member for Bradford, West from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, dated 17 February, ref. GV100/5098, saying that the British deputy high commissioner in Bombay was unable to trace any such applications and if she will indicate when she expects that a decision will be reached on Mr. Singh's application.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Singh lodged his application with the British High Commission in New Delhi, not Bombay as the hon. Member believes. It was this initial error which contributed to the seemingly contradictory letters received from the two Departments. The letter sent to the hon. Member on 1 March, from the Home Office should have clarified the position and the Home Office will review its procedures, in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, with a view to preventing such misunderstandings in the future.

Mr. Singh's application was refused in July 1988. He has appealed against the decision and his case will be heard by the appellate authorities in due course. The relevant Minister at the Home Office will shortly be writing to the hon. Member about this case.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Disability

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement about the surveys on disability being carried out by his Department; what detailed arrangements are being made to make use of experience gained in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys survey in Great Britain; and what consultations have taken place with organisations concerned with disability in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The study of disability, which the Government announced on 15 December 1988 would be carried out in Northern Ireland, will cover all types of disabilities, mental as well as physical, all age groups and include people living in various forms of communal establishments as well as in private households. The research in Northern Ireland will replicate and develop work conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in Great Britain and will be conducted by the policy planning and research unit of the Department of Finance and Personnel on behalf of a number of Northern Ireland Departments. Regular contact has been maintained with OPCS during the planning stages and continued use is being made of their experience. An initial meeting has been held with the director of the Northern Ireland Council on Disability to inform him of the study

and further consultations will take place with various organisations concerned with disability in Northern Ireland.

Public Expenditure Commentary

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to publish the Northern Ireland public expenditure commentary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Northern Ireland commentary on public expenditure plans 1989-90 to 1991-92 was published today and copies are available in the Vote Office. This is the second Northern Ireland commentary and it aims to improve the information available to Parliament and the public by amplifying the material in the Northern Ireland chapter of the 1989 Public Expenditure White Paper.

Students

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement indicating the nature of the consultations which the Department of Education, Northern Ireland, will have regarding the White Paper "Top-Up Loans for Students" and listing the organisations from which the Department are seeking views.

Dr. Mawhinney: The White Paper made provision for all comments to be submitted to the Department of Education and Science to arrive by 1 February 1989.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the numbers of disabled students by sex in Northern Ireland in further education and in higher education.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information in the form requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate how many students in Northern Ireland are studying four-year degree courses and three-year degree courses, respectively.

Dr. Mawhinney: Provisional information for the 1988-89 academic year is as follows:

Full-time undergraduate students

	Number
Enrolled on:	
Three-year Degree Courses	7,948
Four-year Degree Courses	5,220
Degree Courses longer than 4 years	994

ENVIRONMENT

Globe Theatre Site

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in view of the discovery of the site of the Rose theatre in Southwark, he will ask English Heritage to reconsider its decision not to recommend the Globe theatre site for scheduling.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The importance of the Globe theatre site is unquestioned. It has not been scheduled so far because there is no evidence to show exactly where the theatre stood. This means that an unjustifiably large area would have to be scheduled.

English Heritage has, however, written to the London borough of Southwark suggesting that, before any application for the site's redevelopment is determined, an archaeological evaluation should be undertaken to determine the exact location of any remains. In the light of the results of such an evaluation English Heritage will reconsider where there is a case for scheduling the Globe theatre site. We shall, of course, consider any such recommendation very carefully.

Sea Pollution

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by water authority area the number of sewage outfalls to the sea; and, of those, how many include primary treatment works.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* This information is not held centrally.

Applications for new or varied consent conditions for all sewage outfalls to sea are considered by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Quantitative conditions are set in all cases and these have regard to the impact of the discharge in the receiving waters. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution also requires all new outfalls to include provision for the removal and disposal of screenings and non-biodegradable materials such as plastics. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning has placed copies of the inspectorate's guidelines for the construction of new sea outfalls in the Library.

We do not set specific treatment standards for discharges to the sea; but authorities, in preparing proposals to improve sewage disposal arrangements in coastal areas will want to consider alternative options including inland treatment and sometimes disinfection. However, as the Royal Commission on environmental pollution made clear in its 10th report, the use of long sea outfalls, which rely upon the action of sea and sunlight to break down bacteria, is often the most environmentally satisfactory system of disposal.

Beaches

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the cost of bringing beaches in north-west England up to EEC standards; and from what date he expects the standards to be met.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has asked the North West water authority to draw up a capital expenditure programme with the aim of bringing those bathing waters identified under the EEC bathing water directive up to the directive's standards by 1995.

Yorkshire (Water Reserves)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the present levels of water reserves in the Yorkshire water authority area; if the authority has applied for any drought orders; what risks there are of drought conditions arising during the coming months of the current year; if he will list by location the areas within the Yorkshire water authority area that are most susceptible to suffering from drought conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Storage reservoirs in the Yorkshire water authority area are almost full and, although

groundwater levels in the aquifer serving North Humberside are low, adequate supplies are being transferred from elsewhere. The authority has not applied for any drought orders and foresees no difficulty in meeting demand this year unless an exceptionally dry summer occurs.

Vehicle Exhaust Emissions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact on the environment of those vehicle exhaust emissions which are capable of being reduced or eliminated by catalytic converters.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Assessing the contribution made by petrol driven vehicles to national levels of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, ozone and nitrogen oxides and their consequent environmental impact has been and continues to be a major part of the Department's air quality research programme.

Water Pollution

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the number and location of breaches in 1988 in the EEC guide and mandatory levels for *(a)* faecal coliforms, *(b)* total coliforms, *(c)* cadmium, *(d)* arsenic, *(e)* pesticides, *(f)* nitrogen and *(g)* ammonia in bathing waters which were the responsibility of the Anglian water authority.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning announced on 21 February at column *572*, the results of the 1988 survey of bathing waters for England, Northern Ireland and Wales. A summary of the results has already been placed in the Library. The report contains detailed results for individual waters in each water authority area, including numbers of samples taken for particular parameters and the number of these which failed to meet the directive's mandatory standards.

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the number and location of breaches in 1988 in the EEC guide levels and maximum concentrations for *(a)* chlorides, *(b)* sulphates, *(c)* magnesium, *(d)* sodium, *(e)* potassium, *(f)* nitrates, *(g)* aluminium, *(h)* nitrates and *(i)* phenols in water intended for human consumption supplied by the Anglian water authority;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number and location of breaches in 1988 in the EEC guide levels and maximum concentrations for *(a)* iron, *(b)* manganese, *(c)* copper, *(d)* zinc, *(e)* phosphorus, *(f)* barium, *(g)* cadmium, *(h)* chromium, *(i)* mercury, *(j)* nickel and *(k)* lead in water intended for human consumption supplied by the Anglian water authority;

(3) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number and location of breaches in 1988 in the EEC guide levels and maximum concentrations for *(a)* herbicides, *(b)* fungicides, *(c)* PCBs, *(d)* insecticides, *(e)* total bacteria counts, *(f)* faecal coliforms and *(g)* faecal streptococci in water intended for human consumption supplied by the Anglian water authority.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* In view of the current widespread interest in drinking water quality, Anglian water authority will be publishing a report on the subject setting out the extent of compliance in 1988 with all the standards set in the EC drinking water directive. Work is in hand to prepare this report and I am asking the authority to send the hon. Member a copy when it is published.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals exist to further relax effluent limits on the amount and type of effluent discharged by the plants of the North West water authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* My hon. and learned Friend, the Minister for Water and Planning announced on 7 December 1988 at column *199*, that applications for temporary variations in discharge consent conditions will be considered for those sewage works where capital improvements are programmed to be completed by March 1992.

Applications made by the North West water authority under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, including those for time-limited variations, will be considered on an individual basis by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. Details of all applications made are held on the register maintained by the water authority which may be inspected, free of charge, by anyone at all reasonable hours.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many beaches have now reached the higher EEC standards.

Mr. Moynihan: My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning announced on 21 February at column *572*, the results of the 1988 survey of bathing water quality. These showed that 254 out of the 380 bathing waters in England, Northern Ireland and Wales (67 per cent.) met the mandatory coliform standards in the 1988 bathing season, compared with only 51 per cent., measured on a comparable basis, in 1986.

Although since 1987 we have tightened the way we monitor and assess compliance with the directive, the EEC standards themselves remain unchanged.

Water Authority Chairmen

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the chairmen of water authorities are currently paid.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 27 January 1989 at column *792-3*.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the chairmen of water authorities will be paid once the industry is privatised.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* Once the water authorities are in private ownership, the remuneration of chairmen will be a matter for the successor companies.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the limit on the number of shares a chairman of a privatised water company will be able to hold *(a)* in his own authority and *(b)* in other private water companies.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* The same as for any other shareholders.

Football Membership Scheme

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications for the workability of the Football Spectators Bill *[Lords]* of the extent to which the case for its provision has been made in the absence of separate figures for the number of arrests made inside football grounds.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* Separate figures are not available distinguishing total arrests at football league matches in England and Wales made inside grounds and those directly connected with such matches made in the vicinity of and/en route to and from grounds. However, both are undoubtedly much reduced by the high level of police resources deployed at matches and by the strict segregation of supporters, the use of closed circuit television and video, and other measures. The Football Spectators Bill, in disqualifying trouble-makers from attending designated matches, will be effective in reducing misbehaviour inside grounds and, since those disqualified will be deterred from travelling to matches, outside and on journeys to and from matches as well.

Renovation Grants

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available figures comparable to those in respect of a married couple with two children contained in his Department's paper "Renovation Grants: Proposed Test of Resources", illustrating both the lower and upper thresholds for entitlement to grant towards eligible repairs in respect of *(a)* a single-parent family with one child under 11, *(b)* a single pensioner, *(c)* a pensioner couple, *(d)* a single person aged between 18 and 25 years, *(e)* a single person aged between 25 and 60 years and *(f)* a couple aged between 18 and 60 years on the assumption that all except the pensioner households are entitled to an earnings disregard.

Mr. Trippier: Comparative figures based on work costing £10,000 are :

	Lower Threshold £	*Upper Threshold* £
(a) Single parent family with one child under 11	4,883	13,918
(b) Single pensioner (under 80)	3,331	12,366
(c) Pensioner couple (under 80)	4,560	13,595
(d) Single person aged between 18 and 25 years	2,265	11,690
(e) Single person aged between 25 and 60	3,037	12,270
(f) Couple aged between 18 and 60 years	4,235	13,270

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households living as owner occupiers in dwellings eligible for renovation grants on grounds of their condition with incomes *(a)* below £20,000 a year, *(b)* below £15,000 a year, *(c)* below £12,000 a year and *(d)* below £9,000 a year will not qualify for any grant aid towards improvement and repair costs on the basis of the proposals embodied in part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Bill and amplified in his Department's paper "Renovation Grants: Proposed Test of Resources".

Mr. Trippier: On the basis of the assumptions contained in the consultation paper "Renovation Grants: Proposed Test of Resources" the estimated numbers of those with net incomes below the levels specified who do not qualify for grant are:

(a) 1·9 million
(b) 1·7 million
(c) 1·2 million
(d) 0·4 million

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ban chlorofluorocarbons in all but medically essential aerosols.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Members of the British Aerosol Manufacturers Association have already agreed to end all non-essential use of chlorofluorocarbons in their products by the end of this year. They are well on course to achieve this.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to how many countries Britain exports chlorofluorocarbons which are not signatories to the Montreal protocol.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Export data for past trade are not sufficiently detailed to provide this information. A recent revision of data headings means that such data should become available in due course for 1989 and subsequent years. The Montreal protocol does not prohibit the export of CFCs to countries outside the protocol as this might persuade them to start their own new production of CFCs. However, from 1 January 1993, any export of the controlled CFCs or halons to such countries must be compensated for by an equivalent additional reduction in domestic consumption.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects a ban on the use of chlorofluorocarbons in refrigeration units to be implemented.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is hoped that new ozone-benign refrigerants will be available early in the 1990s, although their introduction will be subject to the satisfactory conclusion of toxicological testing. At present, the voluntary approach to reductions in chlorofluorocarbon use is working well. Should new rules become necessary to require the use of the more beneficial refrigerants as they become commercially available, then we would introduce them.

Ozone Layer Conference

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the London saving the ozone layer conference.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The outcome of the highly successful saving the ozone layer London conference was summarised in the chairman's message prepared by my right hon. Friend. Copies of the message, together with a more detailed account by the conference rapporteur, have been placed in the Library.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to extend the provisions of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act to cover urban development corporations and new town corporations.

Mr. Trippier: This Act is currently under review but there are no plans to extend its provisions to urban development corporations or new town corporations.

River Quality

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which are the specific objective criteria used when assessing the quality of rivers as (i) good and (ii) fair.

Mr. Howard: The national freshwater quality classification scheme ranks water in four main categories, the highest two being good (class 1) and fair (class 2) quality.

The specific criteria used in determining river quality class in England and Wales are given in appendix 1 to the report of the 1985 river quality survey of England and Wales.

In Scotland, slightly different criteria are used. Details are given in appendix A to the report of the 1985 water quality survey of Scotland.

Copies of both reports are available in the Library of the House.

Sewage Treatment Works

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those sewage treatment works in each English water authority which discharged effluent below the required standard during 1988.

Mr. Moynihan: Information for 1988 is not yet available but the indications are that water authority returns will show a further improvement in the number of sewage treatment works complying with discharge consents.

River Pollution

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of recorded incidents of river pollution, the number of related prosecutions and the number of convictions in England in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Moynihan: The number of reported water pollution incidents recorded by English water authorities in each year between 1980 and 1987, has been published in the Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics (No. 11, 1988), a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

The number of prosecutions brought by the English water authorities under section 31 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, are as follows:

Year	*Total prosecutions*
1980-81	91
1981-82	129
1982-83	124
1983-84	173
1984-85	206
1985-86	201
1986-87	254

Figures for years prior to 1980-81 are not held by the Department and figures for 1987-88 are not yet available.

Information about convictions following prosecutions is collected by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, but it is not in a directly comparable form. I understand, however, that on average, around 90 per cent. of these cases result in convictions.

Enterprise Centre (Bradford)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has approved any grants or other financial assistance towards capital or revenue costs of the enterprise centre in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: A grant of £96,267, towards the capital works needed for the refurbishment of Britannia house, in which the enterprise centre is housed, was given under the urban programme for 1988-89.

Voluntary Organisations (Bradford)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the financial assistance he announced on 15 March enabling five voluntary organisations in Bradford threatened with closure to continue has come from within existing allocations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The resources, which will enable eight voluntary organisations to continue, will come out of the £4·5 million urban programme allocation for 1989-90, also announced on 15 March.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make further financial assistance available to enable the 21 voluntary organisations in Bradford, which are faced with closure or severe cuts in their funding, to receive funding, in line with inflation for 1989-90.

Mr.Trippier: No. The urban programme is intended to provide initial finance for a project, which if continued can then be financed longer term from other sources such as the council's main programme, or the private sector. Against this background it is for Bradford to decide which projects it wishes to put forward for funding through the urban programme. The Government have already agreed, as an exceptional measure, to the continued funding next financial year of eight projects that have time expired. This utilises in full the resources available next year within the urban programme allocation for Bradford.

Rating Reform

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what a ward sister would pay *(a)* in community charge and *(b)* in a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in the proportions of 80-20, respectively, if she lived in a typical one bedroom flat in Paddington.

Mr. Gummer: A ward sister earning £15,000 living in a flat in Paddington worth £70,000 would pay a community

charge of £373 (disregarding the transitional safety net) and £1,165 under a system of capital value rates plus local income tax.

Set-aside Scheme

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to introduce top-up payments for farmers who have entered land into the set-aside scheme and undertaken to bring about environmental improvements on that land.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have been considering, with the Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council, the possibility of making additional payments to farmers who undertake to manage their set-aside land in a way that produces specified benefits for the environment.

The set-aside scheme already carries with it conditions to ensure that fallow land is kept in good condition and that hedges are maintained. In addition, guidance has been issued suggesting to farmers how they can best manage fallow land in the interests of the landscape and wildlife. However, in order to assist farmers in cases where particular forms of management impose significant extra costs going beyond the basic conditions of the scheme, we have decided to introduce a system of additional incentives.

Under the scheme farmers will be invited to adopt one or more specified management practices which will, for example, increase the nature conservation or landscape value of the land or provide access or other recreational opportunities. Adoption of these practices will attract payment in addition to the rates offered under the set-aside scheme. The incentives will vary according to the nature of the management involved.

The top-up scheme will, at any rate initially, be targeted to certain parts of England where scope for environmental improvement seems greatest. It will be run by the Countryside Commission, with the assistance of the Nature Conservancy Council and in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture. Payments will be made at the discretion of the commission.

Further details of the scheme, including its geographical coverage are now being worked out and will be announced in due course.

Eastbourne Waterworks Company

Mr. Gow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement following his meeting with the chairman of the Eastbourne Waterworks company to discuss changes for the year ending 31 March 1990.

Mr. Howard: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Migratory Species

Mrs. Rosie Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is possible to keep, breed and sell any species listed in appendix 2 of the Berne convention on migratory species.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes. I will write to the hon. Member with details.

Electoral Registers (Doncaster)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report*, the total number of people in each of the three parliamentary constituencies in the Doncaster area listed on *(a)* the electoral registers for 1988-89, *(b)* the electoral registers for 1989-90 and *(c)* the electoral registers for five years and 10 years ago, respectively.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply. The information requested for 1983-84 and 1988-89 is as follows:

Parliamentary constituency	*Parliamentary electors*	
	1983-84	*1988-89*
Doncaster Central	71,888	70,680
Doncaster North	73,204	74,457
Don Valley	74,136	75,852

Notes:

The current reorganisation of parliamentary constituencies took place in 1983. Electorate statistics for 1983-84 have been reassembled on the basis of current constituency boundaries. Figures for earlier years are not available.

Numbers on the 1989-90 Register are still being assembled centrally. They will be published in Electoral Statistics 1989 (Series EL No. 16) at the end of May, and a copy will be placed in the Library.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Telecom (Pricing Policy)

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he has had any discussions with the Director-General of Fair Trading regarding the pricing policy of British Telecom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will discuss with the chairman of OFTEL the pricing policies of British Telecom; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has any plans to review the legislation which defines the services provided by British Telecom governed by the RPI-X pricing formula; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: These are matters for the Director General of Telecommunications to consider in the light of his independent statutory functions. I understand that at the end of last year he published a notice of his proposals for revising the price control formula in BT's licence with effect from 1 August 1989.

Manufacturing Industry (North-West)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of the economy of the north-west consists of manufacturing industry; and what is the national average.

Mr. Atkins: Provisional figures for 1987 indicate that manufacturing industry contributed 30·6 per cent. to the north-west standard region's gross domestic product (at factor cost and current prices). This compares with an average figure for the United Kingdom of 24·8 per cent.

GDP (North-West)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, by how much gross domestic product per head has increased in the north-west of England since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: Gross domestic product per head (at factor cost and current prices) in the north-west standard region has increased from £2,838 in 1979 to, provisionally, £5,622 in 1987.

Export-Import Trade

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the value of United Kingdom exports to and imports from *(a)* Latin America, *(b)* Japan, *(c)* Asia (excluding Japan), *(d)* South Africa, *(e)* Sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa) and *(f)* the middle east; for each of the last five years in (i) constant prices and (ii) current prices.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information in constant prices is not available. Information at current prices is given in the table:

United Kingdom trade with Latin America, Japan, Asia[4], South Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa[5] and the Middle East for 1984 to 1988

	1984		1985		1986		1987		1988[1]	
	Imports[2]	*Exports*[3]	*Imports*[2]	*Exports*[3]	*Imports*[2]	*Exports*[3]	*Imports*[2]	*Exports*[3]	*Imports*[2]	*Exports*[3]
Latin America	1,525·9	924·9	1,582·4	1,067·3	1,231·2	1,091·2	1,436·8	1,191·9	1,515·6	1,101·8
Japan	3,771·9	926·6	4,115·5	1,012·3	4,936·9	1,193·7	5,464·0	1,495·1	6,509·1	1,742·7
Asia[4]	4,770·4	4,194·4	4,642·0	4,501·5	5,357·1	4,682·5	6,226·3	5,312·7	7,457·0	5,557·9
South Africa	725·6	1,204·1	989·8	1,009·2	829·6	849·5	658·2	948·6	807·7	1,074·8
Sub-Saharan Africa[5]	1,849·2	1,726·6	2,053·4	2,066·9	1,443·8	1,564·4	1,086·3	1,564·4	1,006·2	1,479·9
Middle East[6]	2,026·8	5,224·5	1,755·4	5,304·0	1,669·4	5,033·7	1,536·4	4,955·7	1,879·1	4,749·8

[1] Provisional.
[2] Imports cif
[3] Exports fob
[4] Asia: Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Laos, Kampuchea, Vietnam, Mongolia, China, Taiwan, Macao, Hong Kong, North Korea, South Korea, Philippines, Maldives, Brunei and Indonesia. Excluding Japan.
[5] Excluding South Africa.
[6] Middle East: Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah etc, Oman, Yemen North, Yemen South, Iraq and Iran.

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

Price Indication (Code of Practice)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) when he intends to review the effectiveness of the code of practice for traders on price indications;

(2) what progress he has made in setting up a committee to monitor the effectiveness of the code of practice for traders on price indications.

Mr. Forth: The code of practice on price indications provides practical guidance for traders who need to comply with the obligation imposed by section 20 of the Consumer Protection Act 1987 not to give a misleading price indication.

The Government will be monitoring the operation of the legislation and the working of the code of practice and has suggested that a committee should be set up for this purpose. It is hoped that representatives of all interested parties will be prepared to take part in the work of the committee. A review of the working of the legislation and the associated code of practice will be undertaken when sufficient experience of its operation is available to enable an informed assessment to be made.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received on the effectiveness of the code of practice for traders on price indications *(a)* since they came into practice on 1 March and *(b)* before that date.

Mr. Forth: Extensive consultations were held both prior to and during the preparation of the code of practice with representatives of the main interested parties and with the public. Since its coming into operation on 1 March there have been a number of representations and inquiries on specific aspects of the code.

Public Limited Companies

Mr. Janman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many new public limited companies have been registered in the United Kingdom in the last 12 months.

Mr. Maude: The chief executive of Companies House tells me that 2,843 public limited companies were incorporated in Great Britain in the 12 months to February 1989. In addition, a further 841 private companies were re-registered as plcs in the same period.

Regional Assistance

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide figures on regional development grants for each of his Department's regions for *(a)* the number of applications outstanding on 31 March 1988, *(b)* the number of applications processed, *(c)* the number of those applications that are still outstanding and *(d)* the total amount of money paid out since 31 March 1988 to those applicants.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested in respect of the revised regional development grant scheme by region is as follows:

	North East	North West	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	South West
Number of applications outstanding at 31 March 1988	3,260	2,740	830	240	540
Number of these processed at end-February 1989	3,064	2,711	819	234	538
Number still outstanding end-February 1989	196	29	11	6	2
Grant paid (£ million) to date on applications outstanding at 31 March 1988	14·2	12·9	3·1	1·5	1·8

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total expenditure on regional selective assistance in each of his Department's regions for each year from 1983-84 to 1987-88 inclusive and the estimated expenditure for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Atkins: Total expenditure on regional selective assistance (RSA) by region in the years in question was:

£ million

	North East	North West	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	South West	West Midlands	England Total[1]
1983-84	13·8	15·2	8·8	8·7	2·0	—	62·2
1984-85	14·6	14·4	9·7	6·4	2·1	—	72·9
1985-86	15·6	13·3	8·3	3·9	2·5	5·5	74·8
1986-87	17·6	18·9	10·1	2·2	5·2	9·8	100·6
1987-88	23·4	20·9	14·1	2·3	4·3	18·3	122·9

[1] At the regional level the figures include only industrial and training grants: the England total also includes some unallocated project grants, and expenditure under the business improvement services and exchange risk guarantee scheme which it is not possible to provide on a regional basis.

Note:

All figures are gross of domestic receipts and receipts from the European regional development fund.

The latest gross forecast outturn for 1988-89 is £135 million. This is a best estimate and is dependent on the level of claims received and processed before the end of March.

The planned provision for 1989-90 as contained in the Supply Estimates, is £145 million. The planned provision for 1990-91 and 1991-92 is £150 million and £160 million, respectively. All planned provision figures are net of domestic receipts.

All the above figures include expenditure on industrial and training grants, and the business improvement services and exchange risk guarantee schemes.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total expenditure on regional development grant in each of his Department's regions for each year from 1983-84 to 1987-88 inclusive, and the estimated expenditure for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Atkins: Total expenditure on the original and revised regional development grant schemes by region in the years in question was:

Year	North East	North West	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	South West
1983-84	68·8	115·5	23·5	8·2	7·8
1984-85	61·6	107·4	26·8	3·8	9·5
1985-86	46·4	83·0	24·2	4·4	8·6
1986-87	89·8	113·7	27·1	8·4	15·3
1987-88	57·6	49·8	17·8	7·1	7·0

Note:

All figures in the table are gross domestic receipts and receipts from the European regional development fund.

The latest gross forecast outturn for DTI as a whole in 1988-89 is £155 million. This is a best estimate and is dependent on the level of claims received and processed before the end of March. The planned provision for 1989-90, as contained in the Supply Estimates, is £125 million. Planned provision in respect of 1990-91 and 1991-92 is £110 million and £55 million respectively. All planned provision figures are net of domestic receipts.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will give for each of his Department's regions *(a)* the total number of applications received for investment grants from 1 April 1988 to the most recent date for which figures are available, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period and the estimated expenditure for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(2) if he will give for each of his Department's regions *(a)* the total number of applications received for innovation grants from 1 April 1988 to the most recent date for which figures are available, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period and the estimated expenditure for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Atkins: Regional enterprise grants (REGs) became available on 1 April 1988 in the development areas, and on 1 September 1988 in south Yorkshire. The information requested, for the English regions for which DTI is responsible, for the eleven months to 28 February 1989, is as follows:

	Number of applications	*Number of offers*	*Value of offers (£ 000)*
Investment			
North East	363	219	1,203
North West	390	219	1,373
Yorkshire and Humberside	161	95	771
East Midlands	36	30	269
South West	126	86	385
Total England	1,076	649	4,001

Payments of £557,900 have been under investment up to end February.

Innovation			
North East	117	48	896
North West	129	36	759
Yorkshire and Humberside	61	22	490
East Midlands	8	3	75
South West	28	11	199
Total England	343	150	2,419

Payments of £164,000 have been made under innovation up to end February.

The amount of expenditure paid out in any particular region depends on demand for the scheme and the appraisal of individual applications. The value of grants actually paid so far reflects the nature and timescale of the projects on which applicants have sought grants since scheme commencement in April.

The provision for 1989-90 as published in the supply estimates are £22·2 million for investment grants and £5·9 million for innovation grants.

Planned provision for regional enterprise grants in 1990-91 and 1991-92 is £45·2 million and £46·3 million respectively. The actual expenditure in future years will of course depend on demand.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide figures on regional selective assistance for each of his Department's regions giving *(a)* the total number of applications received since April 1988, *(b)* the number of applications that have been processed and *(c)* the total amount of money paid out since 1 April 1988.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested in respect of regional selective assistance (RSA) industrial and training grants by region is as follows:

	North East	*North West*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands*	*South West*	*West Midlands*
(a) Number of applications received between 1 April 1988 and 28 February 1989	255	399	216	21	94	520
(b) Number of applications processed between 1 April 1988 and 28 February 1989	239	382	208	31	84	562
(c) Total grant paid (£ million) between 1 April 1988 and 28 February 1989	22·9	17·4	6·9	0·9	3·6	21·2

Business Development Consultancy Initiative

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give the total number of applications *(a)* received, *(b)* approved for business development consultancy initiative from 1 April 1988 to the most recent date for which figures are available and *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved for each of the regions of his Department, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Atkins: In the period from 1 April 1988 to 24 February 1989 a total of 16,761 applications were received for the business development consultancy initiatives. In the same period 12,533 applications were approved for assisted consultancy. The Department's contribution to the cost of completed consultancies totalled £9·3 million. It is estimated that those consultancies not completed by 24 February 1989 will cost the Department £22·5 million. A breakdown of numbers and cost of consultancy projects for each DTI region and for Scotland and Wales is as follows:

Department of Trade and Industry region/county	(a) Number of applications received	(b) Number of applications approved for consultancy	(c) Department of Trade and Industry expenditure on completed consultancies (£'000)	(d) Estimated expenditure on outstanding consultancies (£'000)
North East	852	649	465	1,124
North West	2,607	2,106	1,775	4,295
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,636	1,203	1,078	2,609
West Midlands	1,789	1,268	1,069	2,586
East Midlands	989	793	660	1,597
South West	1,667	1,008	576	1,394
South East:				
Cambridge	1,155	832	372	900
London	1,783	1,349	892	2,159
Reading	969	769	390	944
Reigate	910	707	446	1,079
Scotland	1,366	1,093	1,078	2,609
Wales	1,038	756	493	1,192
TOTAL	16,761	12,533	9,294	22,488

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will estimate the total amount of expenditure on the business development consultancy initiative to be paid out in Scotland, Wales and his Department's regions for each of the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Atkins: We estimate the total amount of expenditure on the business development consultancy initiatives in 1988-89 will be £43·3 million. This cannot be broken down on a regional basis. The public expenditure survey provision for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91 is £91 million and £109 million respectively. Provision for 1991-92 has not yet been set.

WALES

Nurses (Regrading)

13. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the nurses' clinical regrading review.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Health authorities in Wales completed their work on the nurses clinical grading review by the end of October 1988. They received additional funds to meet the estimated final cost of the regrading.

Sheepmeat Regime

14. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest developments regarding the sheepmeat regime proposals as they affect Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Little progress has been made on the Commission's proposal for the review of the sheepmeat regime. Meanwhile, producers in Wales continue to benefit from the existing support arrangements.

Wales Tourist Board

15. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of the Wales tourist board; and what was discussed.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend frequently meets with the chairman of the Wales tourist board to discuss many matters of mutual interest, including the WTB's central reservations system which is showing bookings up by 50 per cent. on this time last year—with self-catering holidays up 100 per cent.

Experimental Farms

16. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to expand research and development at Trawsgoed an Pwllpeiran experimental farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The funding of research and development at experimental husbandry farms is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Future research programmes will depend on the results of consultations which are still under way.

Collieries (Merthyr)

17. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends next to meet the chairman of British Coal to discuss the future of the collieries in the Merthyr area.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am in regular contact with the chairman and deputy chairman to discuss issues of mutual interest, including the future of pits in the south Wales coalfield.

Gwynedd Health Authority

19. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends to meet the chairman of Gwynedd health authority to discuss health services.

Mr. Peter Walker: I plan to meet members of the Welsh health authorities chairmen's Committee, including Mrs. Edwards, in the near future to discuss the White Paper "Working for Patients". My officials will be meeting officers of Gwynedd health authority to discuss its revised financial plans in the light of my recent decisions on its hospital rationalisation proposals.

West Wales (Inward Investment)

20. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he is taking to encourage inward investment to west Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Efforts to attract inward investment to Wales have been very successful with 1988 being a record year. The advantages of all parts of Wales are emphasised when projects are discussed with potential inward investors and Winvest has recently appointed a regional executive to work closely with local authorities in west Wales to secure inward investment projects for the area. I am tomorrow launching a marketing campaign developed by Winvest and a consortium of local authorities in west Glamorgan and east Dyfed. Winvest is currently discussing with local authorities in Dyfed the possibility of a similar initiative for west Wales.

East Glamorgan General Hospital

21. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement explaining the delay in the announcement of a replacement for the east Glamorgan general hospital.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Mid Glamorgan health authority's proposals for the replacement of east Glamorgan general hospital are contained in its consultation document on the reorganisation of hospital services in Taff Ely and Rhondda. My right hon. Friend wishes to see health services in that area improved and he will give a decision on the proposal when further information that he has been asked for is obtained.

Farming Unions

22. **Mr. Martin Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had recently from the Welsh farming unions.

Mr. Peter Walker: I regularly receive representations from the Welsh farming unions on a wide range of issues affecting agriculture in Wales.

Rating Reform

23. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the community charge for 1990-91 for *(a)* Cardiff and *(b)* the average in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have made no such estimates.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the outcome of the meeting between Welsh office Ministers and representatives of disablement organisations in Wales, held on 7 February; and whether he proposed to take any new action as a result of that meeting.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if following the meeting between his officials and the Spastics Society with the Wales Council for the disabled on 7 February in Cardiff, he now considers there to be the need for an all Wales physical handicap strategy and for additional resources to be made available for services for people with physical disabilities in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Representatives of the Wales Council for the Disabled and the Spastics Society in Wales were told that Welsh Office social work services would be undertaking surveys of services for disabled people provided by local authorities and voluntary organisations in Wales. The needs of people with physical and sensory disability would also be examined in the next round of health authority strategic planning. The results of those exercises will not be available until next year, but in the meantime further consultations will be held with a number of bodies representing people with disabilities and preliminary guidance for planning purposes will be issued.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing, in current money equivalent terms, the spending by Social Services departments in Wales on services for registered physically handicapped people during 1987-88 and for each of the previous 10 years, together with the number of such people who were beneficiaries of these services in each year and the corresponding average spending per assisted case.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information available on spending is given in the table:

Local authority expenditure on physically handicapped[1] at 1986-87 prices

	£ million
1976-77	4·5
1977-78	3·3
1978-79	4·3
1979-80	4·0
1980-81	3·8
1981-82	3·6
1982-83	3·5
1983-84	4·2
1984-85	[2]
1985-86	3·5
1986-87	3·6

[1] Estimated from outturn information shown in the local authority social services planning statements for Wales. May include some expenditure on the elderly. Excludes day care.
[2] Not available.

Information relating to the receipt of services provided by Social Services Departments is as follows:

	Number of residents under the age of 65 supported by local authorities[1 2]	*Cases of assistance provided by social services departments*[3 4]
1977	761	22,110
1978	718	24,997
1979	720	28,707
1980	689	28,418
1981	634	25,293
1982	630	26,720
1983	583	31,290
1984	599	41,659
1985	548	39,312
1986	417	42,423
1987	416	44,310
1988	404	45,285

[1] In local authority, private and voluntary homes. Some of these residents may not be physically handicapped.
[2] As at 31 March.
[3] Telephone rentals, personal equipment, adaptations to property, holidays etc. Information given relates to cases as opposed to beneficiaries (an individual beneficiary may receive more than one case of assistance). Figures quoted include all age groups and relate to assistance provided to both physically handicapped people and other client groups.
[4] Year ending 31 March.

It is not statistically meaningful to calculate an average spending per assisted case because of the differing natures of the various services provided. These services vary from

smaller forms of assistance (such as the provision of personal aids) through to long-term support in residential care.

Dialysis Patients

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new patients per million population in Wales received (i) haemodialysis and (ii) continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis in 1988 or the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of new patients receiving renal dialysis in Wales in 1988 was 71·2 per million population. The proportional contribution of each dialysis mode was as follows:

Home haemodialysis	18·3 per cent.
Hospital haemodialysis	31·0 per cent.
Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis	50·7 per cent.

New Patients

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of new patients were attended to in the private sector and in public sector units.

Mr. Peter Walker: This information is not available centrally.

Regional Assistance

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide figures on regional selective assistance for *(a)* the total number of applications received since 1 April 1988, *(b)* the number of the above applications that have been processed and *(c)* the total amount of money paid out since 1 April 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: A total of 231 applications for regional selective assistance grants were received by my Department and 181 of these processed in the period from 1 April 1988 to 28 February 1989. The total amount of grant paid out over the same period was £27·4 million (RSA project and training grants).

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide figures on regional development grants for *(a)* the number of applications outstanding on 31 March 1988, *(b)* the number of those outstanding applications that have subsequently been processed, *(c)* the number of those applications that are still outstanding and *(d)* the total amount of money paid out since 31 March 1988 in regional development grants to those applicants.

Mr. Peter Walker: A total of 1,935 applications for revised regional development grant (RDG II) were outstanding on 31 March 1988. All these have since been actioned, and decisions had been made on 1,821 as at 28 February 1989, leaving a balance of 114. Actual payments on applications outstanding at 31 March 1988 totalled £13·3 million as at 28 February. Total expenditure on RDG II between 31 March 1988 and 28 February 1989 was £34·85 million.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total expenditure on regional development grant for each of the years 1983-84 to 1987-88 inclusive, and the estimated expenditure for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Peter Walker: Expenditure on regional development grants in Wales for the years 1983-84 to 1987-88 inclusive was as follows:

	£ million[1]
1983-84	72·1
1984-85	92·7
1985-86	84·4
1986-87	88·8
1987-88	53·4

Notes:
Estimated outturn for 1988-89 is £57·5 million[1] and the provision for 1989-90 is shown in the Supply Estimates published on 14 March. Planned provision by my Department for 1990-91 and 1991-92 is, respectively £43·6 million[2] and £34·3 million[2].
[1]Gross expenditure on original (RDG I) and revised (RDG II) schemes.
[2]Expenditure net of domestic receipts and recoveries, gross of EC receipts.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total expenditure on regional selective assistance for each of the years 1983-84 to 1987-88 inclusive, and the estimated expenditure for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Peter Walker: Expenditure on regional selective assistance[1] in Wales for the years 1983-84 to 1987-88 inclusive is as follows:

	£ million[1]
1983-84	18·2
1984-85	25·1
1985-86	28·0
1986-87	35·6
1987-88	36·7

Notes:
Estimated outturn for 1988-89 is £43·0 million[1] and the provision for 1989-90 is shown in the Supply Estimates published on 14 March. Planned provision by my Department for 1990-91 and 1991-92 is, respectively £61·2 million[2] and £62·7 million.[2]
[1] Gross expenditure on industrial and training grants, exchange risk losses on European loans, payments under the business improvements services scheme.
[2] Expenditure net of domestic receipts, gross of EC receipts.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications received for innovation grants from 1 April 1988 to the most recent date for which figures are available, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period and the estimated expenditure for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Peter Walker: Under the regional enterprise grant scheme 106 applications for innovation projects were received by my Department and 28 offers of grant to the value of £538,000 were made in the period 1 April 1988 to 28 February 1989. Most of these offers will not fall due for payment until 1989-90 and subsequent years. The revised total provision for payments in the 1988-89 financial year is £0·1 million. Vote provision for 1989-90 is shown in the Supply Estimates published on 14 March and planned provision in 1990-91 and 1991-92 is £1·8 million in each year.

Investment Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications received

for investment grants from 1 April 1988 to the most recent date for which figures are available, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period and the estimated expenditure for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Peter Walker: Under the regional enterprise grant scheme 277 applications for investment projects were received by my Department and 111 offers of grant to the value of £688,350 were made in the period 1 April 1988 to 28 February 1989. Most of these offers will not fall due for payment until 1989-90 and subsequent years. The revised total provision for payments in the 1988-89 financial year is £0·2 million. Vote provision for 1989-90 is shown in the Supply Estimates published on 14 March and planned provision in 1990-91 and 1991-92 is £5·6 million and £5·7 million respectively.

SCOTLAND

Waste Disposal

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of convictions, by district, for illegal waste-dumping in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* The information requested is not available.

Nurses

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year the number of nurses employed by the National Health Service in the following categories *(a)* qualified, *(b)* untrained and *(c)* in training in terms of whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is set out for selected years:

Nursing and Midwifery Staff NHS Scotland (WTE)

	1975	*1980*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	[1] *1988*
Total	52,540	58,602·5	62,562·1	62,868·2	63,388·3	63,909·0
Qualified	24,246	28,028·4	33,803·3	34,426·1	35,109·8	35,663·4
In training	11,096	12,414·3	11,366·7	11,190·7	10,830·4	10,828·4
Unqualified	17,198	18,159·8	17,392·1	17,251·4	17,448·1	17,417·2

[1] Provisional.
Note: Data at 30 September.

Teachers (Vacancies)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many vacancies exist currently in *(a)* primary, *(b)* junior and *(c)* secondary schools for teachers in (i) English, (ii) mathematics, (iii) languages, (iv) science, (v) craft and (vi) art subjects in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of vacancies for full-time teaching posts in Scotland which education authorities had advertised but not filled, at 31 January 1989, are as follows:

Type of school or subject	*Vacancies*
(a) Primary	70
(b) Junior	[1]—
(c) Secondary	58
(i) English	9
(ii) Mathematics	3
(iii) Languages	2
(iv) Science	8
(v) Craft (Technology)	4
(vi) Art	4
(vii) Other subjects	28

[1] Not applicable in Scotland.

Remand

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ensure that minor offenders are not given remand; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The decision to grant bail or, to remand an offender in custody is entirely one for the courts, which have before them the facts of each case and can consider all the circumstances.

Incinerators (Pollution)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals for new guidance on practices at incinerators to reduce dioxin discharges; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 16 March by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). In Scotland, large incinerators will be under the control of HM industrial pollution inspectorate.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals for new limitations on pollution from incinerators of municipal rubbish; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 16 March by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham).

Salmon Farming

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research has been conducted into the metabolism and depuration rate of dichlorvos in farmed salmon; and what regulations are in place to ensure that farmed salmon is not marketed within an appropriate period following treatment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No research has been carried out by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland into the metabolism and depuration rate of dichlorvos in farmed salmon. The veterinary products

committee would require any company applying for a licence for a dichlorvos-based product to provide data of this kind for evalution. However, information in support of an application for a medicinal product licence is a matter of commercial confidentiality and its publication would be a matter for the company concerned. It is the responsibility of the user and his veterinary adviser to comply with the conditions of use stipulated for any veterinary medicinal product.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when and where the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland's marine laboratory will publish its research result on *(a)* the toxicity of dichlorvos to marine organisms, including phytoplankton species, copepod species and larval stages of various marine organisms and *(b)* the persistence of dichlorvos in the marine environment and the form in which it is dispersed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Toxicity experiments on phytoplankton and copepod species were carried out by scientists of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland's marine laboratory as preliminary "range-finder" tests on a number of species to determine the most sensitive and therefore appropriate species for more detailed work. Subsequent detailed studies of the toxicity of dichlorvos to lobster and herring larvae have been carried out and it is hoped that reports will be published in the scientific press later this year.

No measurements of the persistence of dichlorvos in the marine environment have been carried out by scientists of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. Published work on the degradation rate of dichlorvos indicates a half-life in sea water of 6-7 days at 10-15c.

The marine laboratory is currently developing numerical models of the dispersion of dichlorvos away from release points in a fish farm, and field studies are planned for later this year to measure the horizontal and vertical diffusion coefficients and other hydrographic parameters required for these models. It is too early to say when this work will be sufficiently progressed to consider publication.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will issue a template for future environmental assessment statements in connection with proposed salmon farming developments to include a full marine impact statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment (Salmon Farming in Marine Waters) Regulations 1988 already provides a framework for preparing environmental statements including the assessment of the effect of the proposed development on the marine environment.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ensure that the environmental assessment statement submitted to the Crown Estate Commissioners by Marine Harvest Ltd. for a proposed salmon farm development in Lamlash bay, Isle of Arran (ref. XX100/660a) meets the requirements of *(a)* the Environmental Assessment (Salmon Farming in Marine Waters) Regulations 1988 and *(b)* the European Community directive 85/337 as implemented by Statutory Instrument 1218.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Whether the requirements of European Community Directive 85/337, as implemented by the Environmental Assessment (Salmon Farming in Marine Waters) Regulations 1988, are met is the responsibility of the Crown Estate Commissioners who are the competent authority under the regulations.

Schools (Self-Government)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the organisations he has met with to discuss the consultative document on self-governing schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Over recent months I have met a number of education organisations and discussed a range of topics, including our explanatory paper on self-governing schools.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the schools which have expressed an interest in changing to self-governing status.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Pending the establishment of school boards there is no formal means by which a school corporately can register interest in changing to self-governing status.

Deprivation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has gathered, and what research it has sponsored or carried out regarding the effect of deprivation on the physical and mental health of the Scottish people.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Home and Health Department is funding a research project into "Community Health Promotion in a Deprived Area" and has funded studies into aspects of health care in the community. The Department is aware of work undertaken by the Medical Research Council sociology unit in Glasgow, which may be relevant.

Grant Maintained Trust

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he or his Ministers have met representatives of the Grant Maintained Trust.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any requests from the Grant Maintained Trust for forward support.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

City Technology College Trust

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any request from the City Technology College Trust for financial support.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he or his Ministers have met representatives of the City Technology College Trust.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes.

Regional Assistance

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide figures on regional development grants for *(a)* the number of applications outstanding on 31 March 1988, *(b)* the number of those outstanding applications that have subsequently been processed, *(c)* the number of applications that are still outstanding and *(d)* the total amount of money paid out since 31 March 1988.

Mr. Lang: The figures requested for applications in Scotland under the revised regional development grant scheme are as follows:

Number of applications outstanding at 31 March 1988: 5,117
Number of these fully processed by 15 March 1989: 4,414
Number under consideration but awaiting response from applicants: 703
Number of applications awaiting attention: nil
Total payments made between 31 March 1988 and 10 March 1989: £47·7 million

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide figures on regional selective assistance for *(a)* the total number of applications received since 1 April 1988, *(b)* the number of applications that have been processed and *(c)* the total amount of money paid out since 1 April 1988.

Mr. Lang: In the period 1 April 1988 to 15 March 1989, 242 applications for regional selective assistance (RSA) were received in Scotland. Of these, 199 have been fully processed. The remaining 43 are being processed. Total payments of RSA in Scotland in the same period have amounted to £33·0 million.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the allocation of a mobile cancer screening unit to the Highland health board for use wholly in that board's area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have agreed that Highland health board will receive a mobile breast cancer screening unit for use wholly within their area as part of the programme to implement a comprehensive breast cancer screening service in Scotland by March 1991.

Water Pollution

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list those sewage treatment works in Scotland that discharged effluent below the required standard during 1988;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of recorded incidents of river pollution, the number of related prosecutions and the number of convictions in Scotland in each of the last 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not held centrally in the form requested. In Scotland river purification authorities are responsible for water pollution control. The information sought on compliance, pollution incidents and prosecutions is generally available in the annual reports of river purification boards which are lodged in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Rights of the Child (United Nations Convention)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's policy in respect of negotiations on the United Nations convention on the rights of the child; whether it is intended that Her Majesty's Government should be a signatory to that convention; and what reservations Her Majesty's Government have expressed on the convention.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom has played a leading role in the drafting of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child and intends to sign and ratify soon after its adoption. We indicated at the working group in December last that we may need to enter reservations on various articles of the convention but the scope of these reservations has yet to be determined.

South Africa

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will take steps to express Her Majesty's Government's concern at the recent visit to Chile by General Magnus Malan, the South African defence minister, and the resultant agreements between Chile and South Africa for military collaboration, in contravention of the United Nations arms embargo on South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We faithfully implement the United Nations arms embargo. It is for the United Nations Security Council arms embargo committee to investigate alleged breaches by other countries. We would deplore any breach shown to have occurred.

Vietnam

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether it is his policy to support the policy of the European Community Commission to establish a special office of trade and co-operation in Hanoi to further commercial relations between the European Community and Vietnam.

Mrs. Chalker: We understand the Commission has no plans to open an office in Hanoi.

El Salvador

Mr. Wood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will be sending observers to the forthcoming presidential elections in El Salvador.

Mr. Eggar: We have accepted an invitation from the Salvadorean Government to observe the presidential election in El Salvador on 19 March. Dr. David Browning, fellow of St. Cross college, Oxford has been appointed as official Government observer. He will report his findings to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary in due course.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Special Constables

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Attorney-General what guidance the Lord Chancellor gives to justices of the peace

regarding their powers under section 79 of the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847 to swear in as special constables persons nominated for the purpose by harbours, docks or piers undertakers and as to the nature of the inquiries to be made before such swearing in; and when such guidance was last amended.

The Solicitor-General: The Lord Chancellor does not give guidance to justices of the peace on the exercise of their powers. They receive advice as to the law and procedure on such matters from their justices' clerk.

Duty Solicitors

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what representations have been received by the Lord Chancellor's Department on the draft Legal Advice and Assistance (Scope) Regulations 1989 concerning duty solicitor schemes in the county court; and if he will publish the responses to any such representations.

The Solicitor-General: The Lord Chancellor's Department has received five representations on the draft Legal Advice and Assistance (Scope) Regulations 1989 which concern the provision of assistance by way of representation in county courts. Representations were also received on this subject during the preparation of the regulations from a further nine bodies or individuals to whom individual replies have been sent. These replies are on similar lines and I will place a copy of the letter of 15 November 1988 from the Lord Chancellor's Department to the Law Society in the Libraries of both Houses.

Legal Aid

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what steps have been taken in the last year to obtain accurate estimates of the percentage of the adult population eligible for legal aid.

The Attorney-General: Studies have been carried out on the basis of family expenditure survey data in relation to households of different compositions.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what estimate he has made of the number of persons who will *(a)* cease to be eligible and *(b)* pay increased contributions in respect of legal advice and assistance, civil legal and criminal legal aid consequent upon proposals for assessment of cohabitees' resources when assessing legal aid eligibility.

The Solicitor-General: The proposals in respect of the assessment of cohabitants' resources for legal advice and assistance, civil legal aid and criminal legal aid reflect the rules applicable to social security benefit applicants and implement a recommendation made by the legal aid advisory committee in its 34th annual report (1983-84). The Government announced their acceptance of this recommendation in 1986. It has not been possible to estimate the numbers who might benefit and the numbers who might lose as a result of this change.

Single Parents (Custody)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the requirements for judges to inquire into the circumstances of single parents and the provision for any children before any custodial sentence is passed.

The Solicitor-General: When passing sentence judges are required to take into account all the relevant circumstances.

Crown Court Judges

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Attorney-General how many Crown court judges are in post; what is their current training; what social services, psychological, or community service training is undertaken before or during appointment; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: There are 405 circuit judges of whom the majority regularly sit in the Crown court. Circuit judges are appointed from recorders and assistant recorders who will have sat regularly on a part-time basis.

Before assistant recorders are permitted to sit they must have completed a study programme which comprises:

(a) visits to the prison and probation services;
(b) attendance at a residential 3½ day induction course;
(c) sitting in with an experienced judge for a minimum of five days.

Every year each circuit holds one or more conferences which all circuit judges and part-time members of the judiciary are expected to attend. Speakers from the prison and probation service regularly attend these conferences. After 3½ years' sitting assistant recorders attend a three-day residential refresher seminar. Thereafter, together with all circuit judges and other part-time members of the judiciary they attend further refresher seminars every five years. In addition, the judicial studies board has initiated a series of induction and refresher courses in the civil and family field which have, inter alia, dealt with housing benefit.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the occasions when people have been imprisoned for contempt by Crown court judges or their equivalent for each year from 1970; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: It is not possible to distinguish between contemnors committed to prison by reference to the type of tribunal ordering the committal. However, the table provided shows the numbers of men and women committed to prison for contempt for the period 1970 to 1987 and the average length of imprisonment for all contemnors for each year during the period 1975 to 1987.

Receptions

	Males	*Females*	*Total*
1970	289	10	299
1971	318	42	360
1972	534	23	557
1973	500	18	518
1974	547	15	562
1975	751	15	766
1976	810	24	834
1977	900	33	933
1978	923	34	957
1979	923	31	954
1980	804	24	828
1981	877	36	913
1982	933	40	973
1983	934	37	971
1984	1,020	38	1,058
1985	936	46	982
1986	976	40	1,016
1987	924	41	965

Estimated Average time spent in custody by persons committed in Contempt of Court (in days)

	Days
1975	14
1976	14
1977	17
1978	18
1979	18
1980	19
1981	15
1982	13
1983	14
1984	14
1985	17
1986	18
1987	18

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide details of how the north-east London area advisory committee on the appointment of justices of the peace is undergoing the process of reconstitution; for what purpose; and what progress has been made.

The Solicitor-General: The reconstitution of the north-east London area advisory committee is a routine matter. All the Lord Chancellor's advisory committees on the appointment of justices are subject to a similar process every three years. Appointments are made by the Lord Chancellor on the recommendation of the chairman. The purpose is to obtain a balance of new and experienced members who broadly reflect the composition of the area served.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General why he does not regard it as appropriate to disclose information about members on *(a)* the north-east London area advisory committee and *(b)* the north-east London advisory committee Waltham Forest division sub-committee; what steps he is taking to ensure that the local community are confident that these individuals are fit for their positions; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The purpose of these committees is to advise the Lord Chancellor on the appointment of justices. The final decision is his. The Lord Chancellor believes that it is appropriate for the names of the members to be disclosed but sees no purpose in the publication of personal information about them.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the £40 million tax relief estimated for 1989-90 for private medical insurance he estimates will go to those who already have private medical insurance.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* The introduction of tax relief for private medical insurance paid by or on behalf of the elderly has no cost in 1989-90. As I explained in the Budget debate it is estimated that about 90 per cent. of the cost in 1990-91 will be attributable to those who already have private medical insurance. Over later years this proportion is expected to decline, though the figure will depend upon take-up and marketing by insurers.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the £40 million tax relief he has set aside for private medical insurance he estimates will go to *(a)* BUPA and *(b)* Private Patients Plan.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* The benefit of tax relief on qualifying private medical insurance premiums will go to the person paying the premium and not to the providers of private medical insurance.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the cost of private medical insurance tax relief for 1991-92 and 1992-93;

(2) what is his best estimate of the proportion of pensioners who will take up private medical insurance tax relief in each of the five years from 1989.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* Tax relief on private medical insurance premiums paid by the elderly will not be available until 1990-91. It is estimated that about 5 per cent. of the 12 million people aged 60 and above will be covered by private medical insurance in 1990-91. The number of people covered and the cost of the relief in future years will depend, among other things, on the extent to which medical insurance for the over-60s is promoted and taken up.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if a firm will be eligible for tax relief if they pay the private medical insurance tax relief of ex-employees who are aged over 60 years.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* A firm will normally be entitled to a deduction for these costs under existing law in computing the taxable profits of its trade. But relief would not also be due under the new relief-at-source scheme to be introduced in April 1990.

Seafarers (Taxation)

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish details of any special arrangements for the taxation of earnings of seafarers which apply or are in active contemplation in each of the member states of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Last year for United Kingdom resident seafarers we eased the conditions for entitlement to the 100 per cent. foreign earnings deduction available to those United Kingdom residents who work wholly or partly abroad for a qualifying period of 365 days. Seafarers may now visit the United Kingdom for up to 90 consecutive days and up to one quarter of the total number of days abroad and in the United Kingdom without losing the deduction.

I understand that in Greece, for many years, the earnings of ratings have been exempt from tax and a special low rate of tax (5·5 per cent.) is applied to officers' earnings. A number of other EC countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany and Netherlands) have either introduced or are reported to be considering arrangements, the effect of which is to use the seafarers' tax liability as the basis for calculating a subsidy in favour of the employing shipping company.

Shipping

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a summary of the arrangements for special depreciation on shipping investment in European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information available about the tax treatment of depreciation on shipping investment is as follows:

Country	*Rate/Method of depreciation*	*Notes*
Belgium	Based on life of eight years; 20 per cent. a year straightline reducing to 10 per cent.	Investment allowance of 13 per cent. for new ships.
Denmark	Stage payments in advance of delivery (up to a maximum of 30 per cent. of total cost) attract allowances of 15 per cent. a year for up to two years. Post-delivery rate on unrelieved expenditure is 30 per cent. (reducing balance).	
France	According to life of ship: *Life (years)* / *Rate (reducing balance) (per cent.)* 8 — 31·25 10 — 25 15 — 16·66 20 — 12·5	
Federal Republic of Germany	Normal rates based on expected useful life: large passenger ship: 18·75 per cent.; others: 25 per cent. (reducing balance). Corresponding straightline rates are 6·25 per cent. and 8·33 per cent. Additional 40 per cent. of net cost of new ship can be taken over first five years (straightline basis only).	80 per cent. of book profit from sale of ship can be taken to a tax-free reserve, provided ship owned for at least six years. Replacement must take place within two years.
Greece	Special tax rules according to age and tonnage of ship. (No details available.)	
Ireland	Initial allowance of up to 75 per cent. for capital expenditure on new or secondhand ships (reducing to 50 per cent. for 1989-90) which may be taken as and when required.	
Italy	Accelerated allowance of 15 per cent. for each of first three years. Normal rates thereafter. Passenger, tanker or refrigerated ships: 10 per cent. (straightline). Others (including dry cargo ships): 9 per cent.	
Netherlands	Usual rates 12-16 per cent. (reducing balance) over 12-20 years according to expected life of ship.	Special investment premium of 4 per cent. per year over five years reduces depreciation base. Book profit from sale of ship can be taken to tax-free reserve. Replacement must take place within four years.
Spain	Tankers, refrigerated ships: 15 per cent. Passenger/cargo: 12·5 per cent. (reducing balance). Corresponding straightline rates are 6 per cent. and 5 per cent.	10 per cent. tax credit for investment in new fixed assets. Book profit from sale of ship tax free if reinvested in replacement ship within two years.
United Kingdom	25 per cent. of reducing balance.	Allowances can be rolled forward and taken as required. Cost of newly-acquired ship can be used to offset a balancing charge on the disposal of another vessel, where disposal and acquisition occur in the same chargeable period.

Tax Threshold

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the full cost to the Exchequer of raising the threshold when tax-payers have to pay 40 per cent. income tax *(a)* from £20,000 to £21,000, *(b)* from £21,000 to £22,000, *(c)* from £22,000 to £23,000, *(d)* from £23,000 to £24,000 and *(e)* from £24,000 to £25,000.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 March 1989]:* The direct revenue cost in a full year at 1989-90 income levels of raising the basic rate limit by £1,000 from the 1988-89 level of £19,300 is estimated to be about £200 million. Each further increase of £1,000 would cost about £10 million less, so that the cost of raising the limit from £24,000 to £25,000 would be about £150 million.

Estimates are based on a projection of the 1986-87 survey of personal incomes and are provisional.

National Debt

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* an analysis of the total national debt of £197 billion as at 31 March 1988, showing how much was incurred in the following periods: *(a)* 1979-80 to 1987-88, *(b)* 1974-75 to 1977-78, *(c)* 1970-71 to 1973-74, *(d)* 1964-65 to 1969-70 and *(e)* 1959-60 to 1963-64.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* Taken literally, the question appears to ask what fraction of the particular stocks currently outstanding (31 March 1988) was issued, net of redemptions, during each period. Figures for Treasury Bills and the various National Savings products are unavailable. Of those gilt-edged stocks currently outstanding (nominal value = £140·9 billion) the (net) amounts incurred were as follows:

	£ billion
(a) 1979-80 to 1987-88	109·5
(b) 1974-75 to 1979-80	21·5
(c) 1970-71 to 1973-74	3·9
(d) 1964-65 to 1969-70	2·4
(e) 1959-60 to 1963-64	1·9

However, such a series is not very informative. The average life of gilt-edged stocks is somewhere near eight years, and debt has to be issued continually to replace any that is redeemed; we would almost always expect to see a declining series, as above, whatever the relative strengths of public sector finances in each period.

However, the national debt is not the most useful or comprehensive measure of public sector indebtedness. It includes debt held by official bodies within central Government, it does not cover the whole of central Government and it excludes entirely the debt of other parts of the public sector. In addition, it takes no account of the public sector's short-term assets, including foreign exchange reserves.

A better measure is the public sector net debt, which is analagous to the PSBR-PSDR.

In 1987-88 prices, the total PSBR over each period was as follows:[1]

(a) 1979-80 to 1987-88—£88·4 billion equivalent to £9·8 billion a year.
(b) 1974-75 to 1978-79—£111·9 billion equivalent to £22·4 billion a year.
(c) 1970-71 to 1973-74—£39·8 billion equivalent to £9·9 billion a year.
(d) 1964-65 to 1969-70—£33·4 billion equivalent to £5·6 billion a year.
(e) 1959 to 1963—£27·4 billion equivalent to £5·5 billion a year.

[1] Note: before 1963-64 PSBR data are only available in calendar year form.

Income Tax (Scotland)

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the income tax yield from taxpayers resident in Scotland for the latest available tax year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Income tax liabilities of taxpayers resident in Scotland amounted to about £3·3 billion in 1986-87, the latest available year.

Cash Limits

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give revised cash limits for 1988-89 which take account of the decision by some Departments not to seek supplementary provision to cover the carry forward allowed under the end year flexibility scheme.

Mr. Major: Under the end year flexibility scheme, announced in 1983, some 34 1988-89 cash limits were increased to allow for the carryforward of capital underspend in 1987-88—*Official Report*, 21 July 1988, columns *725-28*. Under the terms of the additional flexibility arrangements for the Ministry of Defence announced in 1986, there was a further increase to allow for carryforward and to compensate the defence budget for a writing off part of a debt in respect of loan service and training charges incurred by the Nigerian Government —*Official Report*, 21 July 1988, columns *725-36*. In the case of four voted cash limits, the relevant departments have not sought parliamentary approval for the extra provision in a Supplementary estimate. To keep the control figures in line with provision, the cash limits are accordingly being reduced; a list is shown in the following table.

Revisions to 1988-89 voted cash limits

Class	*Vote*	*Accounting department*	*Description of expenditure*	*Current cash limit £000*	*Decrease £000*	*Revised cash limit £000*
I	[1]2	Ministry of Defence	Defence Procurement	8,822,266	531,169	8,291,097
XVI	2	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland	Agricultural services and fisheries	76,542	445	76,097
XIX	13	Her Majesty's Treasury	Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency	18,490	406	18,084
XX	13	Office of Fair Trading	Office of Fair Trading	10,227	75	10,152
Total					532,095	

[1] The five cash limited Defence votes are each separate cash limits but, by agreement with the Treasury, are managed as a cash block. Underspend on expenditure eligible for the scheme in these cash limits was carried forward to Class 1, Vote 2.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Crown servants posted overseas continue to receive mortgage interest relief on their homes in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Crown servants, including members of the armed forces and diplomats, serving abroad who are required to live in job-related accommodation qualify for mortgage interest relief on their homes in the United Kingdom. Most other Crown servants are covered by the existing extra statutory

concession under which relief continues during absences, due to employment, for periods up to four years. In a few cases Crown servants, whose salaries remain subject to United Kingdom tax, are posted overseas for periods exceeding four years. We are extending the extra statutory concession to ensure that relief will continue in these cases for the full period of the overseas posting.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Research Assistants (Passes)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how are holders of research assistants' passes with access to the Library reviewed in order to ensure that those who would make fullest use of them are able to do so.

Mr. Wakeham: The passes issued to right hon. and hon. Members for use by their research assistants which give limited access to the Members' Library, are issued for a period of one year in the first instance, and are then renewable on application for three further years. Research assistants holding such passes are required to sign a register each time they use the Library in order to ensure that not more than 15 of them are in the Library at the same time. There is no systematic monitoring of frequency of usage: nor would it appear desirable or practicable to do so.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. Members are on the waiting list for research assistants' passes with access to the Library.

Mr. Wakeham: Twenty-nine.

Standing Orders

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list every change in the Standing Orders of the House since 1979; and if he will indicate the name and ministerial status of the person moving the appropriate motion to change the Standing Orders.

Mr. Wakeham: A table showing the dates at which the Standing Orders of 1988, relating to Public Business, were passed and amended is given in "Standing Orders of the House of Commons: Public Business 1988" (pages ix to xvi; HC 1; Session 1988-89). The House also frequently approves motions which either modify Standing Orders for the duration of a Session or a Parliament or suspend Standing Orders for a specific purpose or a specific period. A list showing every change and the name and ministerial status of the person moving the appropriate motion could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Miss Pamella Bordes

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Lord President of the Council on what date approval for the fitting of a division bell to premises occupied by Miss Pamella Bordes was given by the Serjeant at Arms; and who made the application.

Mr. Wakeham: No application has been made for a Division bell to be fitted to premises known to be occupied by Ms. Bordes.

Photo-passes

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will give the number of photo-passes to the House held by staff of each Government Department.

Mr. Wakeham *[holding answer Thursday 9 March 1989]*: Photo-passes giving restricted access to the Palace of Westminster are issued to departmental staff permanently employed within the precincts, to departmental messengers, to ministeral drivers and to officials who are required to attend often at short notice. The following is the information requested:

	Number
Government Actuary Department	1
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	32
Cabinet Office	57
Central Office of Information	2
Customs and Excise	19
Crown Suppliers	135
Ministry of Defence	97
Department of Education and Science	50
Department of Employment	102
Department of Energy	76
Department of the Environment	228
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	103
Department of Health Department of Social Security	176
Home Office	160
Inland Revenue	95
Law Officers' Departments	10
Lord Advocate's Department	4
Lord Chancellor's Department	163
Northern Ireland Office	35
Office of Arts and Libraries	2
Office of Fair Trading	1
Office of Parliamentary Counsel	29
Overseas Development Administration	19
Prime Minister's Office	42
Privy Council Office	13
Property Services Agency	287
Scottish Office	81
Department of Trade and Industry	192
Department of Transport	60
Her Majesty's Treasury	162
Welsh Office	43
Government and Opposition Whips' Office	18

SOCIAL SECURITY

Appeals

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the reasons for the delays in dealing with the appeal before the social security appeals tribunal in the case of Mr. George McLeod, 689 Mosspark drive, Glasgow.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Mr. McLeod appealed on 3 May and 20 June 1988 against two separate decisions issued by the adjudication officer. The delay in submitting the papers to the social security appeal tribunal was caused partly by the local office having to process a larger than normal volume of appeals resulting from benefit take-up campaigns in the area and partly by the need to resolve issues raised by Mr. McLeod in subsequent correspondence. The appeals were heard on 16 February 1989 and notification of the tribunal's decision was sent to him on 6 March 1989.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing the number of

cases relating to the 26-week period of unemployment benefit qualifications which have gone to an appeal tribunal and the number for which appeals were successful, broken down for Great Britain, England, Wales, Scotland and by Department of Social Security Region.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The number of appeals against disqualification for unemployment benefit, for reasons generally known as voluntary unemployment, heard and decided during the three months ended 30 June 1988 (the latest period for which information is available) and the outcome of those appeals are in the following table:

Area	*Number of appeals*	
	Heard and decided	*Decided in claimant's favour*
Great Britain	2,329	1,040
England	1,829	774
Wales	154	84
Scotland	346	182
English regions:		
North Eastern	416	155
North Western	410	179
London North	271	116
London South	234	113
Midlands	274	111
South Western	224	100

Information is not available as to the number of these appeals which were against disqualifications for the maximum period of 26 weeks.

Pension Age

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects the Government's consideration of proposals for the equalisation of pension age to be resolved.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Government are committed to the principle of equalising state pension age. These are complex issues and it would be wrong to reach a decision without taking all the factors into account. We cannot yet say when we will be able to announce changes.

Family Credit

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of the numbers claiming family credit into *(a)* one-parent and two-parent families, *(b)* self-employed and employed and *(c)* regions, showing in each case the average payment per week.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 20 January at column *360*. No further information is available.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people claimed family credit and housing benefit in 1988-89; and how many will do so in 1989-90.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Income Support

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will explain how the April 1989 income support rule is derived;

(2) what element is included in the income support rules for April 1989 for the average rate payment by an income support claimant.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 27 October 1988 at columns *445-58*.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what element is included in the income support rules for April 1989 for replacement clothing and food.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The income support rates are intended to provide for normal day-to-day living expenses. There is no specific amount included for replacement clothing and food.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what element is included in the income support rules for April 1989 for the average water rate payment by an income support claimant.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Water charges are not a separately identifiable element in the income support rates. Compensation for water charges was included as a once-and-for-all adjustment from April 1988.

Widows (Pensions)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much it is estimated would have been paid out in 1989-90 in widows' benefits had the age limit for widows' pension not been raised from 40 to 45 years and the threshold for abatement not been raised from 50 to 55 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 22 February 1989]:* I regret that information is not available in the form requested. The latest estimate of the amount of benefit that would have been paid out in widows' benefits in 1989-90 had the age bands for widow's pension not been changed is £965 million. This includes the extra expenditure arising from the changes announced on 28 February at columns *161-62* that women widowed before 11 April 1988 will have their entitlement to widows' benefits determined on the pre-reforms legislation.

Seafarers

Mr. Woodcock: To ask Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a summary of any special arrangements for social security contributions by or on behalf of seafarers which apply or are in active contemplation in each of the member states of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 23 February 1989]:* The following special arrangements exist in the United Kingdom for social security contributions paid by and on behalf of seafarers:

1. National insurance contributions paid by the employers of foreign-going mariners are subject to a special rebate, of 0·5 per cent. This reflects the fact that employers of foreign going mariners provide health care facilities for mariners whilst they are on board ship, and because the mariners cannot claim sickness benefit while abroad.

2. Share fishermen are self-employed but pay a special higher rate of national insurance contribution to reflect their entitlement to Unemployment and Industrial Injuries Benefits. The information available in respect of other EEC countries is as follows:

Belgium

Employers can receive special subsidies against their social security contributions if a crew is abroad for over seven months.

Denmark

Employers pay an extra amount per employee to cover sickness insurance.

West Germany

Foreign crew members not resident in Germany do not pay contributions for retirement pension purposes where there is no reciprocal agreement between West Germany and the country of origin.

France

Seafarers can retire on full pension at 55, or at 50 or 52½ on reduced pension (normal pension age 65).

Greece

Special contribution rates and pension arrangements for employers and employees.

Ireland

No special arrangements.

Italy

No special arrangements.

Netherlands

No special arrangements.

Portugal

No special arrangements.

Spain

Special contribution rates for employers and employees and State subsidy.

CIVIL SERVICE

Next Steps Initiative

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what progress he can report on the next steps initiative.

Mr. Luce: Since I last reported to the House on 1 February my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that he has concluded that the Central Office of Information should become an agency. In addition, last week my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement announced the decision to set up the four main non-nuclear research establishments, covering 12,500 staff as a single organisation with the intention that they should become a next steps agency by April 1991. I strongly welcome both these announcements, which illustrate the importance which the Government attach to the next steps initiative.

THE ARTS

Yorkshire Arts Association

29. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Yorkshire Arts Association to discuss the funding and structure of the arts in his region.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so.

Northern Arts Association

30. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Northern Arts Association to discuss the funding and structure of the arts in his region.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so.

British Theatre Association Library

32. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what progress has been made to secure the future of the British Theatre Association Library.

Mr. Luce: I was recently able to discuss the future of the BTA with Mr. Robert Holmes a'Court. I am now very pleased to say that the executive committee of the BTA has accepted Mr. Holmes a'Court's offer to provide premises for the association in central London. These premises will enable the BTA to continue its operations with a firm financial base underwritten by Mr. Holmes a'Court and I would like to pay tribute to his remarkable generosity, which has enabled satisfactory future arrangements for the association to be agreed. I am contributing £25,000 to the BTA towards its transitional costs.

British Library

33. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether, in the light of concern about the ability of the new building at St. Pancras to house all the London collections of the British library, consideration has been given to the retention of the accommodation in the British Museum building with a view to continuing to make use of the round reading room and King's library, and to maintaining the link between the historic collections of the library and museums.

Mr. Luce: The British Library board is satisfied that the library's key requirements—including appropriate accommodation for the King's library—will be met by the completed building at St. Pancras. There are no plans for the British library to retain any reader or storage accommodation in the British Museum building when the new library is complete in 1996.

Library Attendances

34. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what has been the pattern of attendance at libraries over the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: This information is not kept centrally.

North-West Arts Association

35. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of the North West Arts Association to discuss the funding and structure of the arts in his region.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so.

Greater London Arts Association

36. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Greater London Arts Association to discuss the funding and structure of the arts in his region.

43. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Greater London Arts Association to discuss the funding and structure of the arts in his region.

44. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Greater London Arts Association to discuss the funding and structure of the arts in his region.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so.

Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme

37. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has for the future of the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Mr. Luce: I am delighted with the progress of the scheme which, since its inception in 1984, has already brought £23 million of new money into the arts and has attracted over 900 new sponsors. As I announced to the House on 6 February at column *643*, to encourage even more businesses to support the arts, I propose to allow individual arts organisations to be eligible for up to two awards next year instead of one as at present, up to the maximum of £25,000.

East Midlands Arts Association

38. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of the East Midlands Arts Association to discuss the funding and structure of the arts in his region.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so.

West Midlands Arts Association

39. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to meet the chairman of the West Midlands Arts Association to discuss the funding and structure of the arts in his region.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to do so.

The Puppet Centre, Battersea

40. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he next intends to visit the Puppet Centre, Battersea, to discuss support for puppetry.

Mr. Luce: I have no plans to visit the Puppet Centre.

Northern Ballet Theatre

41. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what recent representations he has received seeking his intervention to protect the future of the Northern Ballet Theatre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have received a number of representations. I refer my hon. Friend to the Adjournment debate on Wednesday 8 March 1989 at columns 1007-1014.

Museums

42. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how many museums are currently established in Great Britain; and how many there were in (i) 1984, (ii) 1979, (iii) 1974 and (iv) 1969.

Mr. Luce: The number of museums and galleries in the United Kingdom is estimated to have risen from approximately 900 in 1963 to just under 2,200 in 1984 and over 2,400 in 1988.

The fastest area of growth has been in the independent museum sector where the Association of Independent Museums has indicated that its current membership of 750 represents a doubling of the membership in 1980.

British Craft

45. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what assistance is given by the Government towards the development and export of British craft.

Mr. Luce: The Crafts Council, which is funded by my Department, seeks actively to promote the sales of works by artists/craftsmen at home and abroad. During the past year, its activities have generated sales of crafts exceeding £2¼ million, of which more than £450,000 (20 per cent.) has been for export.

Performing Arts (Young People)

46. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to encourage young people to be trained in the performing arts.

Mr. Luce: I welcome the establishment of the city technological college at Selhurst, in 1990, which will train young people in the full range of abilities, from performance to technical skills, that the performing arts will require in the future. I hope that there will be similar, schools.

Mappa Mundi

47. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what progress has been made in ensuring that the Mappa Mundi remains in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Luce: The dean and chapter of Hereford cathedral, having withdrawn the map from public auction at the end of February, announced at the weekend their decision on the proposals before them. They hope to raise the substantial sum required for the cost of cathedral repairs, running costs and pastoral work by offering shares at £1,000 each in a company, the shareholders to receive a replica of the map and the dean and chapter to hold 50 per cent. of the stock.

The national heritage memorial fund today issued a press notice detailing its proposals, put to the cathedral on 17 February, but not in the event taken up. These were that a charitable trust should be set up, to which would pass ownership not only of the Mappa Mundi, but also the chained library, both of which would be housed in a new building. The trustees had secured from Mr. J. Paul Getty an offer of £1 million, and NHMF had also offered £2 million on the understanding that a public appeal should be launched to raise a similar sum. These proposals were open to negotiation.

I am grateful to the trustees of the fund for their efforts which, along with those of other interested parties, including Hereford city council, have led to the withdrawal from sale of Mappa Mundi. I wish the cathedral authorities every success in their task.

New Buildings

48. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will consider regular giving of Government funds for sponsorship of new buildings to house the performing and other arts.

Mr. Luce: Sponsorship of new or refurbished buildings by businesses is eligible for matching under the Government's business sponsorship incentive scheme in the same way as other arts activities. In 1988-89 such projects attracted over £100,000 in awards.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veterinary Officers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for each of the three counties of Yorkshire, the number and grade of veterinary officers employed by his Department at the end of 1988 and give comparable figures for 1983 and 1978; what recruitment of staff he is undertaking within these three counties at the present time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Because my Department's regional organisation has undergone changes in the period covered by the question and because the geographical areas of responsibility of veterinary staff are not contiguous with the boundaries of the three shire counties of Yorkshire, the precise figures requested by the hon. Member are not available. However, the number and grade of my Department's permanent veterinary staff with responsibilities covering all or part of Yorkshire for the end of years 1988, 1983 and 1978 were:

	1988	*1983*	*1978*
Regional Veterinary Officer	1	1	1
Deputy Regional Veterinary Officer	1	1	1
Superintending Veterinary Investigation Officer	1	1	1
Divisional Veterinary Officer	4	4	4
Senior Veterinary Investigation Officer	[1]1	2	2
Veterinary Investigation Officer (VIO)	[1]3	6	6
Veterinary Officer (VO)	11	14	16
Total	22	29	31

[1] Leeds Veterinary Investigation Centre closed in 1986.

A national recruitment exercise for VOs and VIOs is planned for early May, which will take account of one veterinary officer vacancy at Leeds and additional posts granted for salmonella controls.

Vote Office (Publications)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) on what basis he decides which of his publications should be available to hon. Members in the Vote Office on the day of publication;

(2) how many reports he has published in the last 12 months; and how many of these were made available in the Vote Office on the day of publication.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Reports and other material, compiled by my Department and published by HMSO should be available to hon. Members under arrangements agreed between HMSO and the House authorities. I make other important material available if, for example, the document is of direct interest to a parliamentary debate, or referred to in a parliamentary answer. In the last 12 months HMSO published 14 reports on behalf of my Department. Other than HMSO publications the Department made 98 documents available to hon. Members by placing copies in the House Libraries and copies of 490 documents were lodged in the Vote Office. The total number of documents which my Department made available to the public is not held centrally.

Slaughterhouses (Diseased Animals)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what inspections he carries out in slaughterhouses to ensure that cattle with bovine spongiform encephalopathy and sheep with scrapie do not enter the food chain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: On the advice of the Southwood working party, the carcases of cattle suspected of having bovine spongiform encephalopathy are destroyed as a precautionary measure. The Slaughterhouses (Hygiene) Regulations 1977, as amended, prohibit the entry of animals which are diseased, or suspected of having a disease into a slaughterhouse unless they are accompanied by a certificate issued by a veterinary surgeon which states that the animals are not suffering from any disease or condition which would render the carcase unfit for human consumption.

Scrapie has been present in this country for at least 200 years without any evidence of a risk to humans. Neither has research identified such a risk. Therefore action to prevent sheep with scrapie being slaughtered for human consumption would not be appropriate.

Abattoirs (Hygiene Standards)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the regulations which control hygiene and animal welfare standards in abattoirs for meat prepared for domestic consumption.

Mr. Donald Thompson: For the requirements applying to red meat slaughterhouses I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given on Wednesday 1 February at columns *240-41* to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Mr. Cousins).

In respect of poultry slaughterhouses the following apply:

The Poultry Meat (Hygiene) Regulations 1976, as amended.

The Slaughter of Poultry Act 1967 (as amended).

The Slaughter of Poultry (Humane Conditions) Regulations 1984.

Sheep Dipping

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what regulations control the use of chemicals for dipping sheep; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Sheep dips are veterinary medicines and are subject to controls set down in the Medicines Act 1968. Proper use and storage on farms is a matter for the HSE.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he gives to farmers about the safe use of chemicals used for dipping sheep; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is a condition of licences for all veterinary medicinal products that suitable advice on use is included on the label including, where appropriate, operator safety warnings and contingency medical advice.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to ensure the safe disposal of chemicals used for dipping sheep; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Sheep dip labels carry advice on safe disposal. Fuller guidance is available free in ADAS booklet 2198, "Guidelines for the disposal of unwanted pesticides and containers on farms and holdings".

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to ensure that chemicals used in sheep dips do not enter rivers and streams; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Sheep dip labels point out that it is unlawful to permit any poisonous, noxious or polluting substance to enter any river, stream or watercourse etc. The law is enforced by local water authorities from whom further guidance is available.

Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring is carried out by his Department into transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in mammals in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Bovine spongiform encephalopathy is a notifiable disease in Great Britain and all suspected cases must be reported to the Ministry. Members of the Ministry's sheep and goat health scheme may participate in an optional scrapie monitoring programme. The veterinary investigation service of the state veterinary service continues to monitor for novel diseases which have not been recorded in this country.

Farm Woodland Scheme

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has of delays in obtaining permission to proceed with plantings with the farm woodland scheme during the present tree-planting season.

Mr. Ryder: As I said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) on 16 February at column *357*, most applications for the farm woodland scheme submitted by then should receive approval in time for planting to go ahead this season. That remains our intention. In England, 311 applications had been approved by the end of February. This represents some 66 per cent. of the applications received in England by the end of January. Applications received later than mid-February may not be approved in time for planting this season, although I have given clear instructions that everything must be done to quicken up the process.

Veterinary Products Committee

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to widen the criteria by which the veterinary products committee assesses products submitted for approval for a product licence.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. The terms of references of the veterinary products committee are established under the Medicines Act 1968.

BSE-infected Cattle

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many carcasses of BSE-infected cattle have been buried in the United Kingdom; and what are the burial sites;

(2) what proportion of carcasses of cattle confirmed to be suffering from bovine spongiform encephalopathy are *(a)* buried, *(b)* incinerated and *(c)* disposed of by other means.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Some 1,300, or about one third of the carcasses of cattle compulsorily slaughtered, have been buried on licensed waste tips or on farm, with the approval of water and local authorities. The others have been incinerated.

Transmissible Mink Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any information on outbreaks of transmissible mink encephalopathy in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Transmissible mink encephalopathy has not been reported in this country.

Veterinary Products

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to make it a statutory requirement to consider evidence of need before the granting of a product licence to a veterinary product.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. The principles of the Medicines Act have stood the test of time.

Cetaceans

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow on 1 December 1988, *Official Report*, column *860*, if he will publish details of the monitoring of the incidental capture of cetaceans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department is working on the detailed arrangements for a proposed monitoring scheme and, once this has been established, it is intended that the information obtained will be made available. It is envisaged that fishermen will be asked to provide details of the species taken, its size, the type of fishing practice involved, the location of the capture and whether the animal was released unharmed. It is hoped that this range of information will help us to develop a much clearer understanding of the incidental capture of marine mammals.

Meat Statistics

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much meat was produced in total from abattoirs in the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In total, 2·3 million tonnes of carcase meat (beef, veal, sheep and pigmeat) was produced from abattoirs in the United Kingdom in 1988.

Sheep (Scrapie)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he gives to farmers on the regulations he makes about disposing of scrapie-infected sheep carcases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There are no regulations specifically relating to the disposal of scrapie-infected sheep carcases. There is no evidence to suggest that scrapie is a risk to human health.

Goats' Milk

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether any testing is carried out to ensure hygiene standards of goats' milk; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he has plans to improve the standard of hygiene of goats' milk; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the regulations that cover the hygiene standards of goats' milk.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The wording of the Food Act means that the detailed regulations which apply to cows' milk cannot be extended to cover goats' milk. Consultations on a new Food Bill have suggested that this should be remedied. Meanwhile, goats' milk is subject to the general provisions of the Food Act whereby all food (including drink) must be of the nature, substance and quality demanded by the purchaser, must be fit for human consumption, and must not be labelled in a false or misleading way. Local authorities are responsible for the enforcement of these provisions and for any testing required. In addition, the Ministry has issued a code of practice on the hygienic production of goats' milk.

Fruit (Cyanide)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what discussions he is having with Agriculture Ministers in other countries about the possibility of cyanide contaminated fruit being imported into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what action he is taking to ensure that cyanide contaminated fruit from Chile is not being sold in the United Kingdom.

(3) whether he is considering banning the import of Chilean fruit.

Mr. Ryder: The Government have obtained full information from the Governments of the United States and of Chile about the anonymous threats made to the United States embassy in Santiago relating to action against fruit for export, and the subsequent discovery by the United States authorities of non-lethal doses of cyanide in two grapes in a consignment exported from Chile.

There is no indication that fruit other than grapes is involved, and the threat appears to be restricted to supplies consigned to the United States. My Department and the Department of Health have alerted the port authorities and the trade in the United Kingdom so that produce arriving from Chile can be thoroughly examined. In view of the transport time supplies shipped from the period of the threat cannot yet have arrived in this country.

The Departments will be maintaining a close watch on the situation. In the light of the existing position, no further action is justified at present.

Fruit Imports

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the type of fruit and quantities of each that have been imported into the United Kingdom in each of the last six years.

Mr. Ryder: The following is the information:

Calendar year	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*[1]1988*
Apples	399·4	405·6	401·0	428·4	442·2	443·4	498·3
Pears	63·8	78·5	66·0	69·3	64·3	77·2	92·5
Plums	21·0	27·4	20·5	21·9	20·9	24·0	23·5
Cherries	7·5	7·8	9·5	9·2	6·9	9·3	7·3
Strawberries	7·5	9·0	10·2	12·5	13·7	15·4	17·6
Oranges	315·1	305·2	317·3	283·8	344·4	333·6	400·3
Mandarins	110·4	122·8	134·8	121·9	131·1	151·1	134·6
Lemons	50·1	48·0	49·5	47·2	51·3	51·5	54·4
Other Citrus	98·2	85·1	79·3	71·4	82·2	83·2	92·2
Bananas	328·0	307·3	309·4	323·7	343·1	359·6	388·2
Melons	71·0	90·5	98·4	99·1	106·0	107·7	93·7
Peaches	67·3	83·8	82·4	85·0	79·3	95·0	83·8
Grapes	64·5	85·7	86·2	106·4	101·1	107·8	121·7
Avocados	9·3	10·7	11·9	13·9	14·9	18·7	13·0
Pineapples	15·8	15·9	15·2	18·3	19·2	21·3	22·3
All other fresh fruit	13·1	13·3	14·5	15·9	18·5	18·1	20·7
TOTAL QUANTITY	1,642·0	1,696·6	1,706·1	1,727·9	1,839·1	1,916·1	2,064·9

[1] Provisional.

BSE-infected Cattle

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what criteria are applied when consideration is given to the method of disposal of carcases of cattle confirmed to be infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy;

(2) why burial was chosen as an appropriate means of disposal of the carcases of cattle infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The criteria applied are as for other notifiable diseases; the carcase must be disposed of in a way that does not pose a risk to animal or human health. Both incineration and burial are safe methods of disposing of carcases of cattle slaughtered because of suspected BSE. The method used depends on the facilities available in various parts of the country.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the inactivation of the agent causing bovine spongiform encephalopathy by burial of the carcase of the host.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The only part of a cattle carcase known to carry the BSE agent is the brain, which is removed for laboratory examination prior to the disposal of the carcase and subsequently incinerated. Research is under way to establish whether any other parts of the

carcase carry the agent. The carcases are buried in such a way that no other species would be exposed to the agent should it be present.

Belgian Trawlers (Rule Infringements)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action his Department has taken on reports by United Kingdom fishing vessel operators of breaches of Community fisheries policy and European Community rules by Belgian trawlers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The United Kingdom fishermen concerned have not produced any solid evidence to support their allegations against Belgian trawlers, nor are they substantiated by information available to the fisheries protection service. The United Kingdom co-operates closely with the Belgian authorities on fisheries control matters and information is regularly supplied to them. Such information has in the past been used by the Belgian authorities to institute proceedings against certain of their fishermen.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy in future that any reports by United Kingdom fishing vessel operators of breaches of Community fisheries policy and European Community rules by Belgian trawlers are taken up promptly with the Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It has always been my Department's practice to pass all properly substantiated information on offences of this kind to the vessel's member state and, if appropriate, to the Commission.

Belgian Fishing Fleet

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has had from fishermen and fishing organisations on the relationship between the viability and the quota of the Belgian fishing fleet; and what action he intends to take with the Commission.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, the South West Fish Producers' Organisation and the Cornish Fish Producers' Organisation have made allegations that the level of activity by the Belgian fleet is higher than would be justified by its quotas. The organisations concerned have not, however, provided any concrete or substantiated evidence in support of their allegations. Nor are they supported by evidence available to the Department from the fisheries protection service.

Dutch and Belgian Fishing Vessels

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he intends to take at the Council of Ministers to prevent the Dutch Government from permitting vessels over 4,000 brake horsepower to derate their engines to below the 1800 brake horsepower cut-off which allows these vessels south of 55° north.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The derating of the engines of Dutch fishing vessels to enable them to fish in the North sea south of 55° north between 1 April and 30 June is a matter for the Dutch authorities and the Commission. We shall be following closely any developments.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring his Department has done in the past six months as to how successfully the Dutch and Belgian Governments are enforcing agreed European Community rules on fishing vessels.

Mr. Donald Thompsan: It is primarily the reponsibility of the Commission to monitor member states' compliance with Community rules and the Community inspectorate makes frequent visits to member states to examine their control and inspection arrangements. The United Kingdom continues to inspect Belgian and Dutch vessels, along with other nationalities, operating in British fishery limits. We also continue to press for improved enforcement and control of the common fisheries policy throughout the Community.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make it his policy not to grant a product licence for BST in the light of the trials at Winchester and Edinburgh showing that cows treated with bovine somatotropin fail to gain weight compared to control cows and that treated heifers lose weight;

(2) if he will make it his policy not to grant a product licence for BST in the light of the trials at Shinfield, Hurley and Newcastle showing that cows treated with bovine somatotropin lose body condition score;

(3) if he will make it his policy not to grant a product licence for BST in the light of the trials at Edinburgh, Shinfield and Hurley showing reproduction problems in treated cows;

(4) if he will make it his policy not to grant a product licence for BST in the light of evidence that treating cows with bovine somatotropin through regular non-therapeutic injections can leave tender swellings;

(5) if he will make it his policy not to grant a product licence for BST in the light of the fact that it is against the advice of the British Veterinary Association to inject cows daily for non-therapeutic purposes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The policy for deciding applications for product licences is established by the Medicines Act 1968. In the case of BST products both data being generated in field trials and all other pertinent data will be rigorously assessed against the statutory criteria of safety, quality and efficacy.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research is being done to determine whether BST can survive in the flesh of slaughtered cows which have been treated with BST.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Applicants for product licences for BST are, in accordance with the Medicines Act, obtaining or generating all data necessary for a thorough assessment, including data on possible residues.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about the imposition in the Netherlands of a 28-day withdrawal period on BST treated cows before they are slaughtered; and to what extent a similar practice is followed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: None. In the United Kingdom the withdrawal periods which may be applicable for a

product such as BST are determined following a thorough assessment of the licence application and its supporting data.

Medicines (Monitoring)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what provisions there are to monitor the environmental effects and regulate the use of products used under the Medicines Act 1968, which are not licensed, including products prescribed by veterinary practitioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Products not licensed under the Medicines Act may be prescribed by veterinary practitioners for particular animals under their care, and in accordance with their professional judgment. The wide range of products involved is not a specific category for environmental monitoring purposes.

North-East Drift Net Fishery

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide details of the review of the north-east drift net fishery as laid down in section 39 of the Salmon Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Section 39 of the Salmon Act 1986 requires my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Scotland to prepare and submit to Parliament a report reviewing salmon netting off the coasts of north-east England and eastern Scotland. That report is to be submitted as soon as practicable after 7 November 1989, three years after the enactment of the 1986 Act. Work on the review is currently in hand and it would not be appropriate to pre-empt it.

Slaughterhouses

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions a year his veterinary officers visit each slaughterhouse in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My veterinary officers visit non-export approved slaughterhouses once a year to monitor standards and give advice to enforcement authorities. They aim to make monthly visits to export approved plants and quarterly visits to licensed poultry slaughterhouses.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce legislation to ensure that landlords have no legal claim on payments made under the ESA scheme applied for by a tenant.

Mr. Ryder: No. ESA payments are made to the applicant who will usually be an owner-occupier or tenant of the land. Any questions relating to tenants' participation must be a matter for the parties concerned since they will depend on individual circumstances. I would advise tenants to seek professional advice if they are in any doubt about their position under a tenancy agreement.

"Nuclear Accidents and the Farmer"

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he intends to distribute the leaflet entitled "Nuclear Accidents and the Farmer"; and to whom.

Mr. Ryder: The leaflets entitled "Nuclear Accidents and the Farmer" are being distributed by post to farmers in the vicinity of major nuclear installations. Copies are also being sent to local liaison committees at these sites and to representatives of national organisations such as the Milk Marketing Board, the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association and copies have been placed in the Library of the House. Further copies are available on request from my Department's regional offices.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many leaflets entitled "Nuclear Accidents and the Farmer" he has had printed.

Mr. Ryder: Five thousand copies of the advisory leaflets entitled "Nuclear Accidents and the Farmer" have been printed.

Egg Producers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list each egg producer who received assistance under his scheme to aid the egg industry; and how much was paid out in each case.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Payments under the egg industry scheme were made to egg packers. The slaughter of hens scheme did involve payments to egg producers but it would not be appropriate to list their names and the amounts which they received.

Sheep (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep and in which months since April 1986, have been monitored for radioactivity in slaughterhouses in England.

Mr. Ryder: As promised in the Government's response to the Agriculture Committee's report, "Chernobyl: the Government's Reaction", we have been examining the feasibility of monitoring for radioactivity in English slaughterhouses. An initial pilot study was carried out in December 1988 involving the monitoring of 40 sheep carcases at one slaughterhouse. A more extensive trial is now under-way at six slaughterhouses, as part of which 314 sheep carcases were monitored in February and a further 442 had been monitored by 15 March.

Training

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the appropriateness of the present arrangements for agricultural and related training in the light of the period of considerable change in the industry.

Mr. MacGregor: Over the past 22 years the agricultural training board has made a most valuable contribution in developing training provision in the agricultural industry. I believe, however, that it is timely to consider on what lines the future role of the board might most appropriately develop, taking into account the changing patterns of employment and associated training needs in agriculture and related industries; the diversification of the range of training offered by the agricultural colleges; and the Government's plans for the reform of training set out in the White Papers Cms. 534 and 540. In the circumstances I have, with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, and with the agreement of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Employment and for Education and Science, decided to institute a review with the following terms of reference:

"*To consider* the future role of the Agricultural Training board (ATB) in meeting the agricultural and related training needs for the 1990s bearing in mind the Secretary of State for Employment's proposals on training in 'Employment for the 1990s', and the proposals of the Secretary of State for Scotland contained in 'Scottish Enterprise', and the resources and facilities available at agricultural colleges; and, from the basis of the existing Agricultural Training Board legislation, *to make specific recommendations* to Agriculture Ministers on the national and local organisation and structure most appropriate to meet those needs; *and to report by Autumn 1989.*"

This review will be conducted by Mr. John Smith, a partner in Arthur Young who today becomes chairman elect of the agricultural training board. He will be assisted in his task by the following assessors:

Mr. J. S. Barber, Cavick House Farm, Wymondham, Norfolk
Mr. D. H. Wilkinson, Southdown Farm, Ringstead, Dorset
Mr. D. Rose, Principal, Barony College, Dumfries
Mr. T. Jones, Plas Gwyn, Llangyniew, Welshpool, Powys
Mr. A. G. Harris, Principal, Harper Adams College, Newport, Shropshire
Mr. P. Brown HMI, Staff Inspector for Agricultural Education (England).

DEFENCE

South Korea

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British troops there are in South Korea, and in what capacity.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Forty-three members of Her Majesty's armed forces are currently located in the republic of Korea. A platoon of 34 men from the Hong Kong garrison contribute towards the United Nations honour guard and we have nine personnel in the headquarters of the Commonwealth liaison mission to the United Nations command.

Oman

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) under what agreement British troops are based in Oman; when it was initiated; and what is its duration;

(2) whether any memorandum of understanding exists between Her Majesty's Government and the Sultanate of Oman.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No British troops are based in Oman. A number of members of the United Kingdom armed forces are posted to Oman, as to other countries, as loan service personnel. The details of the arrangements under which this takes place are confidential between the two countries.

Low Flying

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the speed, height and purpose of the low-level flight by a jet aircraft over East Linton, East Lothian at 11.45 am on Monday 27 February; and if he will identify the type of aircraft involved and the base from which it was operating;

(2) if he will make a statement on the purpose, height, speed, home base, and type of aircraft which were involved in flights over Pencaifland at 11.30 am; 3.01 pm; and 3.26 pm on Wednesday 8 March.

Mr. Neubert: United Kingdom and other military aircraft are authorised as a matter of routine to carry out low level flying training in the area mentioned at heights no lower than 250 feet and at speeds normally not exceeding 450 knots. Aircraft may originate from a number of flying stations both in the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Exercise Red Lanyard

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *253*, how many complaints in respect of low flying aircraft during Exercise Red Lanyard have been received to date; and at what locations.

Mr. Neubert: Nine complaints have been identified which are likely to have arisen from military aircraft activity connected with exercise Red Lanyard. They were received from members of the public in Watton, Wilby, Middleton, Monks Soham, West Winch, Stanground, Normans Cross, Lundy Green and Brockhampton.

Royal Military Police (Accountants)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the numbers and qualifications of Royal Military Police officers currently serving as specialist accountants;

(2) in how many cases each year since 1979 investigations by the Royal Military Police have required the services of a specialist accountant who is a serving officer with the Royal Military Police;

(3) how many Royal Military Police officers who are trained as specialist accountants are currently in post; and how many have been in post in each year since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: Cases of suspected fraud are investigated by Royal Military Police (RMP) teams. The teams are composed of members of the special investigation branch of the Royal Military Police and, for technical assistance in their investigations, of advisers seconded from the Royal Army Pay Corps. Two RAPC warrant officers are currently employed full time as specialist financial advisers to provide technical assistance. The first full-time specialist financial adviser was seconded to the RMP in 1983. A second specialist was seconded in 1986.

Before 1983 all RAPC warrant officers could be called upon to assist with a SIB RMP investigation. In order to make best use of the experience and technical expertise gained in this type of investigation it was decided to second a warrant officer to the RMP as a full-time member of their SIB teams.

Since 1983, the financial advisers have handled 121 cases of false accounting, with five cases under investigation.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in how many cases each year since 1979 investigations by the Royal Military Police have required the assistance of specialist accountants who are *(a)* civilians, *(b)* civil servants, *(c)* officers serving with the ministry of defence police, *(d)* officers of the metropolitan police and *(e)* officers of other forces.

Mr. Neubert: None. We do, however, make use of the expertise of the Royal Army Pay Corps.

Warrant Officer Newbery

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make public the Royal Military Police report on Warrant Officer Newbery which led to him being charged with false accounting in 1986 and being subsequently acquitted.

Mr. Neubert: No. It is not the practice to make public confidential reports of this nature.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the dates since 1 January 1988 on which nuclear weapons tests have been carried out on behalf of the United Kingdom; and, in each case, whether these tests were carried out independently, or with the assistance of another country.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what policy considerations underline his decision not to make available to Parliament details of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation deliberations on the plans for modernisation for short-range nuclear weapons; and to what extent he takes into account their publication in other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation member states.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A communiqué is issued, following all NATO meetings, which is made available to the public. Copies are placed in the Library of the House. However, the details of the ministerial discussions and documentation for these meetings is, and should remain, confidential.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if nuclear submarines personnel have access to a record of their dose rates on leaving service with the nuclear submarine fleet or the armed services;

(2) what levels of radiation are *(a)* received by nuclear submarine personnel and *(b)* reported by the Central Electricity Generating Board amongst classified persons working in nuclear power stations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* The ionising radiation doses accrued by Royal Navy nuclear submarine personnel during the operation of the submarines are in general very small, being for the most part lower than those received by members of the public, who are exposed to natural cosmic and terrestrial radiation from which submariners are shielded. The majority of nuclear submarine personnel are thus not categorised as radiation workers.

Personnel who require regular access to designated radiation areas are categorised as radiation workers and subject to dosimetric assessment. Since 1986 such personnel have been isssued, on leaving the Royal Navy, with a termination record of the total dose which they have received. Before 1986, dose records were available to the individual on request. The average whole body dose received by Royal Navy submarine personnel categorised as radiation workers during 1988 was 1·5 milliseiverts.

I understand that the average radiation dose received by classified persons working in the Central Electricity Generating Board's nuclear power stations in 1987 was 0·7 milliseiverts (the 1988 figure is not yet available).

The radiation exposure limit for classified persons, set by the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985, is 50 milliseiverts per annum.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the upper quartile range of maximum radiation dose rates sustained by nuclear submarine personnel in the last five years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* Figures for the radiation doses sustained by nuclear submarine personnel are not easily broken down into quartiles. The following table gives the cumulative total dose, the average individual dose and a breakdown of numbers of personnel by dose received for each of the last five years.

Year	Cumulative dose (man Seiverts)	Number of personnel in dose ranges						Average individual dose (mSv)
		0-15 mSv	15-20 mSv	20-30 mSv	30-40 mSv	40-50 mSv	Over 50 mSv	
1988	2·1	1,398	4	0	0	0	0	1·50
1987	2·6	1,307	19	12	4	0	0	1·90
1986	3·1	945	19	18	16	1	0	3·07
1985	2·9	905	18	16	10	3	0	3·05
1984	2·8	777	24	13	6	0	0	3·46

Note: mSv = milliseivert.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what level of radioactivity his Department judges as significant in regard to the discharge of radioactive materials from nuclear submarines into the sea; and what type of materials are involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Royal Navy submarines do not discharge radioactivity at sea under normal circumstances. The significance of such discharges depends upon their potential effect. In determining what levels are acceptable, therefore, the Royal Navy takes into account the recommendations of the International Commission on radiological protection regarding dose. The radioactive isotope of most significance in discharges from Royal Navy submarines would be cobalt 60.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how his Department knows either in which foreign ports Britain's nuclear submarines may berth, or into whose territorial waters those submarines may enter.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Whenever a Royal Navy nuclear-powered submarine wishes to visit a foreign port, a request is made to the authorities of the country concerned.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of the consequences of an accident involving the nuclear armed warheads of the Polaris class of submarine boats in berth, and when at sea nearby the coastline, with regard to the guidelines recently published by the Health and Safety Executive entitled "Tolerability of Risk".

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The consequences of a Polaris nuclear weapon accident have been thoroughly examined. The hazard from such an accident would be from contamination by nuclear material which might be dispersed by a fire or ignition of conventional explosives. The risks of such an accident occurring are extremely small, and are assessed as consistent with the HSE guidelines on the tolerability of risk, although these were drawn up with nuclear power stations rather than weapons in mind. Plans do, however, exist to deal with such an accident.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department regards nuclear submarine personnel as equivalent to classified persons, as specified by the Ionising Radiations Regulations; and what measures are implemented to monitor and safeguard the health of such submariners, and to maintain the radiation dose exposure records of such personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Most nuclear-powered submarine personnel are not categorised as radiation workers. Of those who are, a proportion are designated as classified persons using criteria laid down in the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985. Radiation protection advisers are appointed, and dedicated staff qualified in radiation protection are provided in each nuclear-powered submarine and in their operating bases. Where required, dosimetric assessments are made by the defence radiological protection service.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if dose rate records for submariners working aboard nuclear submarines are maintained on a national register; and if those records are transferred to, or available to, future employers of such personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A national register of radiation workers is currently being produced within the United Kingdom. The doses accrued by nuclear submarine personnel will be included within the register unless the individual concerned chooses not to have his name entered. The requirements for termination records laid down in the Ionising Radiations Regulations are complied with, and for any radiation worker a summary of the dose received can be provided.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has knowledge of any medical disorders associated with radiation dose uptake amongst past and present submarine service personnel or their offspring.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence has no knowledge of any medical disorders arising from the exposure of RN nuclear submarine personnel to radiation.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average whole body radiation dose equivalent receipt or uptake of submariners aboard a nuclear submarine during an average tour of duty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The average radiation dose per annum for those submarine personnel designated as radiation workers is included within the breakdown of dose statistics which I gave earlier today. The average tour of duty with an individual submarine is about two years. The majority of submarine personnel, on the basis of their type of employment and access to radiation areas, are not designated as radiation workers and are not, therefore, subject to dosimetric assessment.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if his Department has identified and evaluated the worst credible nuclear accident in the operation of its nuclear powered submarine fleet, its predicted frequency, and the severity of its consequences both in terms of an individual positioned at each operational dockyard station perimeter and, separately, for nearby populations beyond that perimeter;

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the consequences of an accident involving the nuclear powered

reactor of a nuclear submarine in berth, at either a refit dockyard, at Z-berth, or any other port of call, with regard to the guidelines recently published by the Health and Safety Executive entitled "Tolerability of Risk."

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Accident probabilities and consequences for nuclear-powered submarine reactor accidents have long been identified and evaluated. These predictions have subsequently been compared with the Health and Safety Executive guidelines on the tolerability of risk, and are consistent with these. The predictions are used in the formulation of accident response plans for the berths in question, in consultation with local civil authorities.

HEALTH

Dolls' Houses (Synthetic Foods)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children have been injured or killed by consuming synthetic foodstuffs for use in dolls' houses in each of the past five years; and if he was consulted over the EEC directive on the issue.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

None. This fact, coupled with the fact that they are usually so small as to be unlikely to mislead a young child into thinking that they are food, has enabled me to exempt them from the proposed regulations, which I announced in a written answer on 14 March to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) at column *128*.

Governments of all member states were, of course, consulted during the preparation of the EC Dangerous Imitations Directive which the Council of Ministers adopted on 25 June 1987. It rightly outlaws products which imitate food or drink and thereby pose a hazard to the public. Products which do not pose a hazard are not banned by the directive.

Kidney Patients

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many new patients per million population in England have received *(a)* haemodialysis, *(b)* continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis each year since 1980, and how many that is in absolute numbers;

(2) if he will show for 1988 dialysis in new patients per million population for the English regional health authorities.

Mr. Freeman: Information about new patients accepted for the treatment of end stage renal failure in England is not available in the precise form requested.

I understand that the number of new patients in England accepted for treatment since 1980 is as follows:

Year	*Number of new patients*	*Per million population*
1980	1,072	23
1981	1,177	25
1982	1,376	29
1983	1,534	33
1984	1,672	36
1985	1,993	42
1986	2,181	46
1987	2,330	49

Information for 1988 is not yet available.

Psychiatric Care

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide a table showing the amount of capital and special revenue funds allocated to each regional health authority for (i) 1988-89 and (ii) proposed for 1989-90 for the development and operation of regional secure psychiatric and interim secure facilities and the total amounts allocated for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: Revenue and capital allocations in 1988-89 and initial revenue allocations for 1989-90, for regional secure units (RSU) are shown in table 1. We plan to allocate an additional £0·355 million revenue and £1·037 million capital for further RSU developments during the course of the year.

Total capital allocations for RSUs from 1978-79 to 1987-88 are shown in table 2. The total initial revenue allocation in 1978-79 was £6·5 million. It has increased in real terms as regions have opened more RSU beds and in 1987-88 at the initial allocation stage stood at £15·5 millions.

Table 1

Regional secure units

Region	*Total revenue allocation 1988-89 (£'000s cash)*	*Initial revenue allocation 1989-90 (£'000s cash)*	*Capital allocation 1988-89 (£'000s cash)*
Northern	957	1,005	133
Yorkshire	1,098	1,153	—
Trent	1,648	1,636	—
East Anglian	834	876	24
North West Thames	1,079	1,133	47
North East Thames	1,161	1,219	205
South East Thames	1,377	1,446	388
South West Thames	892	937	—
Wessex	815	856	—
Oxford	763	974	399
South Western	1,180	1,458	561
West Midlands	1,608	1,688	—
Mersey	1,168	1,226	19
North Western	1,698	1,783	—
Bethlem and Maudsley (SHA)	874	918	—
Totals	17,152	18,308	1,776

Regional secure units *Table 2*

Total capital allocations for regional secure units

Year	*£000s (cash)*
1978-79	292
1979-80	1,086
1980-81	2,239
1981-82	5,656
1982-83	7,247
1983-84	7,759
1984-85	4,804
1985-86	5,228
1986-87	4,289
1987-88	3,080

Surgery Costs

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the average National Health Service costs of *(a)* an appendectomy, *(b)* a hernia operation, *(c)* a hysterectomy, *(d)* duodenal ulcer treatment, *(e)* a

cataract removal, *(f)* a tonsillectomy, *(g)* a slipped disc repair, *(h)* gall bladder removal, *(i)* a varicose veins operation, *(j)* a bunion removal, *(k)* a knee cartilage operation, *(l)* breast lump removal, *(m)* a hip replacement, *(n)* a prostate removal, *(o)* a nasal polyp removal, *(p)* a prolapse repair and *(q)* a bowel resection.

Mr. Freeman: Cost estimates are not available for all of these procedures. Broad estimates of the costs of the following procedures have been made (1988-89 prices):

	£
Hernia operation	730
Hysterectomy	1,350
Cataract removal	790
Tonsillectomy (tonsils and adenoids)	370
Hip replacement	2,500

Secure Accommodation

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each year 1979 to 1989 the local authorities which maintain secure units for the purpose of restricting the liberty of children in care and within each authority give *(a)* the type of unit provided, *(b)* the number of places available, *(c)* the number of places filled by children from outside the authority and *(d)* the number of places filled by children from within the authority.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 17 March 1989]: We do not have information in the form requested for the full period. The table gives details of approved secure units as at 31 December 1988. Details of the use made of each unit by local authorities are given in "Children Accommodated In Secure Units During the Year Ending 31 March" for the years 1984 to 1987. Copies are available in the Library. Information on children in secure accommodation was not collected centrally prior to 1984.*

Approved secure accommodation—31 December 1988

Region and location	*Local authorities*	*O & A or CHE*[1]	*Number of places*[2]
Northern			
New Aycliffe (Royston House)	Durham	O & A	14M
Clavering House	Newcastle	O & A	3M
Aycliffe Special Unit	Durham	CHE	36M
Netherton Park	North Humberland	O & A	5M
Yorkshire and Humberside			
Kepples View	Rotherham	O & A	4M
East Moor	Leeds	O & A	9B
East Moor	Leeds	CHE	18B
North Western			
Red Sands	Cheshire	CHE	6M
Derwent House	Liverpool	O & A	4G
Red Bank (Vardy House)	Lancashire	O & A	8B
Red Bank Special Unit	Lancashire	CHE	26B
Blackbrook House (Labore House)	Liverpool	CHE	5G
Briars Hey (Orchard House)	Lancashire	CHE	8G
Dyson Hall	Liverpool	O & A	8B
West Midlands			
Danescourt	Wolverhampton	O & A	4M
Stoke House	Coventry	O & A	6M
St. Johns	Birmingham	O & A	4M
East Midlands			
Moorfield	Derbyshire	O & A	2M
Kesteven	Lincolnshire	O & A	4M
Amberdale	Nottinghamshire	O & A	8M
Greenacres	Derbyshire	O & A	5M
Thames/Anglia			
Salters	Cambridgeshire	O & A	4G
Oxenden House	Bedfordshire	O & A	6M
Woodside Young People's Centre	Hertfordshire	O & A	2M
Thornbury House	Oxfordshire	O & A	3B
Brookside	Berkshire	O & A	4M
London			
Middlesex Lodge	Hilingdon	O & A	9G
Little Heath Lodge	Newham	O & A	6B
Orchard Lodge	Southwark	O & A	8B
Frant Court	Sussex	CHE	3G
Melanie Klein House	Greenwich	CHE	6G
Southern			
Landsdown	East Sussex	O & A	5M
Beechfield	West Sussex	O & A	6M
The Oaks	Surrey	O & A	2M
Fairfield	Hampshire	O & A	3G
Glen House	Hampshire	O & A	8B

Region and location	Local authorities	O & A or CHE[1]	Number of places[2]
South Western			
Atkinson Unit	Devon	O & A	12M
Kingswood	Avon	CHE	20B

[1] Observation and Assessment Centres (O & A); Community Homes with Education (CHE).
[2] Girls (G); Boys (B); Mixed sex (M).

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide the total number of children in care in each local authority for each year 1979 to 1989 and list the proportion of those in care who were placed in approved secure accommodation maintained *(a)* by the authority and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* The number of children in care in each authority at 31 March is published annually in "Children in Care of Local Authorities During the Year Ending 31 March, England" for 1979-87.

The information requested for secure accommodation is not readily available in the form requested and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. However, the latest available information on the total number of children in approved secure accommodation at 31 March (including some who are not in care) is published annually in "Children Accommodated in Secure Units During the Year Ending 31 March, England" for 1984-87.

Copies of these publications are availible in the Library.

No information on children in secure accommodation was collected prior to 1984; the current format of collection and publication was introduced in 1985.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of approved secure places were filled by *(a)* juvenile offenders, *(b)* young persons who have been detained under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and *(c)* children in care who have not committed any offence for each year from 1979 to 1989; and if he will make a statement on the availability of such places.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* We do not collect information centrally in the form requested. However, the details available of the legal status of children in approved secure units are given in "Children Accommodated in Secure Units During the Year Ending 31 March 1987, England" for 1984-87. Copies are available in the Library. Information on children in secure accommodation was not collected centrally prior to 1984.

The provision of secure accommodation is the statutory responsibility of local authorities. There were 294 places available in 38 secure units on 31 December 1988; in addition, five secure units, providing 46 places, were temporarily closed on that date because of building work.

Because secure accommodation is a specialised resource there is, at times, considerable pressure on available places. The Department is always ready to consider applications from local authorities for grant aid towards the costs of providing new secure units and renovating and extending existing units.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total cost to local authorities and directly to the Department of Health for the provision of secure accommodation in each year from 1979 to 1988; and what is the estimated cost for the years 1989 to 1991.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* We do not hold centrally information about the revenue cost to local authorities of providing secure accommodation.

Grant-aid may be made available by the Department to local authorities to meet the capital costs of providing secure accommodation and to improve security aspects of existing units. The table provides the available information:

Table: Grants to local authorities (S.81 Child Care Act 1980).

	£000s
1978-79	1,024
1979-80	1,120
1980-81	2,000
1981-82	1,748
1982-83	525
1983-84	316
1984-85	572
1985-86	506
1986-87	503
1987-88	1,205
1988-89	[1]994
1989-90	[2]2,500

[1] Estimate.
[2] Current budget limit.

Cot Deaths

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many babies have died in each of the last five years through cot death syndrome; and whether the totals reveal any statistically significant features relating to regions, proximity to strong electro-magnetic fields or any other specifically identifiable feature common to such tragedies.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 20 February 1989]:* The following figures for the years 1983-87 (the latest available) show for each regional health authority and for Wales the number of deaths and the death rate for *(a)* deaths where sudden infant death or a similar term was given as the underlying cause; *(b)* deaths where sudden infant death or a similar term was mentioned on the death certificate although not as the underlying cause; and *(c)* for comparison, all infant deaths.

The figures illustrate what has long been known—that regional variations exist. We are aware of no statistically significant evidence that links deaths from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), or accounts for its geographical variations, with any specific factor. A 1988 report on infant mortality in England prepared for the chief medical officer—a copy of which was placed in the Library—noted that there has been a shift in diagnostic classification towards certifying as SIDS deaths which would previously have been assigned to diseases of the respiratory system. The recent Social Services Select Committee report on perinatal, neonatal and infant mortality recommends further research into the causes of infant deaths, particularly those attributed to SIDS. The Government will be responding shortly.

Deaths registered in England and Wales where Sudden Infant Death is given as the underlying cause

	Numbers					Rates per 1,000 live births				
	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
England and Wales	1,099	1,080	1,165	1,292	1,337	1·75	1·70	1·77	1·95	1·96
Northern	56	60	51	69	84	1·43	1·53	1·25	1·71	2·08
Yorkshire	105	111	102	113	101	2·26	2·38	2·12	2·34	2·05
Trent	67	63	81	80	85	1·17	1·09	1·38	1·35	1·39
East Anglia	53	42	53	47	56	2·30	1·77	2·16	1·91	2·17
North West Thames	81	64	86	68	76	1·78	1·39	1·81	1·41	1·53
North East Thames	74	85	70	94	121	1·48	1·66	1·35	1·77	2·19
South East Thames	77	81	101	102	92	1·75	1·81	2·15	2·14	1·84
South West Thames	56	55	67	95	81	1·61	1·58	1·84	2·59	2·12
Wessex	75	72	74	91	99	2·27	2·13	2·12	2·54	2·66
Oxford	65	52	52	44	52	2·10	1·63	1·57	1·33	1·50
South Western	93	81	77	104	105	2·62	2·24	2·05	2·73	2·64
West Midlands	89	110	110	127	115	1·30	1·60	1·56	1·80	1·59
Mersey	55	49	58	75	60	1·73	1·55	1·76	2·29	1·83
North Western	101	109	116	115	118	1·88	2·01	2·09	2·07	2·08
Wales	49	42	64	66	88	1·38	1·17	1·74	1·78	2·33

Deaths registered in England and Wales with a mention of Sudden Infant Death

	Numbers					Rates per 1,000 live births				
	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
England and Wales	1,315	1,242	1,301	1,504	1,528	2·09	1·95	1·98	2·28	2·24
Northern	65	65	57	78	95	1·66	1·66	1·39	1·94	2·35
Yorkshire	114	118	115	125	117	2·45	2·53	2·39	2·59	2·37
Trent	128	118	118	131	128	2·24	2·05	2·01	2·21	2·10
East Anglia	52	46	55	48	57	2·25	1·94	2·25	1·95	2·21
North West Thames	92	70	87	92	82	2·02	1·51	1·83	1·91	1·65
North East Thames	83	95	84	97	135	1·66	1·85	1·62	1·83	2·44
South East Thames	93	92	105	115	105	2·11	2·06	2·24	2·42	2·10
South West Thames	69	70	71	92	93	1·99	2·01	1·95	2·50	2·43
Wessex	92	79	79	102	107	2·78	2·34	2·26	2·85	2·88
Oxford	75	62	64	55	66	2·42	1·95	1·94	1·66	1·90
South Western	100	85	82	122	111	2·82	2·35	2·18	3·20	2·79
West Midlands	110	123	127	145	131	1·61	1·79	1·81	2·06	1·81
Mersey	66	57	62	91	73	2·07	1·80	1·89	2·78	2·23
North Western	110	111	120	137	126	2·05	2·05	2·16	2·47	2·22
Wales	63	47	72	72	96	1·77	1·31	1·96	1·94	2·54

All deaths of infants aged under one year registered in England and Wales

	Numbers					Rates per 1,000 live births				
	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
England and Wales	6,381	6,037	6,141	6,313	6,272	10·1	9·5	9·4	9·6	9·2
Northern	398	370	343	394	353	10·2	9·4	8·4	9·8	8·7
Yorkshire	524	499	513	513	498	11·3	10·7	10·7	10·6	10·1
Trent	591	524	505	585	553	10·3	9·1	8·6	9·9	9·1
East Anglia	208	195	231	198	201	9·0	8·2	9·4	8·1	7·8
North West Thames	400	397	429	412	411	8·8	8·6	9·0	8·6	8·3
North East Thames	481	474	441	491	549	9·6	9·3	8·5	9·3	9·9
South East Thames	413	442	445	408	463	9·4	9·9	9·5	8·6	9·3
South West Thames	301	298	332	323	323	8·7	8·5	9·1	8·8	8·4
Wessex	335	329	316	326	352	10·1	9·7	9·0	9·1	9·5
Oxford	288	270	271	299	299	9·3	8·5	8·2	9·0	8·6
South Western	349	309	320	361	342	9·8	8·5	8·5	9·5	8·6
West Midlands	740	771	741	706	687	10·8	11·2	10·5	10·0	9·5
Mersey	296	252	293	307	279	9·3	8·0	8·9	9·4	8·5
North Western	607	542	536	594	535	11·3	10·0	9·6	10·7	9·4
Wales	379	314	362	352	359	10·7	8·8	9·8	9·5	9·5

General Practitioners (Contracts)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the latest date on which general practitioner principals received his letter on the proposed new contract; by what date they are required to respond; what previous notice had been given of the proposals under consideration; what agreement there was on the confidentiality of negotiations between himself and the General Medical Services Committee; and whether this agreement was breached.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Despatch to all GPs of my proposals for changing the GP's term of service and remuneration system, set out in the booklet "A New Contract", commenced on 23 February 1989. I have no reason to believe that the postal authorities were unable to deliver within a few days of that date. The purpose of the

document was to inform GPs of the Goverment's plans. No specific response was called for because the contents were and continue to be the subject of consultation with the GP's representatives, the General Medical Services Committee (GMSC), although I am pleased to say that many GPs are using the "helpline" service we set up.

Notice of the proposals was given in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm 249) published in November 1987, which announced the Government's plans for improving the primary health care services. "A New Contract" is the culmination of a year's detailed consultation with the GMSC.

It was agreed with the GMSC that consultation should proceed on a confidential basis on the understanding that either party could terminate the arrangement by giving the other due notice. The GMSC chose to bring the confidentiality arrangement to an end on 16 February and I was informed of this intention on 9 February by the chairman of the GMSC.

Organ Transplants

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many kidneys, hearts, livers and other organs have been transplanted each year since 1980; and what proportion of each group of transplant patients survive for longer than one year.

Mr. Freeman: Information on the number of organs transplanted in the years 1980 to 1987 was provided in my reply to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) on 22 December 1988 at columns *397-98*. I announced provisional figures for 1988 during the Adjournment debate on transplant surgery on 21 February at column 976.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Health provided information on survival rates following transplant in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) on 19 December at columns *130-31*.

Ethnic Minority Health

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress he has made towards developing a central information resource unit for ethnic minority health following the management seminar organised by his Department on 4 November 1987.

Mr. Mellor: The report "Action not Words" by a National Association of Health Authorities working party, published in November 1988, proposed the creation of a central resource unit on ethnic minority health issues.

As I said in my reply on 9 February to the hon. Members for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) at column *800*, we needed to consider whether establishing a separate unit was the best way forward. Officials in the Department are exploring, with a number of organisations, ways of setting up an effective system for exchange of information on ethnic minority health issues.

Prescription Costs

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what variations his Department is aware of in the level of costs of prescriptions between doctors' surgeries.

Mr. Mellor: We are aware of substantial variations in the prescribing costs of practices. For example, about 10 per cent. of practices prescribe at a level of 25 per cent. or more above the average for a practice in their FPC area. We have published information on the variation between FPCs in cost per head of prescriptions and I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 16 March.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from the London borough of Hillingdon concerning the importation of hazardous waste through London Heathrow airport and the environmental health implications of the carriage of dangerous substances by air; if he will review the Public Health (Aircraft) Regulations 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: A letter from the chief executive of the London borough of Hillingdon has been received. Copies were sent also to my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Secretary of State for Transport and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, to a number of hon. Friends and hon. Members and to a number of local authorities and other organisations. A reply will be sent to the chief executive as soon as is practicable and I shall write to my hon. Friend at the same time.

Child Protection Services

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to publish the report by the social services inspectorate on child protection services in the London borough of Southwark; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In response to concern about the handling of child protection cases in Southwark, the Department's social services inspectorate has examined the child protection services and reported its findings to me. Copies of the report are now available in the Library.

The inspection revealed a number of features which require attention. The number of children registered is distorted by the present cumbersome registration system, but even if efficient registration systems were operated there would still be a large number of children on the register.

It is always unacceptable for child protection cases to be without social work intervention when they have been assessed as needing it, and the number of such cases in Southwark is disturbingly high.

However, on the brighter side, action taken in one area of the borough has been effective in reducing the number of unallocated cases, and this action must be repeated elsewhere if this authority is to deserve public confidence in a crucial area of its operations.

Overall, there was considerable activity on child protection cases but the quality of the social work done needs to be improved to enable sound judgments to be made on cases.

It is clear that determined management action is needed on a number of fronts to ensure that the position improves. In view of this I am asking SSI to agree a plan of action with Southwark Council and to monitor progress closely.

Southwark council has asked Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham area review committee to establish an independent inquiry into the handling of the case of Doreen Mason. That inquiry is being chaired by an independent lawyer. I understand that the inquiry should be completed by the early summer and that the outcome will be made public. I will then determine whether further action is needed on my part.

Expenditure

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the definitions for the purposes of statistics collection of the national United Kingdom expenditure on health care provision *(a)* for total public expenditure on health services, *(b)* for private sector health care provision and *(c)* for voluntary sector health care provision.

Mr. Freeman: The United Kingdom national accounts, prepared by the Central Statistical Office, define the components of net public expenditure on health care as follows:

(a) Total final consumption on the NHS.
(b) Public sector gross domestic fixed capital formation on health.
(c) Current grants to the personal sector.
(d) Current grants abroad.
(e) Capital grants to the private sector.

Private expenditure on health is defined as the sum of:

(f) Payments to the NHS, ie "charges".
(g) Consumers' expenditure on medicines.
(h) Consumers' expenditure on private medical insurance.
(i) Consumers' expenditure on spectacles.
(j) Consumers' expenditure on medication.
(k) Private sector gross domestic fixed capital formation.

The voluntary sector is not separately identified in the United Kingdom national accounts.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the national United Kingdom expenditure on voluntary sector health care provision in money terms, for the latest 10 financial years for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: Expenditure by the voluntary sector on health care provision is not separately identified in the United Kingdom national accounts prepared by the Central Statistical Office.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the total national United Kingdom expenditure on private sector health care provision from National Health Service funds in money terms, for the latest 10 financial years for which figures are available; and whether this includes the voluntary sector.

Mr. Freeman: None. NHS funded health care is, by definition, NHS health care.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give figures for, or an estimate of, the amount of double counting of expenditure on health care provision when amounts are aggregated for national United Kingdom statistics on total national expenditure on health.

Mr. Freeman: We are not aware of any double counting either in the health expenditure figures for England which this Department prepares or in the summary figures for the United Kingdom which are prepared by the Central Statistical Office for the United Kingdom national accounts.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the national United Kingdom expenditure on voluntary sector health care provision from National Health Service funds in money terms, for the latest 10 financial years for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: The United Kingdom national accounts prepared by the Central Statistical Office do not separately identify voluntary health care provision from National Health Service funds.

Registered Homes Tribunal

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list *(a)* the chairs of the registered homes tribunal and *(b)* the wing members and their occupations.

Mr. Mellor: A list giving the Lord Chancellor's panel of chairmen has been placed in the Library.

A separate list giving the Lord President's panel of members has also been placed in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 21 March 1989

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

European Regional Development Fund (Stockport)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will give an assurance of the availability of funding from central Government for projects eligible for funding under objective 2 of the European regional development fund, in Stockport;

(2) what projects he has identified as eligible for funding from the European regional development fund, in Stockport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Stockport's eligibility for European regional development fund assistance, as part of Greater Manchester county, is subject to the Commission's confirmation of its provisional objective 2 list. My Department and the Department of the Environment will consider with the local authorities and other interests concerned what projects should be proposed to the Commission for support from the ERDF, and the manner in which it will be sought. Decisions on use of the fund rest with the Commission. Central Government funding will depend upon the nature of the projects eventually agreed.

Tanzania

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what the total level of imports into the European Community from Tanzania has been for each of the last 10 years at constant 1987 prices; and what the level of exports from the European Community to Tanzania has been for each of the last 10 years at constant 1987 prices;

(2) what the total level of imports into the United Kingdom from Tanzania has been for each of the last 10 years at constant 1987 prices; and what the level of exports from the United Kingdom to Tanzania has been for each of the last 10 years at constant 1987 prices.

Mr. Alan Clark: Data are not available at constant prices. The information at current prices is in the following table:

European Community and United Kingdom trade with Tanzania
ECU millions

	EC (12)		*United Kingdom*	
	imports	*exports*	*imports*	*exports*
1978	218	428	76	169
1979	225	391	73	188
1980	221	428	68	185
1981	206	364	45	149
1982	226	385	38	127
1983	267	327	75	109
1984	322	406	73	106
1985	264	444	74	149
1986	290	329	67	93
1987	187	356	45	128
1988	n/a	n/a	37	131

Note:
Figures are on the special trade basis which for most purposes may be defined as trade excluding imports for re-export.
Source: EUROSTAT.

Brewing Industry (Report)

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he now expects the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the brewing industry to be published.

Mr. Maude: The Government have today published and laid in both Houses copies of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of beer. The MMC's examination, conducted over two and a half years, has been thorough and comprehensive. We welcome it.

The MMC has found that there is a complex monopoly situation in the supply of beer. This relates to the brewers' relationship with the on-licensed, "tied" premises they own —both managed and tenanted—and the offering of low-interest loans to the "free" trade. The MMC concludes that this complex monopoly restricts competition at all levels, against the public interest.

Currently the brewers restrict competition in two main ways. First, they restrict the supply of drinks by competing brewers and wholesalers to the on-licensed premises they own. The six big brewers produce three quarters of all beer brewed in the United Kingdom and own 74 per cent. of all tied houses. Second, the brewers have effectively captured about half of the "free houses" by offering preferential and low-interest loans, which then tie those outlets to selling the brewers' products. The present system severely limits the opportunities for an independent wholesaling sector to prosper. The result is that both wholesale and retail prices are higher than they need to be.

The MMC believes that lack of competition has resulted in a number of detriments. The main ones are:

—the price of a pint of beer in a public house has risen too fast in the last few years;
—the high price of lager is not justified by the cost of producing it;
—the variation in wholesale prices between regions of the country is excessive;
—consumer choice is restricted because one brewer does not usually allow another brewer's beer to be sold in the outlets which he owns: this restriction often happens in loan-tied outlets as well;
—consumer choice is further restricted because of brewers' efforts to ensure that their own brands of cider and soft drinks are sold in their outlets;
—tenants are unable to play a full part in meeting consumer preferences, both because of the tie and because the tenant's bargaining position is so much weaker than his landlord's; and
—independent manufacturers and wholesalers of beer and other drinks are allowed only limited access to the on-licensed market.

The MMC believes that structural changes are needed to secure a more competitive regime. Its recommendations include:

—a ceiling of 2,000 on the number of on-licensed premises which any brewer may own;
—no new tied loans;
—no restrictions on future use, or product ties, when on-licensed premises are sold;
—tied tenants to be brought within the protection of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954;
—tied tenants to be free to sell at least one "guest" draught beer;
—tied tenants to be free to buy non-alcohol or low

alcohol beers, wines, spirits, ciders, soft drinks and mineral waters from the most competitive suppliers;
—brewers to publish and adhere to wholesale price lists.

These recommendations point very much in the right direction. They will preserve the good features of the present system. They should create more opportunities for small brewers. They should allow much stronger development of an independent wholesaling sector. They should provide more choice for publicans in the way they finance and run their businesses. And, not least, they should provide a much wider choice for consumers in the range of licensed premises available, and in the range of drinks on sale. This extra competition should benefit prices.

My right hon. and noble Friend has considered the report in full and is minded to implement these recommendations. His first step will be to hold discussions with the EC and he has written to Sir Leon Brittan today.

We welcome the European Commission review, announced last week, into the competitive situation in the EC wide market for beer. The MMC's findings and conclusions will clearly serve as a major input into the review.

Ivory

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list for each of the last three years imports, by value and volume and by country of origin, of ivory and ivory products.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is given in the following tables. Data on unworked ivory are not available before 1988.

Table 1

United Kingdom imports of worked ivory 1986-87

	1986		*1987*	
	KG	*£*	*KG*	*£*
Hong Kong	374	156,128	436	188,287
India	690	58,626	91	18,658
China	551	12,495	—	—
Kenya	—	—	84	11,168
United Kingdom	1	6,890	4	6,462
Central African Republic	41	6,255	—	—
Burundi	—	—	14	3,210
United States of America	51	3,188	1	1,022
Zimbabwe	63	2,864	12	2,647
Sudan	—	—	5	2,677
Switzerland	—	—	10	2,430
Thailand	1	2,136	—	—
Tanzania	—	—	143	2,117
South Africa	—	—	12	1,773
Singapore	3	1,255	—	—
Japan	5	631	—	—
Ivory Coast	5	616	—	—
Cameroon	12	483	30	483

Table 2

United Kingdom imports of worked ivory 1988

	KG	*£*
Hong Kong	237	111,492
China	214	28,448
India	1,531	25,263
Federal Republic of Germany	2,453	10,194
South Africa	26	6,390
Malaysia	1,286	6,211
Italy	1,358	4,917
Philippines	916	4,369
Japan	9	4,157
Kenya	15	3,610
United Kingdom	1	2,500
New Zealand	1	833

Table 3

United Kingdom imports of unworked ivory 1988

	KG	*£*
South Africa	7,766	243,507
Zimbabwe	853	105,061
Zaire	1,026	42,318
Malawi	234	32,690
Kenya	293	19,349
Central African Republic	84	8,401
Belgium-Luxembourg	83	8,078
Tanzania	1,800	5,147
Mozambique	13	3,409
Ethiopia	9	1,983

Tropical Forestry Management

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to be able to make a statement on the scheme proposed by the Timber Trade Federation for an import surcharge to finance tropical forestry management through the International Tropical Timber Organisation.

Mr. Alan Clark: The proposal for an import levy which has been put forward by the timber trades in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom has a number of implications, including European Community and GATT. We are considering these within the context of our overall approach to the problem of the depletion of the rain forests.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the number and category of employees in post at the national engineering laboratory, East Kilbride at May 1988 and February 1989.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* The number and category of employees in post at the national engineering laboratory, East Kilbride at 31 May 1988 and 28 February 1989 are:

	31 May 1988	*28 February 1989*
Science and technical	355½	332
Industrial	154	145
Other (administrative)	109	102
Total	618½	579

Civil Servants (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community; and what is the gross annual cost of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg in connection with this work.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 15 March 1989]:* Work connected with the EC involves a great many staff in the

Department since the development of the single European market influences a large and increasing proportion of the DTI's work. It is not possible except at disproportionate cost to provide disaggregated figures in the form requested.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Sex Education

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the scope of the very restricted circumstances referred to in the guidelines in his Department's document circular No. 11/87 entitled "Sex Education at School", page 197, paragraph 20(i).

Mr. Butcher: Section 6 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 provides that it is not a criminal offence for a man or boy to have sexual intercourse with a girl under the age of 16 in the following circumstances:

where he believes that she is over 16 and that he is legally married to her, although the marriage is in fact null under section 2 of the Marriage Act 1949 by reason of her age;

in the case of a man or boy under the age of 24 who has not previously been charged with such an offence, if he believes on reasonable grounds that the girl is 16 or older.

Teachers

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information is available to his Department, for each year since 1986, regarding the number and proportion of all recruits to teaching in maintained schools who were re-entrant qualified teachers; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what number and proportion of all recruits to teaching in maintained schools in each year 1985 to 1988 were re-entrant qualified teachers; whether there is any significant difference in these proportions between the primary and secondary sectors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Estimates of entrants and re-entrants to teaching are derived from the database of teacher records, maintained by the Department to administer the teachers' superannuation scheme. The latest information available relates to the year ending March 1986. The figures for England for that and the previous year are:

	Year ending March	
	1985	*1986*
Re-entrants to maintained nursery and primary schools		
number	6,890	7,670
as a percentage of all entrants to these schools	65 per cent.	63 per cent.
Re-entrants to maintained secondary schools		
number	6,210	6,480
as a percentage of all entrants to these schools	45 per cent.	47 per cent.
Re-entrants to all maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools		
number	13,100	14,150
as a percentage of all entrants to these schools	53 per cent.	55 per cent.

The higher proportion of re-entrants to nursery and primary schools reflects in part the greater number of women teachers in these compared to secondary schools.

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department regarding the subject qualifications of qualified teachers returning to employment in maintained schools in recent years; whether any trends are discernible in the numbers of returners in shortage subjects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Estimates of re-entrants to teaching are derived from the database of teacher records, maintained by the Department to administer the teachers' superannuation scheme. This database contains information on the degree subjects of graduate teachers, but not on the subjects of other qualifications including initial or in-service teacher training. The latest information relates to the year ending March 1986. The figures for re-entrants to maintained secondary schools in England in that year are:

	Number
All re-entrants to maintained secondary schools	6,480
Graduate re-entrants	3,420
Of which, number whose degree subject is:	
Mathematics	240
Physics	110
Other sciences	530
Geography	210
Economics and other social sciences	270
English	510
History	280
Modern languages	420
Other subjects	850
Non-graduate re-entrants	3,070

With regard to the shortage subjects, the number of re-entrant mathematics and physics graduates in the previous year (ending March 1985) were 200 and 110 respectively. No inferences about the number of re-entrants with CDT qualifications are possible from these data, because very few of these qualifications will be in the form of degrees.

Inner London (Administration)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the total estimated administrative costs of education for each of the inner London boroughs for the year 1991 as estimated by the borough's development plans; and how many administrative posts within education in each inner London borough will attract a salary of over £30,000.

Mrs. Rumbold: The development plans of most of the inner London councils do not separately identify the administrative costs of running their education services from April 1990; this is a matter that will be raised by the Department in the context of discussions with each council. Nor do the development plans contain information on salary levels.

City Technology College, Lambeth

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to establish a city technology college in Lambeth.

Mr. Butcher: We have received no proposals as yet from sponsors wishing to establish a city technology college in Lambeth. However, I understand that the Philip and Pauline Harris trust has approached the London borough of Croydon about the establishment of a city technology college in the premises of the Sylvan high school; that Croydon is considering publishing proposals under section 12 of the Education Act 1980 to close the school to enable it to do so; and that, subject to my right hon. Friend approving those proposals, the city technology college's catchment area would include parts of Lambeth.

Inner London (Teacher Shortage)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what communications he has received from the governors of Loughborough junior school, London SW9; and what reply he has sent on the subject of teacher shortages in inner London.

Mr. Butcher: The Department has received a letter from the chair of governors of Loughborough JMI school about the shortage of teachers at the school. I am sending the hon. Member a copy of the Department's reply.

Teachers (Pensions)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to make the pensions payable to the widowers of women teachers the equal of those payable to the widows of men teachers with the same service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Widowers' benefits were introduced into the teachers' superannuation scheme with effect from 6 April 1988 and service from that date counts automatically for that purpose. Subsequent actuarial valuations of the scheme will take the cost of such benefits into account in determining the normal contribution rate. Women teachers can elect to cover service before 6 April 1988 on terms better than those offered to men teachers in similar circumstances in 1972.

Eastern Amazonia

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research he is funding in British universities on the consequences for the physics of the world climate of forest-burning, dam building and cattle-ranch clearing in eastern Amazonia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Research funded by the NERC on global climate change is already extensive and the additional resources announced will enable increased activity to be undertaken. Universities may also undertake relevant research within the substantial general funds put at their disposal by the Universities Funding Council.

Student Loans

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide calculations on the cost and savings of the top-up loans scheme, as illustrated in annex E of the White Paper in respect of *(a)* net change in grant, *(b)* net change in benefits, *(c)* gross loan outlay, *(d)* loan repayments and *(e)* public sector borrowing requirement effect for each of the years from 1990 to 2027, as in annex E of Cm 520, on the basis of *(a)* 90 per cent. take-up and *(b)* 100 per cent. take-up of the student loans scheme.

Mr. Jackson: The costs and savings arising from top-up loans, calculated on the assumptions used in Cm 520, are shown below for the different take-up levels specified. Also shown, for comparison, is the effect of the 80 per cent. take-up level assumed in Cm 520.

(£ million, 1990 prices)

	Net change in grant	*Net change in benefits*	*Gross loan outlay*	*Loan repayments*	*PSBR effect*
80 per cent. take up					
1990	0	−65	167	0	103
1991	−22	−65	193	−2	105
1992	−42	−64	216	−9	103
1993	−61	−63	236	−21	93
1994	−78	−61	255	−39	78
1995	−95	−59	275	−62	59
1996	−112	−59	297	−83	42
1997	−131	−62	324	−102	30
1998	−152	−63	356	−119	22
1999	−172	−65	385	−131	17
2000	−190	−65	410	−142	13
2001	−206	−65	429	−155	2
2002	−222	−65	450	−176	−14
2003	−236	−65	469	−192	−25
2004	−251	−65	488	−203	−31
2005	−266	−65	506	−211	−37
2006	−280	−65	523	−217	−39
2007	−293	−65	541	−220	−39
2008	−293	−65	541	−231	−39
2009	−293	−65	541	−251	−69
2010	−293	−65	541	−275	−94
2011	−293	−65	541	−296	−113
2012	−293	−65	541	−313	−130
2013	−293	−65	541	−329	−147
2014	−293	−65	541	−345	−162
2015	−293	−65	541	−357	−174
2016	−293	−65	541	−367	−184
2017	−293	−65	541	−375	−193
2018	−293	−65	541	−383	−200
2019	−293	−65	541	−388	−206
2020	−293	−65	541	−393	−210
2021	−293	−65	541	−399	−216
2022	−293	−65	541	−404	−222
2023	−293	−65	541	−407	−225
2024	−293	−65	541	−410	−227
2025	−293	−65	541	−411	−228
2026	−293	−65	541	−411	−228
2027	−293	−65	541	−412	−230
90 per cent. take up					
1990	0	−65	188	0	123
1991	−22	−65	217	−2	129
1992	−42	−64	242	−10	128
1993	−61	−63	265	−23	120
1994	−78	−61	288	−43	106
1995	−95	−59	310	−68	87
1996	-112	−59	334	−93	69
1997	−131	−62	365	−115	58
1998	−152	−63	400	−133	52
1999	−172	−65	434	−147	50
2000	−190	−65	461	−159	46
2001	−206	−65	484	−176	37
2002	−222	−65	506	−199	21
2003	−236	−65	528	−216	10
2004	−251	−65	549	−228	4
2005	−266	−65	569	−238	1
2006	−280	−65	589	−245	−1
2007	−293	−65	608	−248	2
2008	−293	−65	608	−260	−10

	Net change in grant	Net change in benefits	Gross loan outlay	Loan repayments	PSBR effect
2009	−293	−65	608	−283	−33
2010	−293	−65	608	−310	−60
2011	−293	−65	608	−333	−83
2012	−293	−65	608	−351	−101
2013	−293	−65	608	−371	−121
2014	−293	−65	608	−387	−137
2015	−293	−65	608	−401	−151
2016	−293	−65	608	−413	−163
2017	−293	−65	608	−423	−173
2018	−293	−65	608	−430	−180
2019	−293	−65	608	−436	−186
2020	−293	−65	608	−442	−192
2021	−293	−65	608	−448	−198
2022	−293	−65	608	−455	−205
2023	−293	−65	608	−459	−209
2024	−293	−65	608	−460	−210
2025	−293	−65	608	−462	−212
2026	−293	−65	608	−463	−213
2027	−293	−65	608	−464	−214
100 per cent. take up					
1990	0	−65	209	0	144
1991	−22	−65	242	−3	153
1992	−42	−64	269	−11	154
1993	−61	−63	295	−26	147
1994	−78	−61	320	−48	133
1995	−95	−59	344	−76	113
1996	−112	−59	371	−104	95
1997	−131	−62	406	−128	85
1998	−152	−63	445	−148	82
1999	−172	−65	482	−164	81
2000	−190	−65	512	−177	80
2001	−206	−65	538	−195	71
2002	−222	−65	562	−221	55
2003	−236	−65	586	−240	44
2004	−251	−65	610	−253	40
2005	−266	−65	632	−264	37
2006	−280	−65	654	−272	38
2007	−293	−65	676	−276	42
2008	−293	−65	676	−289	29
2009	−293	−65	676	−314	3
2010	−293	−65	676	−344	−27
2011	−293	−65	676	−370	−52
2012	−293	−65	676	−390	−73
2013	−293	−65	676	−412	−94
2014	−293	−65	676	−430	−113
2015	−293	−65	676	−446	−128
2016	−293	−65	676	−458	−141
2017	−293	−65	676	−470	−152
2018	−293	−65	676	−478	−161
2019	−293	−65	676	−484	−167
2020	−293	−65	676	−491	−173
2021	−293	−65	676	−498	−181
2022	−293	−65	676	−505	−188
2023	−293	−65	676	−509	−192
2024	−293	−65	676	−511	−194
2025	−293	−65	676	-513	-195
2026	−293	−65	676	-514	-197
2027	−293	−65	676	−515	−198

Travellers' Children

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the numbers of travellers' children per local education authority as returned by them on form 510F (1989—190) appendix 2.

Mr. Butcher: The information received from the local education authorities is incomplete. I am writing to the hon. Member.

"Standards in Education 1987-88"

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether copies of Her Majesty's inspector's report, "Standards in Education 1987-88," will be made freely available at the stand taken by him at the Ideal Home exhibition.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Yes.

Under-fives

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his announcement on 18 January, *Official Report*, column *401*, when he intends to give details of the membership and terms of reference of the committee inquiring into the content of the educational experience of under-fives.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following have agreed to become members of the committee which is to be established under my chairmanship.

Ms. Lesley Abbott, Principal Lecturer in Primary Education, Manchester Polytechnic.

Professor Neville Bennett, Professor of Primary Education, University of Exeter.

Mr. Peter Gedling, Chief Education Officer, Dorset.

Mrs. Rose Johnson, Headteacher, Brentfield Primary School, Brent.

Dr. Christine Pascal, Principal Lecturer in Primary Education, Worcester College of Higher Education.

Mrs. Gillian Pugh, Head of Under Fives Unit, National Children's Bureau.

Mrs. Ann Sharp, Adviser (Early Years), Sheffield Local Education Authority.

Mrs. Jennie Shaw, Chairman, Pre-school Playgroups Association.

The Committee's terms of reference are:

To consider the quality of the educational experience which should be offered to 3- and 4-year-olds, with particular reference to content, continuity and progression in learning, having regard to the requirements of the national curriculum and taking account of the Government's expenditure plans.

To take into account in this consideration:

(a) the diversity of needs and of types of provision;

(b) demographic and social factors;

(c) the nature of training for teachers and other professional staff involved in the education of children under five.

Student Grants

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish details of student grants for the 1989-90 academic year.

Mr. Jackson: I announced on 16 December, *Official Report*, column *755*, that the main rates of student grant would be increased by 5 per cent. for students studying outside London and by 9·3 per cent. for London students. I am publishing the supplementary allowances today; details have been placed in the Library. Most will rise by 5 per cent. in line with the main rates of grant, but allowances for students with dependent children will be increased on average by 10 per cent. There will be some minor modifications to the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations. These include the reclassification of some countries for the purpose of determining the level of grant for study abroad, and some relaxation of the rules relating to parental contributions for married students and students who have been in care.

WALES

Woodland Grant Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the names, locations and areas of woodland grant scheme applications in excess of 100 hectares submitted since the start of the scheme in Wales, showing for which of these an environmental assessment has been requested by the Forestry Commission; and if he will give reasons why environmental assessment has not been requested for any remaining applications.

Mr. Peter Walker: There have been two applications under the woodland grant scheme for more than 100 hectares of new planting in Wales. They are listed as follows. An environmental assessment was not requested for these applications as they did not meet the criteria specified in the Forestry Commission booklet "Environmental Assessment of Afforestation Projects", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Name	*County*	*Total Area (ha)*	*Planting Area (ha)*
Maesllymystyn	Powys	119	116
Gesail Ddu	Powys	148	134

Community Health Councils

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, in the light of representation he has received from the Arfon-Dwyfor community health council, he will revise his statement of 3 March on the closure of ysbyty Madog, that there was no opposition to closure from the community health council; and if he will now withdraw and reconsider his ratification for that closure proposal.

Mr. Peter Walker: Welsh Office officials have written to the Secretary of Arfon-Dwyfor community health council to explain that the reference in the letter of 3 March was to direct objections to myself following the announcement of the one-month appeal period after Gwynedd health authority's meeting on 25 April 1988. I was aware of the representations which the Arfon-Dwyfor community health council made to the health authority and copied to me on 7 March 1988. I took account of them before reaching my decision. I therefore do not consider that I should withdraw my approval of the proposal to close Madog memorial hospital in the light of the representations of the Arfon-Dwyfor community health council.

General Practitioners

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each health authority area in Wales how many general practitioners are men and how many are women.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information, which is only available by family practitioner committee areas, is given in the following table:

Unrestricted principals as at 1 October 1987

	Male	*Female*
Clwyd	194	20
Dyfed	175	30
Gwent	195	45
Gwynedd	123	20
Mid Glamorgan	252	39
Powys	66	9
South Glamorgan	165	60
West Glamorgan	165	29

Labour Statistics

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what would be the totals of unemployed in the area covered by the valleys programme for the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92, if calculated on the assumption of the continuation of the reduction in the totals from 1984 to the date of the publication of the programme.

Mr. Peter Walker: The total numbers of unemployed claimants in the valleys programme area fell by 21 per cent. from 45,199 in May 1984 to 35,675 in May 1988.

It is not the Government's policy to forecast unemployment levels. However, the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to note that between May 1988 and February 1989 numbers of unemployed claimants in the valleys fell by 5,863 to 29,812—a fall in the first nine months of the valleys programme—considerably more than double the average annual fall in the preceding four years.

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what would have been the reduction in the average bill of the Welsh domestic water consumer in each of the past five years had the sum of £460 million, and its equivalent in real terms, been written off the debt of the Welsh water authority.

Mr. Peter Walker: The question is hypothetical.

Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all Forestry Commission woodlands in the geographical county of Glamorgan, stating for each woodland its acreage and grid reference.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* This information is not held centrally and could not be provided in the form requested except at disproportionate cost.

Sea Pollution

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of sewage outfalls to the sea in the Welsh water authority; and, of these, how many include primary treatment works.

Mr. Peter Walker *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* The current information on sewage outfalls to the sea in the Welsh water authority area is as follows:

Level of treatment	*Number of outfalls*
None	90
Tidal storage	23
Preliminary—Screened and/or macerated	53
Primary	29
Secondary	61
Total	256

The Welsh water authority continues to pursue a policy of improving the treatment and disposal of sewage so as to meet the quality objectives of the receiving water. Since 1979 some 10 untreated discharges have been abandoned and a further five replaced by outfalls with preliminary treatment. One new outfall with secondary treatment has been constructed. These figures do not include work which has upgraded existing treated outfalls to a satisfactory standard. Since 1981-82 the authority advises that capital expenditure of over £21·5 million (at 1988 prices) has been undertaken in respect of work to sea outfalls and sewage treatment works discharging to tidal waters.

ENVIRONMENT

Toxic Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *769*, if he will make a further statement on the outcome of follow-up discussions with the Medical Research Council over radioactive waste from radon source materials at Barton-Le-Clay, Bedfordshire.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Medical Research Council has provided Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution with extensive information about its wartime operations at Barton-Le-Clay.

In 1939, the council transferred its production of medical radon sources from London to Barton in the Clay, Bedfordshire. It ceased production in 1948, transferred the source material to the Ministry of Supply at Amersham and checked for any remaining radioactive waste. The premises were then handed back to the original owner.

HMIP has carried out a thorough inspection of the area and is satisfied that it is safe.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *769*, on United Kingdom generated toxic waste exports, if he will initiate an investigation into plans by Hamilton Resources Ltd. and the Sesco Company of London to dispose of 5 million tons of hazardous wastes in Benin, West Africa.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste regulations of 1988 require, inter alia, that before any consignment of hazardous waste is transported from this country to Benin, the holder of the waste sends a copy of the completed consignment note to the Secretary of State. The Department has received no such consignment note to date.

Afforestation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites of special scientific interest damaged or destroyed since 1983 by afforestation *(a)* grant-aided by the Forestry Commission and *(b)* without grant aid.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that the information requested is only readily available since 1985:

(a) Craigs of Succoth (1985-86). One hectare damaged in error by an adjoining landowner ploughing in preparation for afforestation. No trees were planted on the SSSI. The afforestation proposal was granted aid by the Foresty Commission.
(b) Abernethy forest (1986-87) 270 hectares planted with the benefit of grant aid from the Forestry Commission.
(c) Glen Feshie (Cairngorms SSSI) (1986-87). Two hectares affected by planting without the benefit of grant aid.

No sites have been lost.

Development Corporations

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the end-of-contract date of each urban development corporation and the London Docklands Development Corporation; and if he will make a statement of his policy on the future management of these areas after the termination dates.

Mr. Trippier: It was envisaged that the duration of the first two urban development corporations (London Docklands and Merseyside) would be about 15 years; the duration of the second generation of UDCs (black country, Teeside, Trafford park, and Tyne and Wear) is expected to be about a decade and the third generation (Bristol, Central Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield) about five to seven years. No dates have been fixed for the dissolution of any corporation.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, referring to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's letter to the hon. Member for Taunton of 15 December 1988, what consultations have taken place on the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988; and whether he now proposes to amend this order to allow a maximum of 28 days permitted use rights for clay pigeon shooting.

Mr. Chope: The General Development Order 1988 allows land to be used for clay pigeon shooting without planning permission for up to 14 days a year. The Department's consultation paper of 16 December invited views on whether the order should be amended to alter the limit to 28 days. We are now considering the responses to the consultation, and expect to reach a decision within the next few weeks.

National Pet Week

Dame Janet Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to offer support to national pet week.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The question of pet welfare is one primarily for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. This Department's responsibilities extend only to the conservation of endangered species, dog licensing and registration matters.

Supermarket Trolleys

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with senior managers of supermarket chains about introducing a pay scheme to encourage shoppers to return their trolleys to their local store after unloading.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. Abandonment of trolleys may cause a financial loss to the companies and

expense in collection and disposal to local authorities. It is for the parties involved to consider the best approach to the problem.

Churston Golf Club

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish the result of the planning appeal with regard to Churston golf club, Torbay; what was the date of the hearing of the appeal; when the Churston golf club was visited by the planning inspector; and when the report was completed.

Mr. Chope: The appeal is being dealt with by an exchange of written representations and no public local inquiry was held. An inspector visited the site on 22 August 1988 and his report was submitted to my right hon. Friend on 12 September 1988. A decision will be made as soon as possible.

National Parks

Mr. Crowther: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce new laws giving extra protection to the landscape of the national parks.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We see no need for any further legislation on this subject at present.

Nitrate Pollution (Nottingham)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has concerning the level of nitrate pollution in the sandstone aquifers north of Nottingham.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that six out of 41 public supply groundwater abstractions in the Trent catchment north of Nottingham currently exceed 50 mg/litre nitrate.

Capper Pass Factory

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's report on investigations into the disposal of wastes from the Capper Pass factory on north Humberside.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This report is being published today and copies are being placed in the Library of the House.

The report concludes that there is no evidence from environmental monitoring data, predicted atmospheric dispersion patterns, radiological assessments and epideniological studies to link the reported childhood leukaemia excesses in villages to the west of Hull with discharges to atmosphere of polonium 210 or arsenic from Capper Pass. It also concludes that concentrations of antimony, lead, copper, tin and zinc in the locality are low and unlikely to cause any adverse health effects. Further attention should be given to limiting cadmium discharges, although the concentration of cadmium in the atmosphere close to Capper Pass has steadily reduced since 1978.

Nirex

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has yet received proposals from United Kingdom Nirex concerning the choice of sites for the disposal of radioactive waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Nirex's report and recommendations on the disposal of low and intermediate-level radioactive waste in a deep repository were submitted to Government on 28 February. Nirex recommends that a repository should be constructed in the form of a mine under the land, and that the next steps should be to carry out detailed geological studies, including the sinking of boreholes, in the vicinity of Sellafield and Dounreay. In arriving at these recommendations Nirex has concluded that it would be best to explore first those sites where there is some measure of local support for civil nuclear activities. The further evaluation of the geology of these two areas will enable Nirex to decide on their suitability for construction of a repository, or whether it will be necessary to evaluate other sites.

The Government, having consulted the radioactive waste management advisory committee accept the report and note that Nirex, having examined the arguments for storage rather than disposal of radioactive waste, has endorsed the Government's policy of disposal. The Government agree that further exploratory work is necessary before any particular site can be decided upon, and that it is for Nirex to obtain the necessary planning permissions through the normal procedures. Only when these investigations have been undertaken will Nirex be in a position to submit proposals for a substantive development and to seek the necessary approvals.

I have today decided to accept the recommendations made to me by the inspector, that the appeal by British Nuclear Fuels plc against Cumbria county council's refusal of planning permission to drill an exploratory geological borehole at Sellafield should be allowed.

Copies of the decision letter on the borehole drilling at Sellafield have today been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. Copies of the Nirex report will be placed in the Libraries shortly. Further copies of the report will be available from Nirex.

Ecclesiastical Exemption

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals for an order under section 58AA of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, which provides for the restriction of the ecclesiastical exemption.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has today issued a consultation paper to interested parties setting out our proposals. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Water Pollution

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number and location of breaches in 1988 in the EEC guide and mandatory levels for *(a)* phenols, *(b)* mineral oils, *(c)* enteroviruses, *(d)* salmonella, *(e)* faecal streptococci, *(f)* phosphates and *(g)* nitrates in bathing waters which were the responsibility of the Anglian water authority;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number and location of breaches in 1988 in the EEC guide and mandatory levels for *(a)* cyanides, *(b)* lead and *(c)* chrome in bathing waters which were the responsibility of the Anglian water authority.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Monday 20 March 1989.

Miss Pamella Bordes

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To as the Secretary of State for the Environment if an official ministerial car has been used to transport *(a)* Miss Pamella Bordes or *(b)* any other person to or from 6 Stockton court, Greycoat street, London SW1 or 69A Winchester street in (i) 1988 or (ii) 1989.

Mr. Chope: To the best of my knowledge no official ministerial car has ever been used to transport Miss Pamella Bordes or any other person to or from either address.

DEFENCE

Falkland Islands

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the outturn level of expenditure, or latest estimate where necessary, of the Falkland Islands in each year for 1983-84 to 1989-90; and if he will break the total down into *(a)* the cost of the airfield, *(b)* garrison running costs, *(c)* other garrison costs and *(d)* campaign costs.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The estimated total extra cost of the Falklands commitment from 1983-84 to 1989-90, and the campaign costs, garrison running costs, garrison capital costs, and the element of the garrison capital costs which is for the airfield construction, are set out in the table:

	Total extra cost[1]	*Campaign costs*	*Garrison running costs*	*Garrison capital costs*	*Airfield construction costs*[2]
1983-84	637	246	199	192	54
1984-85	644	241	184	219	108
1985-86	571	175	175	221	102
1986-87	405	169	126	110	18
1987-88	229	111	76	42	18
1988-89	102	43	56	3	—
1989-90	73	17	54	2	—

All figures £ million in-year cash.

[1] Includes all extra costs relating to the Falklands garrison; it excludes those personnel, equipment and other costs which would be incurred in the absence of the Falklands commitment.

[2] The airfield construction costs form part of the garrison capital costs.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, in his discussions with his counterpart, and other Ministers of the Federal German Government, in Frankfurt on 21-22 February, he specifically addressed the implications for article VI compliance of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty of any modernisation programme of short-range nuclear missiles for NATO member states party to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Armed Services (Movements)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what criteria he selects *(a)* airlines and *(b)* airports for the movement of members of the armed services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The air transport force (ATF) of the RAF meets a large proportion of the armed forces' air movements needs and is used in preference to commercial airlines for economic reasons. ATF capacity is insufficient to provide for all these requirements, however, and commercial airlines are contracted to provide regular services over a number of routes. Normal competitive tender arrangements are used to select them.

For the movement of personnel using the ATF, the RAF employs its own airfields. Where personnel move by commercial airline, the airports used are those which are most cost-effective given the start and destination points of those travelling, and the operating practices of the contractor.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

USSR

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Russian Government about their continued failure to grant an exit visa to Malka Prilutzkaya.

Mr. Waldegrave: The case of Malka Prilutzkaya has not previously come to our attention. If the hon. Member can supply full details about this case, we can add it to those cases about which we consistently press the Soviet authorities.

Indebted Countries

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the net financial transfer of resources to the 17 most indebted countries for the last year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: According to World Bank statistics, in 1987 (the latest date for which figures are available), there was a net financial transfer from the 17 highly indebted countries of $21·8 billion.

This is a misleading figure. The bank has measured the difference between repayments of loans (principal and interest) and new lending. They take no account of other flows such as grant aid. Before interest payments, there was a positive net resource transfer of $6·2 billion to the highly indebted countries in 1987.

Afghanistan

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries which currently have *(a)* full diplomatic representation, *(b)* lower diplomatic representation at consular level, etc., and *(c)* no representation at all in Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: Since Her Majesty's embassy in Kabul is temporarily closed and since we have no substantive dealings with the Kabul regime, we cannot provide the detailed information requested. We do know that Turkey is the only NATO member still currently represented in Kabul.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he anticipates that Britain will have diplomatic representation again in Afghanistan; and at what level.

Mr. Eggar: British diplomats will return to Kabul as soon as circumstances permit them to do a useful job. It is too early to predict when this will be.

THE ARTS

New Audiences

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to encourage the arts to attract new audiences.

Mr. Luce: I have been greatly encouraged by the response of arts organisations to my marketing initiatives over the last two years and I believe that there is now an increased appreciation of the importance of good marketing. In 1989-90 I intend to build on previous experience by offering (i) extended consultancies to arts organisations trying a new marketing approach and (ii) to support the work of arts marketing consortia in offering new services to their members. Both schemes aim to bring in new audiences to introduce more people to the arts, and to encourage particular audience groups, such as young people, multi-cultural groups and the retired. I shall contribute 75 per cent. of the cost in both cases.

I am grateful for the continued support of the Arts Council whose own marketing activities these schemes are intended to complement. It has agreed to run both schemes on my behalf.

I hope that arts organisations will find these new initiatives a valuable means of extending access to the arts, particularly to new and wider audiences.

Victoria and Albert Musuem

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will publish a table showing the monthly attendance figures of the Victoria and Albert museum for the last three years.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 8 March 1989]:* I understand that the monthly attendance figures of the Victoria and Albert museum, including outstations, for the last three years are as follows:

	1986	*1987*	*1988*
January	126,345	99,814	115,020
February	100,874	121,956	115,478
March	147,252	124,611	116,611
April	134,022	109,494	108,242
May	110,133	99,904	117,967
June	94,628	112,228	97,224
July	122,854	126,792	136,842
August	146,625	134,220	154,032
September	110,874	107,199	95,979
October	127,551	129,830	126,139
November	115,537	132,673	129,772
December	102,941	99,947	117,331

PRIME MINISTER

Wolston

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Wolston, near Coventry.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Rain Forests

Q96. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will seek an invitation from the President of Brazil to visit central Amazonia and Brasilia in order to discuss United Kingdom technical support and debt-for-nature agreements with the Brazilian authorities, leading to an alleviation in the destruction of the rain forests.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so. Through meetings at ministerial and official level, the Government of Brazil are well are of our concern about the rain forests. We are supporting joint reseach into forestry regeneration and allied subjects at the Maraca rain forest project and have been asked by Brazil to develop further proposals to help in this sector. Our co-operation is highly valued.

President Bush

Q131. **Mr. Wood:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet President Bush.

Q135. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet President Bush.

The Prime Minister: I expect to see President Bush when he comes to Europe for the NATO summit at the end of May.

President Gorbachev

Q133. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet President Gorbachev.

Q141. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet President Gorbachev.

Q146. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet President Gorbachev.

The Prime Minister: On 5 April, when he arrives in Britain for a two-day visit.

Nuclear Weapons

Q170. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Prime Minister what current action Her Majesty's Government are taking to eliminate all nuclear weapons.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom fulfils her obligations as a party to the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Article VI of the treaty requires the parties to it to pursue negotiations on effective measures connected with nuclear disarmament. Since the United States and the Soviet Union possess between them the overwhelming preponderance of nuclear weapons it is universally recognised that the primary responsibility for negotiations falls to them. The United States and Soviet Union are currently engaged in such negotiations which aim at 50 per cent. reductions in their strategic nuclear weapons.

NHS Hospitals

Q214. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Prime Minister when she most recently visited a National Health Service hospital.

The Prime Minister: I visited Mayday hospital in Croydon on 5 March 1989 following the rail tragedy at Purley.

Engagements

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

Mr. Tredinnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 21 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Interception of Communications Act 1985

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Prime Minister when the commissioner appointed under the Interception of Communications Act 1985 will present his annual report; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: A copy of the 1988 annual report by Lord Justice Lloyd has been laid before the House today in accordance with section 8(7) of the Interception of Communications Act 1985. The confidential appendix to the report has been excluded from that copy in accordance with section 8(8) of the Interception of Communications Act 1985. I am grateful to the commissioner for his work on the report and the reassurance it contains, that care is taken by all concerned to observe not only the letter but also the spirit of the Act. The commissioner's report suggests a small number of improvements to the procedures observed in dealing with these cases. Careful consideration is being given to ways of implementing these suggestions.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Liscombe Experimental Husbandry Farm

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the possible closure of Liscombe experimental husbandry farm, near Dulverton, Somerset,

and its current contribution to research into pollution control measures, conservation techniques and other environmental issues; when he expects to reach a decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I have received a number of letters and a large number of copies of a circular letter together with a petition.

Today my noble Friend, the Baroness Trumpington, wrote to industry organisations and to the chairmen of the advisory committees for Ministry experimental husbandry farms to provide more information for the industry to assist it in determining what near market research it will fund. That letter also announced the Ministry's proposal to close the Liscombe experimental husbandry farm, but final decisions will not be taken until Ministers have considered the industry's response. Local interests have already approached the Department with a proposal and discussions are continuing.

Poultry Industry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to whether any measures similar to those he has recently introduced to secure the wholesomeness of the British poultry industry apply in any other EEC countries.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Several member states of the European Community have introduced a range of controls to combat salmonella, though none is as comprehensive as the measures which I set out on 18 January. The United Kingdom is pressing for further action to tackle the problem throughout the Community.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about recent changes in employment totals in the poultry industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no figures relating to total employment in the poultry industry.

Dog Hunting (New Forest)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations he has received, by letter, postcard and petition, concerning the prohibition of hunting with dogs in the New Forest.

Mr. Ryder: Since the start of the most recent postcard campaign in January 1988, I have received 16 letters, 3,281 pre-printed postcards and three petitions carrying a total of 383 signatures on this subject.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning the risks posed to certain groups of workers by possible contact with bovine spongiform encephalopathy-affected products.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Ministry has received inquiries from a number of employees' organisations about the possible risks to workers who may come into contact with cattle suspected of being infected with BSE and material from them. Although the evidence is that the risks to human health are remote, the Health and Safety Executive is considering whether additional safety guidelines are necessary for such occupational groups.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has concerning the level of infectiousness of bovine spongiform encephalopathy-infected cattle prior to the onset of chronic manifestations of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There is no evidence that bovine spongiform encephalopathy can be transmitted from cattle to cattle.

Strychnine

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those organisations which are allowed to purchase strychnine compounds in sufficient quantity to meet their foreseeable needs.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Rabbit clearance societies and large estates are allowed to purchase strychnine compounds in quantities sufficient to meet their foreseeable needs, with a maximum limit of 50 grammes, on the same basis as professional pest control contractors. Returns are required of the land on which strychnine has been used.

Extensification Pilot Schemes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what extensification pilot schemes are presently being conducted or envisaged in the United Kingdom; what is the nature of each of the schemes involved; and how many are being sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Ryder: Now that the Community has adopted the relevant legislation, I will be considering in consultation with the interests concerned what pilot schemes might be appropriate.

Salmonella

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he accepts the recommendations for additional research on salmonella in his Department's joint report with the Department of Health and the British Egg Information Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government devote substantial resources to research on food safety. We have now re-examined carefully the coverage of the existing programmes and the research needs newly identified in the joint report.

Accordingly new research amounting to £1 million annually is being commissioned to cover the recommendations in the report relating to the possible contamination of eggs and the pathogenicity of the salmonella organisms as well as the growth and survival of the pathogen in processed eggs and egg products. The programmes will draw on the expertise available at my Department's central veterinary laboratory, at the institute of animal health of the agriculture and food research council and at the food research associations.

Near Market Research

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to hold further

discussions with the industry on the funding of near market agricultural and food research and development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: My noble Friend the Baroness Trumington is writing today to the agricultural and food industry, consumer organisations and other interested bodies about the next stage of the consultations on the transfer to the industry of funding for near market research. I have deposited a copy of that letter and its annexes in the Library of the House. The annexes to the letter give details of the agriculture, horticulture and food research which is being supported by the Agriculture Departments in Great Britain, together with an indication of the likely content of future public good programmes. I wish to emphasise that we shall continue to give priority to work in support of statute and policy, such as research on food safety, which is essential to protect public interest. The letter also refers to a proposal to close the experimental horticulture stations at Brogdale, Luddington and Rosewarne and the experimental husbandry farm at Liscombe in 1989-90.

My Department's regional laboratories will also be rationalised in order further to improve cost-effectiveness. This will involve closing during the 1989-90 financial year the subordinate laboratories at Newcastle, Evesham and Accrington as well as some very small laboratories in Wales. In 1990-91 the laboratories at Bristol and Wye will be closed and the laboratories at Leeds and Trawsgoed reduced in size. The Welsh Office is seeking alternative uses for the present Trawsgoed analytical chemistry laboratory. We shall be making new investment in storage, transport, analytical and information processing facilities so that the remaining laboratories can continue to meet needs across the whole of England and Wales.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Tanzania

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will commission an independent evaluation of the impact on aid policy of the international monetary fund agreement with the Tanzanian Government on the provision of health and education services in Tanzania.

Mr. Chris Patten: It is for the Government of Tanzania to consider whether to evaluate the impact of their economic recovery programme on the social sectors. We are, however, participating with the World Bank in a social dimensions of adjustment project in Tanzania. This should help facilitate a systematic evaluation of the social impact of the economic recovery programme.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what development projects in Tanzania are currently being supported by the Overseas Development Administration; and what is their cost and likely completion dates.

Mr. Chris Patten: Britain is currently financing over 30 development projects in Tanzania. The following table lists current projects in excess of £200,000, with details of their estimated costs and planned completion dates.

	Cost (£ million)	*To be completed*
Agriculture and Natural Resources		
Armyworm Control Programme	1·476	1990
West Kilimanjaro Dairy Project	1·400	1990
Clove Disease Research Project	0·395	1989
Fisheries Development Project	0·275	1989
Sunflower Research Project	0·235	1989
Transport		
Tanzania Railways Corporation	8·392	1991
Songea/Makambako Road Post Construction Maintenance	1·857	1989
Health and Population		
Southern Regions Health Project	13·366	1990
WHO/Tanzania Medium Term AIDS Action Plan	1·500	1992
1988 Census Project	0·383	1990
Education		
English Language Teaching Support Project	1·956	1992
University Support Project	0·731	1989
Finance Sector		
Diagnostic Study	0·600	1989

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria are used to measure the effectiveness of programme aid and project aid towards development in Tanzania; and how this evaluation will affect the future aid programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: For programme aid we monitor in general the extent to which the objectives of the Tanzanian economic recovery programme are being met and, as part of that, the foreign exchange allocation and procurement systems. Capital projects proposed for financing from British aid funds are subject to comprehensive appraisal to determine their financial and economic rates of return. Their implementation is systematically monitored. These assessments are taken fully into account in determining the future volume of programme and project aid that we allocate for Tanzania.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total level of programme aid to Tanzania for each year since it was introduced; what was the total level of aid to Tanzania for each of those years; and what percentage of that total constitutes programme aid.

Mr. Chris Patten: Programme aid to Tanzania resumed in the financial year 1986-87. Programme aid and total British aid to Tanzania in 1986-87 and 1987-88 were as follows:

	£ million 1986-87	*£ million 1987-88*
Programme aid	14·974	17·322
Total aid	25·207	28·948
Programme aid as a percentage of total aid	59	60

Overseas Aid

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what GDF deflator figure was used in the calculation of a 5 per cent. real terms

increase in the overseas aid programme in 1989-90 referred to by the Minister for Overseas Development in the debate on 17 March.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer my right hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 17 March at column *697*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Dana Concert (Children's Travel)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether there was any cost to public funds for the provision of transport for schoolchildren associated with the recording by Dana at the Giant's Causeway on Friday 10 March.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department of Education will meet the cost of transport from within its community relations budget. It should be noted that the rights to the recording of the song "Harmony" and to the associated video belong to Co-operation North and all proceeds from the production will go to that organisation.

Voluntary Grammar Schools

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the category A expenditure admitted for each of the voluntary grammar schools in Northern Ireland for the current school year and the last school year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

School	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £
Armagh Royal	686,584	692,151
Armagh, Christian Brothers'	424,949	—
Armagh, St. Patrick's College	456,013	—
Armagh, St. Patrick's Grammar	—	777,255
Ballymena Academy	1,241,449	1,308,677
Ballymena, St. Louis	892,133	952,704
Ballymoney Dalriada	895,006	961,830
Ballynahinch, Assumption Convent	729,156	773,164
Bangor Grammar	991,360	1,038,845
Belfast, Bloomfield Collegiate	549,450	597,481
Belfast, Campbell College	721,527	756,171
Belfast, Christian Brothers'	1,160,966	1,260,140
Belfast, Dominican College	856,881	902,481
Belfast High School	870,526	881,920
Belfast, Hunterhouse College	825,554	877,994
Belfast, Methodist College	1,855,702	2,121,464
Belfast, Our Lady & St. Patrick's	961,120	1,035,116
Belfast, Royal Belfast Academical Institution	1,071,474	1,134,662
Belfast Royal Academy	1,495,581	1,579,420
Belfast, St. Dominic's	1,084,846	1,110,886
Belfast, St. Malachy's College	1,070,076	1, 080,880
Belfast, Strathearn	647,635	749,850
Belfast, Victoria College	986,720	986,458
Coleraine Academical Institution	1,080,931	1,107,936
Coleraine Convent	753,748	814,969
Donaghmore, St. Joseph's	311,390	358,773
Downpatrick, St. Patrick's	561,357	617,350
Dungannon Royal	759,865	763,598
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Boys'	627,493	694,465
Dungannon, St. Patrick's Girls'	568,711	644,312
Dunmurry Rathmore Grammar	1,053,961	1,106,680
Enniskillen Convent	681,716	772,600
Enniskillen, Portora Royal	410,202	437,514
Enniskillen, St. Michael's	662,680	718,782
Garron Tower, St. Macnissis	514,263	575,427
Holywood, Sullivan Upper	1,062,414	1,134,848
Kilkeel St. Louis	427,802	431,931
Larne Grammar School	787,649	798,785
Lisburn, Friends School	1,020,543	1,085,529
Lisburn, Wallace High	1,130,022	1,256,618
Londonderry, Foyle College	844,820	918,568
Londonderry, St. Columb's	1,486,499	1,624,391
Londonderry, Thornhill College	1,290,160	1,363,294
Lurgan, St. Michael's	582,121	620,811
Magherafelt, Rainey Endowed	677,933	710,791
Magherafelt, St. Mary's	930,913	1,045,734
Newry Christian Brothers'	698,145	735,426
Newry, Our Lady's Grammar	678,061	759,182
Newry, Sacred Heart	760,052	771,879
Newry, St. Colman's	707,620	783,934
Omagh, Christian Brothers'	737,324	806,615
Omagh, Loreto Convent	762,596	795,111
Portstewart, Dominican College	457,143	468,363
Strabane Convent	462,924	488,574

Notes:

1. The figures include preparatory departments.
2. Armagh Christian Brothers' and Armagh St. Patrick's College amalgamated on 1 September 1988 to become Armagh St. Patrick's Grammar.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement indicating the basis for the figures given in the *Official Report*, columns 39-40 to indicate pupil numbers and category B grants for each of the voluntary grammar schools in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: Category B grants are based on the levels of approved expenditure in previous years adjusted to take account of both pay and price increases and the skewing of resources in favour of the relatively low spending schools. Category B grants are calculated in relation to the number of non-fee-paying pupils only, details of which are provided by individual schools.

Teaching Costs

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement indicating the amounts allocated to each secondary school in Northern Ireland to fund teaching costs in the current and last two school years, the numbers of pupils in each school in each year and the numbers of approved teaching posts.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on teaching costs is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

The numbers of pupils and approved full-time teaching posts in each secondary school in the current and last two school years are set out in the following table.

School name	*January enrolment*			*Approved staffing*		
	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Belfast Board Area						
Kelvin Secondary	216	155	0	20	18	10
Ashfield Girls' Secondary	528	523	501	35	37	37
Ashfield Boys' Secondary	409	406	390	28	28	29
Model Girls' Secondary	947	916	913	65	65	63

School name	January enrolment			Approved staffing		
	1987	1988	1989	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Model Boys' Secondary	1,089	1,049	1,017	71	72	70
Orangefield Boys' Secondary	802	673	596	56	54	48
Larkfield Secondary	272	280	395	20	21	29
Orangefield Girls' Secondary	625	577	539	45	44	41
Deramore Secondary	643	588	522	52	47	45
Cairnmartin High	502	408	353	41	36	31
Forthbridge Secondary	552	481	405	42	41	37
Castle High	553	475	401	49	43	38
St Patrick's Secondary	575	493	466	43	42	37
St Gabriel's Secondary	332	333	313	26	24	24
St Thomas's Secondary	476	404	0	34	32	[1]0
St Louise's Comprehensive	2,339	2,399	2,470	160	161	162
St Monica's Secondary	394	369	324	34	33	32
Little Flower Girls's Secondary	499	486	508	33	33	33
Our Lady of Mercy Secondary	659	633	614	43	44	43
St Rose's Secondary	289	277	285	24	24	23
Christian Brothers' High, Glen Road	686	711	736	45	45	48
St Peter's Secondary	166	121	0	16	15	[1]0
St Augustine's High	357	307	270	27	26	24
St Genevieve's Secondary	751	768	770	51	51	52
Cross and Passion High	260	213	154	26	23	21
St Gemma's Secondary	282	278	263	24	23	23
St Paul's Secondary	262	242	0	24	22	[1]0
Christian Brothers' High	197	142	0	17	15	[1]0
La Salle Boys' Secondary	1,138	1,132	1,147	67	69	70
Corpus Christi College	0	0	920	0	0	[2]70
Hazelwood Integrated College	0	0	215	0	0	[2]16
Grosvenor High	1,046	1,044	1,070	67	66	66
Annadale Grammar	405	377	350	30	28	27
Carolan Grammar	351	325	330	24	24	23
Ashleigh House Grammar	320	0	0	23	0	[3]0
Bloomfield Collegiate	523	538	590	32	32	32
Campbell College	729	712	725	43	42	41
Christian Brothers' Grammar	1,114	1,099	1,122	72	71	69
Methodist College	2,220	2,153	2,142	124	124	121
Princess Gardens School	456	0	0	31	0	[3]0
Richmond Lodge	336	0	0	23	0	[4]0
Royal Belfast Academical Institution	1,144	1,146	1,164	66	65	65
Belfast Royal Academy	1,596	1,555	1,585	90	90	89
St Dominic's High	972	913	910	67	63	60
St Malachy's College	1,000	948	918	65	62	60
Victoria College	607	0	0	35	0	[1]0
Dominican College	786	751	790	51	50	47
Strathearn Grammar	703	769	807	36	38	42
Rathmore Grammar	984	1,020	1,063	62	62	62
Victoria College	0	866	847	0	54	[4]54
Hunterhouse College	0	799	801	0	50	[3]50
Western Board Area						
Clondermott Secondary, Londonderry	565	567	567	37	38	38
Templemore Secondary, Londonderry	402	397	407	26	26	27
Enniskillen High	641	616	602	44	44	43
Castlederg High	468	456	408	31	31	32
Faughan Valley Secondary, Londonderry	525	519	495	35	35	35
Lisnaskea High	274	280	256	18	18	20
Omagh High	697	659	636	43	45	43
Dungiven Secondary	118	121	112	8	8	9
Limavady High	777	753	779	55	53	53
Strabane High	567	522	496	40	40	39
Duke of Westminster High, Kesh	408	377	364	29	29	28
St Colman's Secondary, Strabane	935	907	916	56	58	59
St Mary's Secondary, Limavady	951	918	860	62	61	59
St Patrick's Secondary, Omagh	617	608	602	39	39	39
St Mary's Secondary, Creggan	768	778	788	48	48	50
St Mary's Secondary, Belleek	198	192	133	13	13	13
Our Lady of Mercy High, Strabane	582	556	553	39	39	38
St Fanchea's Secondary, Enniskillen	428	397	417	28	29	28
St Joseph's Secondary, Enniskillen	369	377	355	23	23	23
St Mary's Secondary, Irvinestown	289	263	252	20	21	20
St Eugene's Secondary, Castlederg	305	270	292	20	20	19
St Patrick's and St Brigid's High, Claudy	505	485	482	35	33	32
St Brigid's High, Omagh	607	600	587	38	38	38
St Joseph's Secondary, Creggan	750	767	781	48	49	50

School name	January enrolment			Approved staffing		
	1987	1988	1989	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Dean Brian Maguire High, Carrickmore	279	331	345	17	19	21
St Joseph's High, Plumbridge	286	272	286	20	19	20
St Patrick's High, Dungiven	447	452	456	28	29	29
St John's High, Dromore	333	338	340	23	22	22
St Aidan's High, Derrylin	278	283	285	17	18	18
St Eugene's High, Roslea	231	224	218	16	16	16
St Peter's High, Londonderry	462	416	384	35	33	31
St Cecilia's Secondary, Londonderry	702	747	774	41	45	48
St Comgall's Secondary, Lisnaskea	423	414	424	26	26	26
St Brigid's Secondary, Londonderry	1,052	1,011	1,033	69	69	67
St Brecan's Secondary, Londonderry	527	471	454	42	40	37
Enniskillen Collegiate Grammar	403	379	373	26	26	25
Limavady Grammar	771	759	763	50	51	50
Omagh Academy	734	703	704	44	43	43
Strabane Grammar	344	325	331	22	22	22
Enniskillen Convent Grammar	674	688	742	41	41	44
Portora Royal, Enniskillen	363	340	342	26	24	23
St Michael's Grammar, Enniskillen	657	662	682	38	39	40
Thornhill College, Londonderry	1,273	1,252	1,306	80	78	77
St Columb's College, Londonderry	1,562	1,546	1,533	91	93	93
Christian Brothers' Grammar, Omagh	734	740	760	45	45	46
Loreto Convent Grammar, Omagh	747	753	816	45	45	45
Strabane Convent Grammar	448	451	452	26	28	28
Foyle and Londonderry College	829	824	785	50	51	51
North-Eastern Board Area						
Garvagh High	251	241	222	21	19	18
Magherfelt High	589	535	467	42	40	37
Larne High	901	860	825	61	59	59
Coleraine Girls' High	808	753	757	53	53	52
Coleraine Boys' High	696	680	632	44	44	44
Maghera High	298	287	256	22	21	21
Carrickfergus High	791	815	838	49	51	53
Ballymena Boys' High	249	227	227	21	18	16
Ballymena Girls' High	240	191	88	18	16	13
Antrim High	508	446	386	37	34	32
Hopefield Secondary, Newtownabbey	626	571	544	41	41	38
Ballycastle High	351	334	289	26	24	23
Ballymoney High	688	678	621	46	45	46
Ballyclare Secondary	831	848	852	53	54	56
Crumlin High	183	194	196	15	15	16
Cullybackey High	644	612	609	42	40	38
Randalstown High	185	175	161	14	14	14
Rathcoole High, Newtownabbey	304	259	238	24	22	21
Monkstown Secondary, Newtownabbey	739	706	671	52	51	48
Glengormley High	1,358	1,345	1,296	86	87	87
Parkhall High, Antrim	351	361	365	23	24	25
Dunclug High, Ballymena	452	411	411	30	28	27
Dunluce Secondary, Bushmills	420	425	456	27	27	28
Downshire Secondary, Carrickfergus	712	662	592	51	48	45
Ballee High, Ballymena	877	822	831	60	59	56
Ardnaveigh High, Antrim	518	493	495	37	37	36
St Aloysius's Secondary, Cushendall	200	188	188	15	15	15
St Comgall's High, Larne	425	376	347	32	30	29
St Olcan's High, Randalstown	290	270	284	21	21	21
Our Lady of Lourdes High, Ballymoney	336	322	316	26	24	23
St Patrick's High, Ballymena	745	753	712	47	46	46
St Joseph's High, Coleraine	481	450	432	34	33	32
St Colm's Secondary, Draperstown	323	315	307	22	22	22
St Mary's College, Portglenone	315	297	271	22	22	21
St Paul's Secondary, Kilrea	294	261	237	19	19	19
St Nicholas's Secondary, Carrickfergus	120	105	83	11	11	10
St Pius X Secondary, Magherafelt	853	840	821	54	54	54
Christian Brothers' Secondary, Glengormley	570	584	592	35	35	36
St Malachy's High, Antrim	646	624	611	42	42	41
Cross and Passion High, Ballycastle	670	663	656	42	42	42
St Patrick's College, Maghera	1,151	1,148	1,196	73	72	73
Stella Maris High, Newtownabbey	269	234	202	21	20	18
Ballyclare High	1,122	1,149	1,215	68	68	69
Cambridge House Girls' Grammar, Ballymena	560	530	561	35	35	35
Coleraine High	681	668	707	45	43	44
Carrickfergus Grammar	578	543	530	36	36	35
Antrim Grammar	616	647	648	36	38	39
Cambridge House Boys' Grammar, Ballymena	434	414	407	29	27	27

School name	January enrolment			Approved staffing		
	1987	1988	1989	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
St Louis Grammar, Ballymena	913	898	912	55	55	54
Ballymena Academy	1,328	1,316	1,328	75	75	76
Dalriada Grammar, Ballymoney	887	895	917	51	51	52
Coleraine Academical Institution	1,024	964	960	66	66	62
Loreto College, Coleraine	711	698	702	43	43	44
Larne Grammar	710	692	671	46	44	43
Rainey Endowed, Magherafelt	601	584	598	38	38	37
Dominican College, Portstewart	399	372	365	25	25	24
Belfast High, Newtownabbey	796	760	737	51	50	49
St Mary's Grammar, Magherafelt	935	935	941	56	56	57
St Macnissi's College, Carnlough	511	530	547	30	31	33
South-Eastern Board Area						
Movilla High, Newtownards	734	707	663	49	48	48
Holywood High	234	203	221	19	17	16
Ballynahinch High	407	434	392	26	27	27
Lisnasharragh High, Belfast	572	544	536	38	38	37
Donaghadee High	365	330	320	24	24	23
Castlwellan High	235	203	182	17	17	16
Comber High	659	630	593	43	43	42
Glastry High, Ballyhalbert	487	486	470	34	33	33
Lisnagarvey Boys' High, Lisburn	643	599	541	46	43	40
Killyleagh High	166	145	119	12	12	11
Quoile High, Downpatrick	124	131	106	12	11	11
Saintfield High	202	209	218	14	14	14
Forthill Girls' High, Lisburn	846	803	803	54	54	55
Knockbreda High, Belfast	670	654	671	40	40	42
Scrabo High, Newtownards	516	502	487	34	35	34
Newtownbreda High, Belfast	792	741	740	49	51	50
Dunmurry High	633	589	458	48	45	43
Dundonald Boys' High	470	419	363	36	33	30
Dundonald Girls' High	406	361	322	33	29	26
Laurelhill High, Lisburn	735	687	668	53	50	48
Gransha Boys' High, Bangor	1,043	965	888	65	65	61
Bangor Girls' High	1,122	1,111	1,077	73	72	72
St Mary's Girls' High, Downpatrick	659	612	555	43	42	39
St Columba's High, Portaferry	406	404	405	29	28	28
St Colmcille's High, Crossgar	426	412	419	28	28	28
St Aidan's High, Glenavy	174	171	160	14	13	13
St Columbanus's High, Bangor	378	380	370	26	26	26
St Colman's High, Ballynahinch	431	410	410	28	28	28
St Patrick's High, Lisburn	436	383	365	34	31	27
St Malachy's High, Castlewellan	819	845	849	53	55	57
St Colm's High, Dunmurry	400	321	261	33	29	25
De La Salle Secondary, Downpatrick	532	513	490	37	37	36
Lagan College, Belfast	455	500	545	28	31	33
Regent House Grammar, Newtownards	1,528	1,542	1,613	90	88	88
Down High, Downpatrick	605	593	595	38	37	37
Glenlola Collegiate, Bangor	1,029	976	977	60	60	59
Bangor Grammar	1,063	1,065	1,069	61	61	60
Sullivan Upper, Holywood	1,171	1,191	1,196	63	66	66
Friends School, Lisburn	1,069	1,060	1,061	61	62	62
Wallace High, Lisburn	1,311	1,285	1,283	73	73	73
Assumption Grammar, Ballynahinch	696	686	696	43	43	43
St Patrick's High, Downpatrick	550	574	601	35	33	35
Our Lady and St Patrick's Grammar, Knock	899	917	914	56	56	57
Southern board area						
Kilkeel High	681	633	657	46	43	42
Newtownhamilton Secondary	108	104	104	8	8	8
Clounagh Junior High	650	625	587	45	45	44
Banbridge High	657	678	656	41	42	45
Killicomaine Junior High	636	618	609	42	40	41
Dromore High	695	686	661	47	48	47
Lurgan Boys' Junior High	349	3349	336	25	24	25
Lurgan Girls' Junior High	333	336	317	23	23	23
Markethill High	420	432	418	27	27	27
Fivemiletown High	493	484	439	35	35	35
Armagh Secondary	665	661	624	45	43	43
Rathfriland High	346	319	328	22	22	22
Tandragee Junior High	282	286	277	21	20	20
Aughnacloy Secondary	181	164	167	14	14	14
Newry High	639	574	568	47	44	4!

School name	January enrolment			Approved staffing		
	1987	1988	1989	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Brownlow High	291	263	247	24	22	20
Cookstown High	1,140	1,121	1,090	76	76	76
Dungannon Secondary	724	721	654	47	46	46
St Joseph's High, Newry	552	539	545	36	37	38
St Columban's High, Kilkeel	511	503	491	34	34	33
St Mary's Junior High, Lurgan	659	623	570	41	41	39
St Patrick's High, Banbridge	523	507	544	37	36	35
St Paul's Junior High, Lurgan	573	572	540	40	39	39
St Mary's Girls' High, Newry	615	579	544	44	44	42
St Patrick's Girls' High, Dungannon	301	280	284	21	20	19
St Mark's High, Warrenpoint	796	769	761	52	52	52
Our Lady's High, Cookstown	539	531	520	35	35	35
St Ciaran's High, Ballygawley	687	704	724	44	45	46
St Paul's Secondary, Bessbrook	1,272	1,210	1,240	83	83	81
St Brigid's Boys' High, Armagh	307	328	336	20	20	24
St Joseph's High, Crossmaglen	596	522	539	39	39	38
St Patrick's High, Cookstown	520	506	495	32	33	33
St Patrick's High, Keady	817	844	832	54	54	54
St Joseph's High, Coalisland	641	638	656	40	41	41
Lismore Comprehensive, Craigavon	997	1,050	957	66	65	64
St Patrick's Boys' High, Dungannon	407	394	373	26	27	27
St Catherine's College, Armagh	846	834	826	57	56	56
Drumcres High, Portadown	692	644	630	54	51	50
Banbridge Academy	824	802	838	53	52	52
Lurgan College	334	340	353	24	24	24
Portadown College	775	781	807	50	50	52
Christian Brothers' Grammar, Armagh	372	359	0	23	23	[1]0
St Patrick's College, Armagh	382	374	0	23	22	[1]0
St Patrick's Boys' Academy, Dungannon	656	675	699	37	40	40
St Patrick's Girls' Academy, Dungannon	596	628	685	36	36	38
St Louis Grammar, Kilkeel	367	326	287	25	24	22
St Michael's Senior High, Lurgan	432	426	406	31	31	31
Abbey Grammar, Newry	702	702	711	42	42	42
Our Lady's Girls' Grammar, Newry	735	733	766	43	44	44
St Colman's College, Newry	753	765	771	42	44	45
St Joseph's Convent Grammar, Donaghmore	287	286	278	18	18	18
Sacred Heart Girls' Grammar, Newry	738	739	778	44	45	45
Royal School, Dungannon	646	617	626	44	44	40
Royal School, Armagh	622	593	554	42	41	39
St Patrick's Grammar, Armagh	0	0	716	0	0	[2]45

[1] Closed 31 August 1988.
[2] Opened 1 September 1988.
[3] Ashleigh House and Princess Gardens amalgamated to form Hunterhouse College with effect from 1 September 1987.
[4] Richmond Lodge and Victoria College amalgamated to form Victoria College with effect from 1 September 1987.

Student Income and Expenditure

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the survey of student income and expenditure as proposed in the recent White Paper "Top-up Loans for Students" will extend to Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. The further survey is confined to Great Britain and follows an earlier similar exercise. However, future monitoring of the general effects of the new top up loans scheme will be on a United Kingdom basis.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a table showing the young mature entry index and the older mature participation index for each year since 1979 for *(a)* universities only and *(b)* for all higher education institutions in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: No young mature entry index is available for Northern Ireland.

Available information for the older mature participation index is as follows:

Year	Universities	All higher education
1987-88	0·196	0·211
1986-87	0·160	0·174
1985-86	0·171	0·181

Information for earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Graduates

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what figures are available to indicate or estimate the number of graduates domiciled in Northern Ireland who earn less than 85 per cent. of national average income at intervals of *(a)* five years and *(b)* 10 years after graduation;

(2) what figures are available to indicate the number of graduates domiciled in Northern Ireland who earn more than 115 per cent. of national average income at intervals of *(a)* five years and *(b)* 10 years after graduation.

Mr. Viggers: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate the numbers of graduates employed in the public sector in Northern Ireland, their distribution among grading levels and the salaries applying to these grades.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The information requested with regard to graduates employed in the public sector in Northen Ireland is not readily available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the number of graduates employed in the NICS, their distribution among grading levels and the salaries applying to these grades are as follows.

Grade	*Number of Graduates*	*Salary scale*
Senior principal and above	427	£19,539-£62,750
Principal	450	£15,631-£21,104
Deputy principal	798	£12,754-£18,167
Staff officer	501	£10,434-£13,458
Executive officer I	262	£8,843-£11,596
Executive officer II	354	£6,134-£9,935
Administrative officer	254	£3,873-£7,555
Administrative assistant	78	£3,519-£6,074
TOTAL	3,124	

Students

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate for each year since 1979-80 the total numbers of 16 to 19-year-olds in further and higher education in Northern Ireland by area board and indicating these numbers as a percentage of the 16 to 19-year-old age cohort.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* The information requested is not available for each area board. However, available information for Northern Ireland as a whole is as follows:

Year	*16-19 year olds in full-time further and higher education*	*As per cent of 16-19 year old population*
1986-87	18,159	16
1985-86	17,627	15
1984-85	16,839	14
1983-84	15,993	14
1982-83	17,270	15
1981-82	15,601	13
1980-81	14,035	12
1979-80	12,452	11

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he proposes to increase the level of grant aid for Northern Ireland students attending universities in *(a)* Scotland from April 1989, *(b)* England and Wales from April 1990 to take account of the community charge payable.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* No.

TRANSPORT

British Rail (Working Conditions)

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what were the average working journey miles per British Rail train driver for each of the years 1980 to 1988; and what assessment he has made of the implications for safety;

(2) what information he has about the hours of work of British Rail employees for the years 1980 to 1988; and what assessment he has made of the implications for safety of these figures;

(3) what were the average weekly working hours of British Rail train drivers in each of the British Rail regions for the years 1980 to 1988; and what assessment he has made of the implications for safety of these figures.

Mr. Portillo: The detailed management information sought by the hon. Member is not reported to the Department. There are no recommendations or conclusions in any accident reports prepared by the Department's railway inspectorate during the years 1980-88 which suggest that drivers' hours or average working journey miles have been a factor in accidents.

Railway Inspectorate

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has reached on the recommendations of his Department's scrutiny of the railway inspectorate.

Mr. Portillo: Since this scrutiny was completed in 1987, we have consulted interested organisations on its many recommendations and I have had the advice of chief inspecting officer, who was appointed in 1988. I am now placing in the Library of the House a note setting out the action that is being taken. Most of the recommendations of the review are being followed up; only four are rejected. I am proposing to review whether any further changes are needed in the interests of efficiency and effectiveness, across all the functions performed by the inspectorate.

Drunk-drivers

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce a super test for drunk-drivers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. We are drawing up plans for a more demanding driving test to be taken by drivers convicted of and disqualified for serious bad driving offences. As explained in the Government's recent White Paper "The Road User and the Law", Cm. 576 this test will not, in the first instance, be taken by most drink drive offenders who are more likely to benefit from the rehabilitation courses also envisaged in the White Paper.

Driving Test

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how the new test proposed in the recent White Paper "The Road User and the Law" will differ from the L test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The new test is likely to be longer than the L test, which will make it more demanding. The standard of assessment will be the same for the new test as for the L test—any actually or potentially dangerous mistakes will result in failure. The fee will be set, as is the L test fee, at the level necessary to recover the costs associated with the test. It is therefore likely to cost more.

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if there are any plans to change the United Kingdom driving tests to comply with European proposals on licensing harmonisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The proposed Second European Community Driving Licence Directive would, amongst other matters, set common minimum standards for driver testing in Europe. Our current tests are likely to meet those standards without need for major changes. If, after detailed consideration, any amendments are thought to be necessary, interested parties will be consulted as appropriate.

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans to introduce a written theory test for driving test candidates to comply with European proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no requirement under the European proposals for a written theory test. A detailed comparison of the United Kingdom's existing oral theory test with the minimum requirements of the proposed Second Driving Licence Directive suggests that the content of the United Kingdom theory test may need to be revised. If a change to the format appears also in due course to be necessary, we shall first consult with interested organisations as appropriate.

Driving Instructors

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if there are any plans for common standards for driving instructors in Europe by 1992.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no plans at present for harmonisation of driving instructor standards within EC.

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many driving instructors have failed to reach the proper standard in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1988, 749 check tests on established instructors were substandard. Some of the instructors involved were subsequently able to raise their standard to an acceptable level. Some await further tests.

Eighty-six instructors have been or are being removed from the register of approved driving instructors for failing to reach the required standard. Others have resigned before this step has been reached.

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many driving instructors fall within each of the different grades allocated by his Department on the check test.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This information will not be available until next year, when all instructors will have been tested to the current standard. All instructors who fail to reach grade 4, 5 or 6 after, at most, three attempts, are removed from the register.

Goods Vehicles (Hazardous Loads)

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether steps have been taken to ensure that drivers of goods vehicles carrying dangerous substances are aware of the need for extra care in bad weather conditions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The various road transport industry training boards and associations are fully aware of the need for special care when transporting dangerous goods. The Department wrote earlier this year to the chairman of the joint board which co-ordinates training for drivers responsible for dangerous substances, asking for renewed emphasis to be placed on the importance of taking account of weather conditions when planning journeys, or in deciding whether to continue them. I am arranging for the letter and the reply to be place in the Library.

Goods and Passenger Vehicle Operator Licensing

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will deregulate goods and passenger vehicle operator licensing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has just completed a review of operator licensing to consider ways in which the burden it imposes on industry might be reduced. Proposals will be published for public consultation, probably in the summer.

MV The Takapu

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what occasions in the last five years the vessel The Takapu operated by Star Offshore, was inspected; and what was the result of such inspections.

Mr. Portillo: I assume that the question refers to the Takapu which is managed by Star Offshore Services Marine Ltd of Aberdeen. This vessel was first registered in the United Kingdom in February 1988 and was then surveyed for the issue of a safety equipment certificate, international oil pollution prevention certificate and a safety radio certificate. Annual surveys were undertaken in February this year. These surveys indicated that the vessel complied with the safety and oil pollution regulations applicable to her.

Continental Shelf (Standby Vessels)

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been his Department's expenditure in each of the last five years, on the inspection and supervision of standby vessels on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Portillo: This information is not available since the expenditure incurred on standby vessels is not separately recorded from the inspection and supervision of other types of vessels. However, every vessel used as a standby vessel must be inspected each year for compliance with the Department's assessment of the suitability of standby vessels attending offshore installations.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list, in respect of each standby vessel on the United Kingdom continental shelf, the occasions when each vessel has been inspected or visited by his inspectors in the last five years;

(2) in respect of each offshore oil and gas installations in the North sea, if he will give *(a)* the name of the standby vessel, *(b)* the age of the standby vessel, *(c)* the previous service history of each standby vessel and *(d)* the name of the owner of each standby vessel.

Mr. Portillo: The information is not available in the form requested. The Department assesses the suitability of standby vessels and when a vessel meets the necessary standards a certificate is issued. It is the responsibility of

the operator to ensure that there is a standby vessel within five miles of a manned offshore installation and he is free to charter any vessel from the pool available. I am placing in the Library the names of all standby vessels currently certificated, the name of the owner, the year of build and the date of the last survey.

Year of build	*Ship*	*Owner*	*Date of last survey*
1962	Anegada	Colne Shippimg	August 1988
1961	Aruba	Colne Shipping	February 1989
1962	Barbuda	Colne Shipping	May 1988
1960	Barnsley	Colne Shipping	July 1988
1962	Bermuda	Colne Shipping	August 1988
1976	Blue Flame 1	Britannia Putford Enterprises	March 1988
1978	Boston Sea Cobra	Britannia Marine Ltd.	May 1988
1972	Boston Sea Fury	Britannia Marine Ltd.	March 1988
1978	Boston Sea Gazelle	Britannia Marine Ltd.	April 1988
1976	Boston Sea Knight	Britannia Marine Ltd.	April 1988
1978	Boston Sea Stallion	Britannia Marine Ltd.	April 1988
1978	Boston Sea Vixen	Britannia Marine Ltd.	May 1988
1961	Breydon Eider	Breydon Marine	May 1988
1961	Breydon Widgeon	Wherry Fish Selling Company	July 1988
1982	Burnhaven	Scotts of Greenock	November 1988
1959	Benella	Benella Ltd.	October 1988
1958	Cam Cougar	Cam Shipping	May 1988
1960	Cam Civet	Cam Shipping	February 1989
1983	Cam Defender	Cam Shipping	February 1989
1959	Cam Cheetah	Cam Shipping	April 1988
1960	Cam Genet	Cam Shipping	August 1988
1960	Cam Lynx	Cam Shipping	June 1988
1971	Cam Guardian	Cam Shipping	June 1988
1957	Cam Jaguar	Cam Shipping	September 1988
1983	Cam Protector	Cam Shipping	May 1988
1958	Cam Panther	Cam Shipping	June 1988
1966	Cam Puma	Cam Shipping	December 1988
1983	Cam Ranger	Cam Shipping	November 1988
1972	Cam Retriever	Cam Shipping	May 1988
1968	Cam Seeker	Nancy Sea Inc.	October 1988
1971	Cam Searcher	Cam Shipping	July 1988
1982	Cam Sentinel	Cam Shipping	June 1988
1957	Cam Tiger	Cam Shipping	September 1988
1960	Cam Zebra	Cam Shipping	February 1989
1963	Colne Hunter	Colne Shipping	July 1988
1966	Colne Kestrel	Colne Shipping	August 1988
1962	Crystal Palace	Colne Shipping	February 1989
1965	Dawn Blazer	Warbler Shipping	September 1988
1967	Dawn Flight	Warbler Shipping	September 1988
1958	Dawn Gem	Warbler Shipping	May 1988
1961	Dawn Monarch	Warbler Shipping	May 1988
1960	Dawn Saviour	Warbler Shipping	November 1988
1967	Dawn Shore	Warbler Shipping	April 1988
1967	Dawn Sky	Warbler Shipping	July 1988
1953	Deventel	Deventel Ltd.	September 1988
1961	Desirade	Colne Shipping	October 1988
1961	Dominca	Colne Shipping	April 1988
1936	Euan	Garcia Ltd.	May 1988
1961	Exuma	Huxley Fishing	September 1988
1961	Grampian Concord	George Craig & Son	July 1988
1962	Grampian Dawn	George Craig & Son	November 1988
1957	Grampian Defender	George Craig & Son	May 1988
1960	Grampian Duke	George Craig & Son	December 1988
1967	Grampian Harrier	George Craig & Son	June 1988
1950	Grampian Hawk	George Craig & Son	August 1988
1962	Grampian Forest	George Craig & Son	January 1989
1957	Grampian Freedom	George Craig & Son	August 1988
1965	Grampian Explorer	George Craig & Son	February 1989
1975	Grampian Eagle	Harrison Clyde	December 1988
1969	Grampian Kestrel	George Craig & Son	August 1988
1968	Grampian Monarch	George Craig & Son	March 1989
1959	Grampian Petrel	George Craig & Son	February 1989
1981	Grampian Pride	George Craig & Son	June 1988
1983	Grampian Protector	George Craig & Son	January 1989
1960	Grampian Princess	George Craig & Son	September 1988
1981	Grampian Pioneer	George Craig & Son	April 1988
1937	Grampian Osprey	George Craig & Son	June 1988
1961	Grampian River	George Craig & Son	October 1988
1949	River Grampian Rose	George Craig & Son	November 1988
1959	Grampian Scott	George Craig & Son	November 1988
1956	Grampian Star	Bon Voyage Enterprises	October 1988
1976	Grampian Sword	George Craig & Son	December 1988
1958	Grampian Queen	George Craig & Son	October 1988
1961	Grampian Viking	George Craig & Son	June 1988

Year of build	Ship	Owner	Date of last survey
1959	Grampian Quest	George Craig & Son	May 1988
1976	Highland Light	Olog Marine	March 1988
1986	Highland Sprite	Olog Marine	June 1988
1985	Highland Legend	Olog Marine	August 1988
1961	Hatherleigh	Putford Enterprises	July 1988
1962	Huddersfield Town	Huxley Fishing	October 1988
1983	Johnshaven	John Cook Agencies	October 1988
1983	Loch Carron	Blackmoor Ltd.	July 1988
1984	Lord Supplier	K/S Supply Service (Norway)	November 1988
1983	Maersk Cutter	Maersk	January 1989
1981	Maersk Dispatcher	K/S Passat Norway	August 1988
1980	Maersk Ranger	Maersk	March 1988
1979	Maersk Retriever	Maersk	March 1988
1980	Maersk Ruler	Maersk	April 1988
1982	Maersk Rider	Maersk	December 1988
1982	Maersk Rover	Maersk	December 1988
1959	Mary Craig	George Craig & Sons	May 1988
1982	Seaforth Monarch	Seaforth Maritime	April 1988
1982	Seaforth Sovereign	Seaforth Maritime	April 1988
1964	Seaboard Implacable	Seaboard Offshore	June 1988
1968	Seaboard Integrity	Seaboard Offshore	October 1988
1968	Seaboard Intrepid	Seaboard Offshore	December 1988
1976	Seaway Jura	Seaway Technology	March 1988
1961	Scampton	Colne Shipping	July 1988
1973	Shetland Service	Offshore Marine	August 1988
1947	Silver Pit	Bobali Ltd.	January 1989
1983	Smit Lloyd 122	Smit Lloyd B.V.	March 1988
1962	St. Anne	Drifter Trawlers Ltd.	July 1988
1962	St. Elizabeth	Colne Shipping	October 1988
1961	St. Luke	Claridge Trawlers	May 1988
1962	St. Louis	Dagon Fishing	September 1988
1961	St. Lucia	Dagon Fishing	August 1988
1964	St. Kitts	Claridge Trawlers	October 1988
1961	St. Martin	Colne Shipping	November 1988
1961	St. Paul	Huxley Fishing	September 1988
1985	Stirling Dee	Scotts Greenock	November 1988
1986	Stirling Esk	Stirling Shipping	March 1988
1982	Stirling Teal	Harrison's Clyde Ltd.	June 1988
1980	Stirling Tern	Stirling Shipping	October 1988
1959	Monkleigh	Putford Enterprises	May 1988
1962	Mustique	Colne Shipping	February 1989
1969	Nova	Britannia Marine	May 1988
1960	Notts Forest	Colne Shipping	November 1988
1955	Nautika	Tamis Ltd.	June 1988
1961	Oakleigh	Putford Enterprises	July 1988
1961	Pagona	Colne Shipping	October 1988
1955	Petrus	Deventel Ltd.	December 1988
1956	Penomis	Tamis Ltd.	August 1988
1967	Putford Guardian	Putford Enterprises	November 1988
1962	Putford Merlin	Putford Enterprises	April 1988
1960	Putford Osprey	Putford Enterprises	July 1988
1960	Putford Petrel	Putford Enterprises	May 1988
1959	Putford Scimitar	Putford Enterprises	May 1988
1967	Putford Skua	Putford Enterprises	April 1988
1971	Renfrew	Gallic Shipping Ltd.	February 1989
1982	Sandhaven	Scotts of Greenock	November 1988
1982	Seagair	B.P. Petroleum Development	August 1988
1986	Seaforth Baronet	Seaforth Maritime	June 1988
1983	Seaforth Centurion	Seaforth Maritime	June 1988
1983	Seaforth Crusader	Seaforth Maritime	March 1988
1982	Seaforth Emperor	Seaforth Maritime	January 1989
1986	Seaforth Earl	Seaforth Maritime	March 1989
1983	Stirling Sprite	Stirling Shipping	January 1989
1983	Star Vega	Star Offshore Services	May 1988
1974	Stone Haven	Haven Shipping Co.	June 1988
1980	Suffolk Champion	Suffolk Marine	May 1988
1974	Suffolk Conquest	Suffolk Marine	June 1988
1972	Suffolk Harvester	Suffolk Marine	April 1988
1985	Suffolk Mariner	Suffolk Marine	August 1988
1982	Suffolk Prince	Suffolk Marine	May 1988
1973	Suffolk Warrior	Suffolk Marine	January 1989
1945	Tamito	Tamis Ltd.	June 1988
1957	Tem	Karlsen Shipping Nova Scotia	February 1989
1977	Tempest	Wijsmuller B.V.	July 1988
1984	TNT Cougar	T.N.T. Sealion	April 1988
1965	Togo	Colne Shipping	May 1988
1960	Umberleigh	H.I. Williams	July 1988

Year of build	Ship	Owner	Date of last survey
1975	Vulcan Service	Wilkes Shipping	February 1989
1962	Waddington	Colne Shipping	December 1988

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines have been issued by his Department, in respect of standards required by operators of standby vessels on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Portillo: The Department last issued guidelines in 1982 in the form of instructions to surveyors on the assessment of the suitability of standby vessels attending offshore installations.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of standby vessels located off offshore oil and gas installations in *(a)* the northern section and *(b)* the southern section of the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Portillo: There are 154 standby vessels currently certified by the Department. It is not possible, without incurring disproportionate costs, to split this total into the two divisions required.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to require supply boats, tugs or standby vessels operating in the United Kingdom continental shelf, to carry medically qualified personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: In the current revision of the "Instructions to Surveyors on the Assessment of the Suitability of Standby Vessels Attending Offshore Installations" it is being proposed that in addition to all crew members having a basic first aid training some should now attend an advanced first aid course. However, if the Piper Alpha inquiry recommends further improvements these will be carefully considered.

Severn bridge

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish details of all fatal and other serious accidents that have occurred in the approaches to the Severn bridge in tailbacks in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information on accidents occurring in tailbacks is not specifically recorded as such.

In the past five years for which information is readily available, there have been 34 vehicular accidents involving personal injury on the M4 within four miles of the Severn bridge in England, excluding the bridge itself.

These are:

	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total
1984	0	2	2	4
1985	0	2	7	9
1986	0	3	4	7
1987	0	1	5	6
1988	0	2	6	8

Information in respect of accidents on the Welsh approach of the crossing may be obtained from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Terrorism (Broadcasts)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to extend the ban on broadcasting of statements of those supporting terrorism to cover any other, non-Christian organisation urging the breaking of United Kingdom laws; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. The broadcasting restrictions apply only to Northern Ireland terrorist organisations and their supporters, and they were introduced only because of the exceptional circumstances surrounding terrorism connected with Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to amend the notices imposing restrictions on access to the media which were issued to the broadcasters last October to take account of the coming into force of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989.

Mr. Hurd: I have today made a technical amendment to the notices substituting a reference to the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 for the existing reference to the Act of 1984. Copies of the amending notices have been placed in the Library.

Prison Service (Privatisation)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what views the prison governors' representatives expressed, at their meeting with him on 6 March, in respect of his plan to privatise parts of the prison service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: When my right hon. Friend and I met representatives of the Prison Governors Association on 6 March we had a useful exchange of views about, among other things, issues arising from the Green Paper "Private Sector Involvement in the Remand System" (Cm. 434, July 1988) and from my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 1 March at columns *277-78*. A copy of the responses to the Green Paper, including that from the Prison Governors Association, is in the Library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department from which organisations he will be seeking advice about his plans for the privatisation of parts of the prison service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In his statement to the House on 1 March at columns 277-278 my right hon. Friend described the further work which will be needed to take forward consideration of the possibility of involving the private sector in the provision and operation of new remand centres, and in the provision of court escort and custody services. This will involve extensive consultation with interested parties in or concerned with the operation of the criminal justice system, as well as with potential contractors.

Firearms Certificates

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of north Wales on the reasons for the delays and multiple visits of officers involved in applications for firearm and shotgun certificates and as to on what dates forces' standing orders or any instructions to officers on the administration of the Firearms Act and amendments have been issued;

(2) if he will call for a report from Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary of the efficiency of the administration in the north Wales constabulary of the Firearms Act 1968 and amendments and as to whom the responsibility for the control of the administration procedures has been delegated.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The administration of the Firearms Acts in North Wales is the responsibility of the chief constable. I am not aware of matters that would justify calling for a report from him or from Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary.

Drugs

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the street price level of drugs over the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The price of illicit drugs is difficult to assess and varies widely according to factors such as the locality, the purity of the drugs and the circumstances in which the transaction takes place. A broad indication of prices paid for some of the main drugs of misuse over the last five years, based on information collected by the national drugs intelligence unit, is given in the table. It shows typical street level prices in London and Glasgow.

	Cocaine (£ per gram)		*Heroin (£ per gram)*		*Amphetamine (£ per gram)*		*Cannabis Resin (£ per ounce)*	
	London	*Glasgow*	*London*	*Glasgow*	*London*	*Glasgow*	*London*	*Glasgow*
1984	55	75	50	90	15	15	65	75
1985	55	75	65	90	15	15	65	95
1986	90	70	90	90	15	15	50	85
1987	75	85	85	90	15	15	60	110
1988	60	85	90	70	13	15	90	110

Broadcasting White Paper

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now list in the *Official Report* the names of all *(a)* organisations and *(b)* individuals who made representations on the White Paper "Broadcasting in the '90s".

Mr. Renton: It would not be practicable to do so: we have now received over 2,900 responses, and a few late submissions are still coming in. We have it in mind in due course to place in the Library a list of the main organisations which have submitted comments.

Mr. Mohammed Bhika

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a decision on the application made by Mr. Mohammed Bhika, Ref. GV100/5063 and B468083, to enter the United Kingdom; when the application was referred to him; and when Mr. Bhika applied to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: Mr. Bhika applied on 4 January 1989, at the British deputy high commission in Bombay, to come here for employment as a minister of religion at the Surti Muslim Khalifa society, Bradford. On 6 January 1989 the entry clearance officer referred the application to the immigration and nationality department for a decision. Preliminary consideration has already been given to the case and further inquiries are under way. I expect a decision to be taken on the application shortly. Mr. Bhika and the Surti Muslim Khalifa society will be informed direct of the outcome.

Mrs. Safina Bi

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he is going to take a decision on the application of Mrs. Safina Bi, Ref. B437592/IMM/91905, to enter the United Kingdom; when the application was referred to him; and when Mrs. Safina Bi applied to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: Mrs. Safina Bi applied at the British embassy in Islamabad on 20 September 1987 for entry clearance to join her husband here for settlement. She was interviewed in Islamabad on 7 February 1988 and the entry clearance officer referred the application to the immigration and nationality department on 21 March 1988 for a decision. Further inquiries were made and the decision to refuse Mrs. Bi's application was sent to the entry clearance officer on 20 March 1989, who will formally notify her of the Department's decision once the papers are received in Islamabad. A letter to Mr. Rashid's solicitors informing them of this decision was sent the same day. Mrs. Bi will be informed of her right of appeal against the Department's decision to the independent appellate authorities.

Extradition

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to initiate the powers on extradition provided in the Criminal Justice Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Later this year, when the provisions of part I of the 1988 Act have been consolidated with other extradition legislation in a Bill which we hope will be brought forward shortly.

Magistrates Courts (Computers)

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has reached a decision on the recommendations in the Home Office research and planning unit report, "Evaluation of the Use of Computers in Magistrates Courts—The Way Forward."

Mr. Hurd: The report was issued for consultation to the magistrates courts service, other agencies within the criminal justice system and the suppliers of computer equipment in September 1987. Very careful consideration has been given to the responses received.

There was substantial support for recommendations in the report which proposed that the Home Office should develop a clear strategy and objectives for computerisation in courts and that it should be more positive in providing advice and guidance on computerisation. A recommendation that the Home Office should itself develop, on behalf of the magistrates courts, a prescribed computer software package gave rise to much criticism, which we think is well-founded. We have concluded that the more realistic and practicable approach would be to develop a standard specification for magistrates courts computer systems to which equipment would be expected to conform and, in parallel, to test the feasibility of greater data interchange between current and planned systems through networking arrangements available from the private sector.

A small team is to be established within the Home Office to take forward this work and to provide advice to the courts on computer matters, including the preparation of investment strategies. The work will be carried out in close consultation with the courts, suppliers of equipment, and the other agencies in the criminal justice system.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give an assurance of the availability of funding from central Government for projects eligible for funding under objective 2 of the European regional development fund, in Stockport;

(2) what projects he has identified as eligible for funding from the European regional development fund, in Stockport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

Stockport's eligiblity for European regional development fund assistance, as part of Greater Manchester county, is subject to the Commission's confirmation of its provisional objective 2 list. My Department and the Department of the Environment will consider with the local authorities and other interests concerned what projects should be proposed to the Commission for support from the ERDF, and the manner in which it will be sought. Decisions on use of the fund rest with the Commission. Central Government funding will depend upon the nature of projects eventually agreed.

Folk Dance and Song Society

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters he has had about alleged irregularities in the election for the national executive committee of the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

Mr. Hurd: I have received one letter from a constituent.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Interest Rates

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the interest rates in *(a)* Britain and *(b)* Germany.

Mr. Lilley: Three-month interbank rates on 17 March were 13·1 per cent. in the United Kingdom and 6·6 per cent. in Germany.

Inflation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the current inflation rates in *(a)* Britain and *(b)* other members of the Group of Seven.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the current inflation rates in *(a)* Britain and *(b)* other members of the Group of Seven.

Mr. Lilley: The current 12-month inflation rates for the United Kingdom and the other members of the Group of Seven are given in the OECD weekly publication "Current Economic Indicators", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Third World Debt

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the proposal on Third world debt formulated by the United States Treasury Secretary, Mr. Nicholas Brady; and whether he will be amending his own initiative in this area in the light of Secretary Baker's proposal.

Mr. Lawson: The proposals announced by Secretary Brady on 10 March relate to the middle-income debtor countries, the majority of whose debt is owed to commercial banks. The proposals include the use of IMF and World Bank finance to bring about voluntary debt reduction by the banks. They are being studied carefully in the run-up to the spring meetings of the IMF and World Bank next month, where they will be discussed. The initiative which I launched in April 1987 was aimed at the poorest, most heavily-indebted countries in sub-Saharan Africa whose debt is owed largely to official creditors. Implementation of this has already begun and sub-Saharan countries are therefore already benefiting from it.

Inward Investment

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the amount of inward investment to the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mr. Major: Inward investment in the United Kingdom is estimated to have been £11·2 billion during 1988.

Ryrie Rules

Mr. Adley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will now revise the Ryrie rules; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the Treasury Paper "Private Finance in Public Expenditure" that I placed in the Library of the House in February 1988 and which explains how policy has developed since 1981.

International Monetary Fund

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to ensure that Britain retains her place as the second largest shareholder, after the United States of America, of the international monetary fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The ninth quota review of the international monetary fund is currently in progress. Decisions are not expected until later this year.

Mr. Mohamed Fayed

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he regards Mr. Mohamed Fayed as a fit and proper person within the meaning of section 11(1)(A) and (E) of the Banking Act.

Mr. Lilley: Statutory responsibility for the authorisation and supervision of banks and for the assessment of whether their directors, controllers or managers are fit and proper persons within the terms of the Banking Act 1987 rests with the Bank of England. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on any particular case.

Central Office of Information

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each year from 1978-79 the total expenditure of the Central Office of Information, including the estimated expenditure for 1988-89 and the budget from 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Total Expenditure £,000s*
1978-79	35,400
1979-80	40,700
1980-81	45,100
1981-82	46,100
1982-83	48,300
1983-84	60,300
1984-85	64,700
1985-86	66,900
1986-87	149,800
1987-88	150,500
1988-89	[1]151,600
1989-90	[1]144,000

[1] Estimate.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each year from 1978-79 the number of employees of the Central Office of Information, including a figure for 1988-89 and a projection for 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

1 January	*Permanent staff in post*
1979	1,163
1980	1,177
1981	1,158
1982	1,071
1983	969
1984	961
1985	925
1986	878
1987	815
1988	804
1989	787
1990	[1]803

[1] Projection.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has for including in the criteria for entitlement to housing benefit an assessment of the number of rooms which claimants should have in their homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Housing Benefit Regulations permit local authorities to restrict the amount of rent eligible for housing benefit, in certain circumstances, where they consider that the claimant's accommodation is larger than is reasonably required. No room standard is set down in either legislation or guidance.

From April 1989, local authorities will apply to a rent officer for a determination of a reasonable market rent where the claimant lives in deregulated private sector accommodation. One aspect of these new arrangements will be that the rent officer will decide, against a room standard laid down in an order setting out rent officers' functions, whether the claimant is over-accommodated. If so, he will notify to the local authority a notional market rent for suitably-sized but otherwise similar accommodation. It will continue to be for the local authority to decide on the level of benefit paid. After 13 weeks, subsidy due to the local authority will generally be limited to benefit paid up to the level of the notional rent.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total amount paid to meet the cost of living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation from his Department's offices in Lambeth in any recent available period of 12 months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret the information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Family Credit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many families in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole are in receipt of family credit;

(2) how many families in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole were in receipt of family income supplement in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that information about family credit on this basis is still not available. In June 1987, the latest date from which figures are available, 27,000 families in Scotland were in receipt of family income supplement. No information is available about claims from particular local areas.

National Insurance

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state the value of the Treasury supplement to the national insurance scheme expressed in current values and calculated on the percentages paid in 1965, 1970, 1975 and 1979.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since 1975, the Treasury supplement to the national insurance fund, which is paid out of general

taxation, has been assessed by applying its current percentage rate to gross national insurance contributions that were paid in the tax year into the fund. In 1988-89, such gross contributions are estimated to be £33,240 million, and the current rate of the Treasury supplement is 5 per cent.

The current 1988-89 value of the Treasury supplement is therefore estimated to be £1,662 million. The remaining information requested is as follows:

Percentage rate of the Treasury supplement and value of the Treasury supplement in 1988-89 if relevant percentage rate were applied to gross contributions in 1988-89

Year	Percentage rate	£ million
1965-66	19·1	6,349
1970-71	17·8	5,917
1975-76	18·0	5,983
1979-80	18·0	5,983

Bed and Breakfast

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* the expenditure incurred by each housing authority in England for providing bed-and-breakfast accommodation for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: I have been asked to reply.
The information has been placed in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Employment Training

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of employment training in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Employment training is now progressing well in Scotland with over 20,000 people participating. Trainees are being recruited at a rate of some 1,500 a week. This is encouraging considering that the new programme has been operational for just over six months.

Alcohol Consumption

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the consumption of alcohol at the following weekly levels *(a)* men 0 to 21 units, *(b)* women 0 to 14 units, *(c)* men 21 to 50 units, *(d)* women 14 to 35 units, *(e)* men more than 50 units and *(f)* women more than 35 units; and what steps his Department is currently taking to highlight the dangers to health of drinking at higher levels.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the precise form requested is not available. The most recent relevant survey, conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, which included information on alcohol consumption and drinking patterns is "Drinking and Attitudes to Licensing in Scotland". The report was published by HMSO in 1986 and a copy is available in the Library.

The ministerial group on alcohol misuse established in 1987 has put in hand a range of measures to assist in tackling the problem of alcohol misuse generally. The Scottish health education group gives high priority to alcohol misuse within its broad-based health education strategy aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles.

Drug-related Offences

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were convicted of drug-related offences for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table. For this purpose, the relevant offences are taken to be the illegal importation, production, manufacture, cultivation or supply of drugs, possession with intent to supply, and simple possession.

Scotland	Persons with a drugs offence proved
1979	1,150
1980	1,155
1981	982
1982	1,373
1983	1,671
1984	2,271
1985	2,660
1986	2,657
1987	2,515

Drugs Seizures

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the weight of police seizures of *(a)* cocaine, *(b)* heroin and *(c)* all drugs, for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is shown in the table. Figures for 1988 are not yet available.

Quantities of drug seizures (grammes) by the police in Scotland: 1979-87

	Cocaine	Heroin	All drugs
1979	33·805	155·898	27,636·978
1980	27·564	166·517	21,720·728
1981	29·037	98·633	19,862·644
1982	203·737	816·584	85,465·785
1983	83·088	1,540·031	74,804·202
1984	460·763	3,340·739	62,163·204
1985	260·175	3,668·488	72,329·897
1986	50·303	810·073	52,080·084
1987	106·499	1,015·371	71,143·757

Translation and Foreign Language Services

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what types of translation and foreign language services are being made available to firms preparing for the single European market in 1992.

Mr. Rifkind: Firms preparing for the single European market have access to translation and foreign language services mainly through private sector companies and the language departments of higher education institutions. The Government, through the Training Agency, the Scottish Development Agency and my Department, are assisting the institutions to form a language for export consortium to develop and market their services in ways best suited to meet the needs of business. The services provided will go wider than translation, interpretation and the acquisition of foreign language skills to embrace all aspects of trans-lingual commercial communication.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total expenditure on regional selective assistance for each of the years 1983-84 to 1987-88, inclusive and the estimated expenditure for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Lang: Total gross expenditure on regional selective assistance and related schemes in the years 1983-84 to 1987-88 inclusive are £28·2 million, £38·2 million, £55·0 million, £43·9 million and £45·5 million respectively. Estimated gross expenditure in 1988-89 is expected to be around £44 million. Planned provision for 1989-90 is published in the Supply Estimates. Planned net provision (including regional enterprise grants), consistent with the figures published in "Public Expenditure to 1991-92, A Commentary on the Scotland Programme", for each of the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 is approximately £80 million. Actual expenditure in these years will depend on the extent to which companies come forward with good projects. We shall continue to encourage Scottish businesses to take full advantage of the provision on offer.

Social Workers

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has had any discussions with regional and islands authorities and directors of social work with a view to improving the training and supervision of social workers dealing with mentally disordered workers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All regional and Islands councils are involved in the provision of training programmes, approved by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, for social workers who are approved as mental health officers under the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984. Officials of the social work services group of the Scottish Education Department regularly meet representatives of directors of social work to discuss matters relating to social work training.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans for the Scottish Office to make a direct contribution to the improvement of the training of social workers dealing with mentally disordered people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The need to strengthen post-qualifying training for social workers was among the considerations which led my right hon. and learned Friend to increase by 13 per cent. provision for local authority current expenditure on social work in 1989-90. In addition the Scottish Office is providing a grant of up to £200,000 over three years to St. Andrews university to establish a shared training project for nursing and social work staff working with mentally handicapped people in the Grampian and Highland regions.

Junior Hospital Doctors

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many junior hospital doctors are known to have contracted hours of duty in excess of 95 hours per week.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not held centrally.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average number of contracted hours of duty of junior hospital doctors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The estimated number of contracted hours of duty of junior hospital doctors in Scotland was 86·1 as at 30 September 1988. The 1988 data for Greater Glasgow, Lanarkshire and Forth Valley health boards are not yet available; 1987 data for these boards have therefore been included in the calculation of this average.

Young People (Housing)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any new proposals for enabling young people to enter the housing market either as tenants or owner-occupiers.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Young people and others who need access to housing will stand to benefit from a number of Government measures designed to improve the operation of the housing market. These include the reform of the private rented sector and the extension of the business expansion scheme to the provision of accommodation let on assured tenancies; powers for local authorities to make schemes to assist tenants to obtain other accommodation; and powers for Scotttish Homes to assist the development of both rented and owner-occupied housing.

Local Authority Housing

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy regarding the provision of housing by local authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities in Scotland have a major role to play both as enablers and providers of housing for the foreseeable future. In their role as housing providers authorities will meet an increasingly competitive environment following the introduction of tenants' choice whereby council tenants will have the right to opt for a new landlord. There are, however, no plans to compel authorities to give up their landlord function and there are no statutory powers whereby the Government or any other body can force them to do so. The only person who can compel a council to sell its property is the individual sitting tenant.

The Government's recognition of the substantial role played by councils as housing providers is reflected in the fact that gross capital consent allocations to housing authorities have virtually doubled over the last four years.

It is important, however, that councils should not focus on their landlord function to the detriment of their role as strategic and enabling housing authorities.

Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Industry

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of people employed in the shipbuilding and marine engineering industry in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole in each year from 1975 to 1989.

Mr. Lang: The latest available figures for Scotland relate to 1986. After 1979 only figures for the shipbuilding and ship repair industry (activity heading 3610 of the 1980 standard industrial classification) are available. Annual figures for Strathclyde and Greenock and Port Glasgow are not readily available.

	Shipbuilding and marine engineering 1968 SIC, MLH 370	Shipbuilding and repairing 1980 SIC activity heading 3610
1975	40,400	—
1976	40,800	—
1977	37,300	—
1978	37,600	—
1979	35,600	30,600
1980	—	26,500
1981	—	25,900
1982	—	26,000
1983	—	24,800
1984	—	21,800
1985	—	20,800
1986	—	18,600

Source: Annual Census of Production.

Manufacturing Investment

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table taking 1979 as 100, of investment in real terms in manufacturing *(a)* in Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Lang: The latest available figures for Scotland relate to 1986. Similar indices for Strathclyde and Greenock and Port Glasgow are not readily available.

Gross domestic fixed capital formation in Scottish manufacturing

Year	Index (1979=100)
1977	108·8
1978	104·0
1979	100·0
1980	99·8
1981	82·8
1982	71·8
1983	59·0
1984	72·3
1985	98·6
1986	86·7

Electoral Registration

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total number of people in the parliamentary constituencies of Greenock and Port Glasgow and Renfrew, West and Inverclyde listed in *(a)* the electoral registers for 1988-89, *(b)* the electoral registers for 1989-90 and *(c)* the electoral registers for five and 10 years ago, respectively.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

	Number of electors			
Constituency	1989 electoral register	1988 electoral register	1984 electoral register	1979 electoral register
Greenock and Port Glasgow	55,612	57,339	60,217	62,360
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	57,234	57,025	54,893	79,339

The 1979 figures relate to the former constituencies of Greenock and Port Glasgow, and Renfrewshire, West whose areas correspond broadly with those of the present constituencies created in 1983.

Dog Hunting (New Forest)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he and the Forestry Commission have received by letter, postcard and petition, concerning the prohibition of hunting with dogs in the New Forest.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since 1 January 1988 the Forestry Commission has received six letters concerning the prohibition of hunting with hounds in the New Forest. My right hon. and Learned Friend has received no communications on this subject.

Students (Allowances)

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will publish full details of students' allowances for session 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I announced the main rates of student grant for the 1989-90 academic year in response to a question from my hon. Friend on 16 December 1988 at columns *780-82*.

I am publishing today the supplementary grant rates for the 1989-90 session and details have been placed in the Library. The increases in these rates are broadly in line with the 5 per cent. increase in the main rates, but allowances for students with dependent children will be increased, on average, by 10 per cent.

In addition, there are some minor changes in the terms of the students' allowances scheme. These include:

i. adjusting the classification of some countries for the purposes of determining the rates of grant for study abroad;

ii. treating married students as independent of their parents after two years of marriage;

iii. reducing the qualifying period to two years where parental contributions can be waived in the case of a student who has been in care or custodianship.

Forestry (Report)

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has determined his response to the report from the Highland regional council working party on forestry in Caithness and Sutherland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I welcome this report as a basis for resolving the apparent conflicts in land use in Caithness and Sutherland. I intend to act on those recommendations directed at my departments, and hope that the other agencies involved will also respond positively.

The report was agreed unanimously and I pay tribute to all the working party members for adopting a reasonable and reasoned approach. I think there are three significant elements in the report. First, the proposed land use strategy, which provides a policy framework for considering all land use changes including conservation and forestry. Secondly, the agreement on the scientific interest of the peatlands, and the need to conserve the areas of highest value. Thirdly, the need to establish a viable forest industry by planting a further 40,000 hectares to secure long term employment in the area.

The proposed land use strategy is a sound basis for both safeguarding the prime peatlands and managing the change of sufficient land to create a viable forest. It is an entirely appropriate mechanism consistent with the

principles of our planning system. Proposals to change land use are initiated by its owners. Only when there is a public interest in the proposed change should there be any involvement with Government and statutory agencies. An indicative strategy sets out clear presumptions for or against particular uses, but leaves individual cases to be decided on their merits. By endorsing this strategy, I am providing a clear indication to private sector interests of the likely attitude of public authorities towards any proposed change in land use, and more particularly, commercial forestry, including those which come to me for ultimate decision.

As regards the specific recommendations which fall within my responsibilities, I am responding positively as follows:

(a) *Forestry*

Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 9, 13, 14 and 16 all relate to forestry. The Forestry Commission will have due regard to these. The detailed changes in Forestry Commission procedures proposed in recommendation 16 will be examined carefully, with other agencies as appropriate.

(b) *Agriculture*

DAFS will have due regard to the strategy in carrying out its duties and, in particular, will examine carefully any proposals which will allow tree planting on areas presently in agricultural or crofting use (recommendation 5).

(c) *NCC*

I am happy to accept recommendation 15 that consultation with the NCC should in future take place only where tree planting is proposed on existing or potential SSSIs. I look to NCC to keep the other public agencies advised of their designation programme.

It is proper to record that the proposed strategy does not totally remove the potential for conflict between conservation and forestry. There are residual problems and concerns. I am, however, greatly heartened by the attitude of the working party members and I believe that if they work within the framework and in the spirit of the agreed report, then we can resolve particular cases in a reasonable and sensitive manner. To emphasise this I am writing today advising them of my response and encouraging them to adopt the strategy and publish their views on specific recommendations relevant to their functions and duties.

Finally, I again express my gratitude to the working party members for their efforts. I hope that they will continue to co-operate in the manner achieved during the lengthy deliberations of the working party.

Trunk Road Projects

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the major trunk road projects which have been started during 1988-89 and those which he expects to start in 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is as follows:

Schemes with estimated cost over £1 million started since 1 April 1988

A7 North Middleton
A75 Dumfries Bypass
A77 Balsalloch-Balcreuchan
A835 Garve Railway Bridge
A7 Dornie Bridge[1]
A9 Dunblane Bypass
A9 Dornoch Firth Bridge
A94 Parkford-Balnabreich[1]
A94 Upper Northwater Bridge—Oatyhill
A96 Inverurie Bypass[1]

[1] Contracts let: works start expected later this month or in April.

Schemes with estimated cost over £1 million expected to start by 31 March 1990

A68 Newton St. Boswells Bypass
A7 Dalkeith Bypass
A701 Ae Bridge
A76 Carronbridge Bypass
A76 Cumnock and Auchinleck Bypass
A77 Bennane Hill
M80 Steps Bypass
A82 Luss Bypass
A94 Stracathro Junction

In addition the following schemes may become ready in terms of design and of completion of statutory procedures during the year 1989-90 and, if so, will be available for start in case of slippage on other major schemes:

A75 Carrutherstown-Hetland
A91 Auchtermuchty Bypass
A92 Rosyth Bypass

Tourism

Dr. Owen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total of Government support for the tourist industry in 1988 prices for each year from 1960 to 1988 for Scotland; and what is the projected amount for the next five years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 February 1989]:* Support for tourism in Scotland is mainly provided by the Scottish tourist board (STB) and the Highlands and Islands development board (HIDB); some of the Scottish Development Agency's (SDA) programmes are also of benefit to the tourism industry. Information on the STB's expenditure since 1969 and the HIDB's since 1981 (figures for earlier years not being readily available) is set out in the table. The publication "Public Expenditure to year 1991-1992: A Commentary on the Scottish Programme", which gives information on tourism provision in future years, is due to be published shortly; copies will be placed in the Library.

Financial Year	*Outturn at 1988-89 prices (£ million)*
1969-70	0·5
1970-71	3·7
1971-72	9·6
1972-73	10·0
1973-74	13·2
1974-75	8·0
1975-76	6·8
1976-77	6·4
1977-78	6·8
1978-79	7·5
1979-80	7·9
1980-81	8·2
1981-82	16·0
1982-83	17·2
1983-84	21·4
1984-85	22·4
1985-86	20·3
1986-87	19·9
1987-88	18·3
[1]1988-89	[1]20·1

[1] Estimated.

New Towns

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the policy of the Scottish new town

development corporations towards companies established under the enterprise allowance scheme who might be in competition with existing firms.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 10 February 1989]:* Scottish new town development corporations, where appropriate working in close liaison with their local enterprise trusts, seek to provide premises, advice and aid in securing financial assistance for which enterprises are eligible. That package of support is made available regardless of the existing competition between traders located within the designated area of the new town.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many companies have been prevented from operating in East Kilbride since January 1987 because of the policy of the development corporation to prevent the establishment of enterprises competing with existing firms in the new town area.

Mr. Ian Lang *[holding answer 10 February 1989]:* The East Kilbride development corporation has no such policy. I am aware of my hon. Friend's interest in a recent case about which I have written to him separately.

Exports

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of exports from *(a)* the manufacturing, *(b)* agricultural and *(c)* mining sectors for each year since 1975 and in 1988 moneys.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 20 February 1989]:* The information is not available in the precise form requested. The Scottish Council (Development and Industry) has been conducting a survey of Scottish manufacturing exports for a number of years. Earlier surveys were conducted on a triennial basis and coverage was low. These points should be borne in mind when interpreting the survey results in the table, which gives the best available estimates on a 1980 price basis.

Value of Scottish manufacturing exports: 1980 prices

£ billion

Year	*Value*
1975	3·4
1976	3·7
1977	3·9
1978	4·1
1979	3·9
1980	3·7
1981	3·6
1982	3·3
1983	3·4
1984	3·7
1985	4·0
1986	3·5
1987	4·0

There is no information available on Scottish agricultural exports.

Information on the value of Scottish coal exports is not readily available but the table shows the volume of Scottish coal exports. There were no coal exports from Scotland between 1975-76 and 1980-81.

Volume of Scottish coal exports

Financial year	*Thousand tonnes*
1980-81	32,000
1981-82	570,000
1982-83	340,000
1983-84	273,000
1984-85	29,000
1985-86	217,000
1986-87	112,000
1987-88	101,000
[1]1988-89	111,000

[1] Provisional.

Resource Management (Hospitals)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish his evaluation of the resource management initiative in the Inverclyde royal hospital and other hospitals involved in the exercise.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 23 February 1989]:* No formal evaluation has been undertaken of the two resource management projects at Inverclyde royal hospital and Bangour general hospital. The experience there, and in English hospitals, will however be of benefit as the Scottish Health Service introduces more clinically-oriented resource management in the next few years.

Schools (Assisted Places)

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost to his Department of the assisted places scheme in Scottish schools in each of the last five years; and if he will give the estimated cost for 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 1 March 1989]:* The information is set out in the table. The assisted places scheme was introduced by the Government from 1981-82 to give parents in lower income families the opportunity to exercise choice in the education of their children.

School year	*Total expenditure £'000s*
1984-85	3,229
1985-86	4,217
1986-87	4,861
[1]1987-88	5,303
[1]1988-89	5,900
[2]1989-90	6,800

[1] Provisional figures.
[2] Estimated expenditure.

Community Service and Probation Schemes

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to encourage the further use of community and probationary schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* It is our intention to develop and expand community-based disposals for offenders and to that end the Government will, with effect from 1 April this year, refund to local authorities 100 per cent. of the eligible costs of providing community service schemes. We are providing additional resources which are expected to eliminate rationing of places and temporary closure of schemes and to provide 600 extra places in each of the next three years.

A review of the use and possible development of probation in Scotland has already been announced and is proceeding.

Training

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish figures from all available sources as to the number of 16 to 18-year-olds without a YTS place and known to the local careers offices to be without work in Strathclyde region's educational divisions of *(a)* Argyll and Bute, *(b)* Ayr, *(c)* Dumbarton, *(d)* Glasgow and *(e)* Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire and Scotland as a whole; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* The only information available on the number of young people seeking a job or a YTS place is that held by the local careers services. I understand that the numbers of young people registered at careers offices in the educational divisions of Strathclyde and in Scotland as a whole on 9 March were as follows:

Number of young people registered

	Number
Strathclyde	
Argyll and Bute	81
Ayr	716
Dumbarton	358
Glasgow	1,964
Lanarkshire	744
Renfrewshire	522
TOTAL	4,385
Scotland	8,446

It should be noted, however, that these figures are likely to include young people who have in fact found work or a YTS place since they registered and others who are seeking only work.

By way of comparison, there were 10,022 unfilled YTS places in Scotland on 24 February.

Regional Enterprise Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications received for innovation grants from 1 April 1988 to the most recent date for which figures are available, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period and the estimated expenditure for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(2) if he will give *(a)* the total number of applications received for investment grants from 1 April 1988 to the most recent date for which figures are available, *(b)* the total number of applications approved, *(c)* the total amount of expenditure involved and *(d)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period and the estimated expenditure for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* The information requested for the period 1 April 1988 to 28 February 1989 is as follows:

Regional enterprise grants

	Innovation grants	*Investment grants*
Number of applications received	85	317
Number of applications approved	32	167
Value of applications approved	£726·1 thousand	£1,004 thousand

Total gross expenditure of regional enterprise grants for the period covered is £205,000 out of a provision for 1988-89 of £1·6 million. Planned provision for 1989-90 is published in the Supply Estimates. Planned net provision for regional selective assistance and related schemes (including regional enterprise grants), consistent with the figures published in "Public Expenditure to 1991-92, A Commentary on the Scotland Programme" for each of the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 is £80 million.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Training

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number entering employment training each month who had received *(a)* one training allowance, *(b)* three training allowances and *(c)* six training allowances, to be given on (i) a national and (ii) an area office basis for the latest available three months.

Mr. Nicholls: Each trainee on employment training can receive only one training allowance in any period.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total funding figures for employment training for *(a)* September 1988, *(b)* December 1988 and *(c)* March 1989 on (i) a national and (ii) an area office basis.

Mr. Nicholls: The total funding figures for employment training are for internal management purposes only.

Between September 1988 and March 1989 the cash limit for employment training nationally, excluding administration costs, was £493·6 million. Figures for the same period for Training Agency area offices were given in my answer to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 21 December at column *332*.

British Drug Houses

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what investigations were carried out by the Health and Safety Executive following the incident at the British Drug Houses' premises in June 1988; when the results of that investigation will be published; and whether he will place a copy of the results in the Library.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) carried out a full investigation following the incident at the British Drug Houses' premises in June 1988. I will send the hon. Gentleman a copy of the results of the investigation which were published and publicised by HSE at a press conference held on 17 October 1988.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many times since 1979 the factory inspectorate has visited the British Drug Houses' premises in Poole, Dorset for the purpose of planned preventive inspections.

Mr. Nicholls: Since 1979, the number of planned preventive inspections paid to British Drug Houses Ltd. premises in Poole, Dorset by Health and Safety Executive inspectors are as follows:

Number of preventive inspections

Address	*Number*
British Drug Houses Ltd., No. 1 Site, West Quay Road, Poole	6
British Drug Houses Ltd., Nos. 2 & 3 sites, West Quay Road, Poole	9
British Drug Houses Ltd., Broom Road, Poole	4

YTS

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what reports have been published by the traininng standards advisory service, since its inception, into *(a)* quality of training on YTS and *(b)* health and safety standards on YTS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The information is in the Library. The training standards advisory service has issued 748 reports on the quality of training in individual YTS schemes to approved training organisations and Training Agency area and regional offices since the service began its formal programme of inspections in April 1987. The annual report of the training standards advisory service for 1987-88 summarised the main findings from inspections carried out by the service during its first year of operation. A copy has been placed in the Library.

The training standards advisory service has not published any reports on health and safety standards in YTS schemes.

Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the procedures for monitoring for spongiform encephalopathy workers in slaughterhouses, veterinarians and others who come into contact with untreated animal products in the course of their work.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive is not operating separate procedures for monitoring spongiform encephalopathy and there have been no reported cases of this disease.

Wages Councils

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now give details of the responses to the 1988 consultation document on wages councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Counting replies, there were 394 responses to the consultation document on wages councils. The positions of respondents were as follows:

	For abolition	*Against abolition*	*Inconclusive*
Organisations			
Employer organisations with seats on Wages Councils	23(a)	20	3
Other employer organisations	14(b)	6	2
Worker organisation with seats on Wages Councils	—	9	—
Other worker organisations	—	26	1
Other organisations	3	130	—
Individuals (d)			
Individual employers on Wages Council industries	36(c)	12	—
Individual workers in Wages Council industries	—	7	—
Other individuals	4	98	—

The replies from employer organisations with seats on wages councils show a marked change of view since the 1985 consultations, when the majority wanted the system retained. In each of the six largest wages councils, which embrace 94 per cent. of workers covered by the system, a majority of the employer bodies represented want the councils abolished. Replies from both organisations and individuals raise a number of important points which my right hon. Friend intends to consider in detail before making a final decision on the councils' future later this year.

(a) Includes two respondents who support abolition in the absence of other preferred changes.
(b) Includes three respondents who support abolition in the absence of other preferred changes.
(c) Includes seven respondents who support abolition in the absence of other preferred changes.
(d) Replies with more than one signatory counted as single responses.

Voluntary Unemployment (Disqualification)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will organise a survey, on a similar but wider basis than that conducted by his Department in November 1986, into voluntary unemployment dis-qualifications to give national, and regional or district, statistics following the increase of the maximum period of disqualifications to 26 weeks.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* I have been asked to reply.

A survey is currently being carried out to monitor the effects of increasing to 26 weeks the maximum period of disqualification for unemployment benefit in cases of voluntary unemployment. It will cover the first three months of 1989 and will provide information on the numbers and lengths of disqualifications imposed both nationally and regionally. In addition an independent agency has been commissioned to explore the impact of the increased maximum period of disqualification on decisions about leaving or taking work as well as the effects on the circumstances of those who are disqualified. We expect the results, which will be published, to be available in the summer.

ENERGY

Pluto Reactor

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the reason for the UKAEA shutting down its Pluto reactor at the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell; and what is the present estimated cost of decommissioning the reactor.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Pluto materials testing reactor at Harwell will be closed at the end of March 1990 because the prospects of business beyond the end of the

forthcoming financial year are judged to be insufficient to maintain the operation of two materials testing reactors. The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority has said that depending on customer requirements it expects that the other materials testing reactor—Dido—will continue in operation for several years more.

The full programme of decommissioning Pluto is being evaluated by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. The planning and execution of the decommissioning programme will be carried out in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive.

Calder Hall and Chapelcross

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will direct the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. to publish in full the feasibility study currently being undertaken into the development of new nuclear generating plant at Calder hall and Chapelcross when it is completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The feasibility study is a commercial document and publication will be a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc.

Offshore Installations

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will make a statement on the exercise of his statutory obligations in respect of drilling platforms which are *(a)* parked in United Kingdom waters but not operating or *(b)* under tow between operating sites;

(2) at what stage in their operations his Department exercises its statutory responsibility in respect of offshore installations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department exercises its responsibilities in respect of offshore installations involved in the exploration and exploitation of mineral resources in United Kingdom-controlled waters at all stages from project design to installation abandonment.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list the medical supplies which are required to be carried by offshore installations; and what steps his Department takes to ensure that operators comply with requirements;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to define the duties of operators of offshore installations to employ medically qualified personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Offshore Installations (Occupational Safety, Health and Welfare) Regulations 1976 require the provision of specified medical stores and medically trained persons on offshore installations. These regulations are kept under continuous review to ensure that they are properly up to-date. My inspectors enforce the requirements of these regulations during offshore inspections.

Electricity Supply Industry

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the required rate of return from new capital investment on the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 17 March 1989 at column *389*.

HEALTH

Abortion

8. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement outlining the process for obtaining consent for a general anaesthetic in order for an abortion to be performed on a girl aged under 16 years, if that girl has asked that her parents are not informed.

Mr. Freeman: In the circumstances described, written consent may be obtained from the patient herself if, in the judgment of the doctor concerned, it is in her best medical interest and she has sufficient maturity and understanding to appreciate what is involved.

14. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to meet representatives of the Islamic Medical Association, the Caring Professions Concern, or the Catholic Doctors Guild to discuss the working of the conscience clause of the Abortion Act 1967.

Mr. Freeman: No requests for a meeting have been received.

15. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last paid an official visit to *(a)* a National Health Service abortion centre and *(b)* a private abortion centre; and what was the purpose of that visit.

Mr. Freeman: My colleagues and I make frequent visits to NHS and private hospitals for various purposes. To date, three visits to NHS hospitals which carry out abortions took place this month.

The most recent ministerial visit to a private hospital which is also approved under the Abortion Act 1967, took place in July 1988 and was by way of a general interest visit to see the hospital and the facilities offered.

61. **Mr. Ken Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the most common technique used in the performing of late abortions in private clinics; and what this technique involves.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friends the Members for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) and for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) on 24 January at column *531*.

71. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement outlining the specific action which has so far been taken to implement the recommendations of the 1973 Select Committee on abortion.

Mr. Freeman: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the reports of the Lane committee on the working of the Abortion Act in 1974 and of the Select Committee on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill in 1975 and 1976. Most of their recommendations have been implemented by administrative means,. The operation of the 1967 Act continues to be monitored closely.

73. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to introduce new regulations or legislation to curb the growing level of advertising by abortion charities in newspapers.

Mr. Freeman: All advertisements placed by registered pregnancy advice bureaux are subject to the approval of the Secretary of State and further controls are not considered necessary at this time.

Public Health (Report)

16. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations contained in the Chief Medical Officer's report on public health in England.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government announced last July, that we accepted the principle of a greater commitment to the public health advanced by the Chief Medical Officer's report on "Public Health in England" and that we would be taking a number of steps to carry forward its recommendations.

These include:

- issuing general advice to health authorities on the main recommendations affecting their responsibilities including the preparation of annual reports and reviews of staffing
- the establishment of a central health monitoring unit
- additional funding for an expansion of the epidemiological function of the communicable disease surveillance centre
- initial work on updating the current law on infectious disease control.

HM Inspector of Anatomy

17. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the duties of Her Majesty's inspector of anatomy.

Mr. Mellor: Under the Anatomy Act 1984, Her Majesty's inspector of anatomy inspects and authorises licences for premises where anatomical examination is to be carried out. He licences teachers of anatomy, undertakes regular visits and site inspections to ensure that the conditions are being carried out.

"Working for Patients"

18. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision he is making under the proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients" for circumstances where a general practitioner overspends on his or her drug budget.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: FPCs will discuss with practices concerned any significant divergence from planned spending. Where there is a reasonable explanation for the variation the FPC will be expected to accept and accommodate it within its overall budget. If no satisfactory explanation for apparent overspending can be found the FPC will discuss with the practice what remedial action is necessary. Under no circumstances will any practice ever be required to withhold necessary medicine from a patient.

19. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the implications of the proposals contained in the White Paper "Working for Patients" for the aims of his policy of care in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our policy aims in the community care field remain unaltered—to promote the development of community services so that people can return to, or remain in the community and live independently wherever this is best for them. We are currently giving active consideration to the future organisation and management of community care following Sir Roy Griffiths' report and will ensure that our conclusions are consistent with our proposals in "Working for Patients".

22. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further responses he has received to the recent White Paper on the future of the National Health Service, "Working for Patients."

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) earlier today.

32. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision is to be made for the proper recruitment and training of staff and the additional cost for establishing the information technology and accountancy needed to implement the proposals contained in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: It will be the responsibility of health authorities to decide what additional manpower they will need. There will be an even greater need for management training and development of staff. The Health Service Executive together with the NHSTA will be working closely with the service on these activities which still need to be improved further in the NHS quite apart from the implications of the White Paper.

36. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is intended that long-stay hospital care for elderly people will be included in the essential core services to be provided by National Health Service hospital trusts under proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: "Core services" is not intended to be a description of essential services but of those services of any kind which must be provided locally. In other words, as was made clear in the White Paper, core services will include all those hospital and community-based services which need to be provided on a local basis on grounds of practicability. But where patients may wish to choose the location of their treatment, districts will—under the new arrangements—be able to buy services in a more flexible way. Some long-stay care for elderly people might fall into either category. It will be for each district to consider, in the light of local circumstances, what its core services should be. It will be the responsibility of every district health authority to ensure that its population has access to a comprehensive range of services.

37. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received from organisations representing Health Service workers or patients supporting the proposals in his White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As yet, we have received only a few such representations.

44. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision he is making for doctors who choose to operate a practice budget, as proposed in the White Paper "Working for Patients" to treat patients where their budget is overspent.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Budget-holding practices will be expected to stay within the agreed budget. But treatment must be available to patients and no circumstances will ever arise in which a practice is required to withhold necessary treatment or medicine from any patient.

Practices will be permitted to overspend in any one year by up to 5 per cent. of budget, on the basis that a corresponding reduction is made in the budget for the following year. Where overspend is due to genuine clinical needs or the changed circumstances of the practice, the practice would opt for a budgetary review. If a practice consistently overspends by more than 5 per cent. the sanction will be that it may lose the right to have a budget.

45. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the implications for patient choice of the proposals in the White Paper, "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A fundamental aim of the White Paper proposals is to make the Health Service more responsive to the needs of patients. We will stimulate better services to patients by encouraging suitable hospitals to apply for self-governing status, by delegating responsibility to local level and by allowing money for patients' treatment to cross administrative borders. General practitioners will be able to improve the service they offer their patients by applying for their own budgets. Patients will be able to choose their general practitioners on the basis of the services they offer. We intend to raise the performance of all hospitals and general practitioners to that of the best. The reformed Health Service will offer a better quality of service and better value for money.

46. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received regarding his White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) earlier today.

49. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received from general practitioners on the documents "Promoting Better Health" and "Working for Patients".

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have recently received a considerable number of representations from individual GPs and their representative organisations on the documents "Promoting Better Health" and "Working for Patients". These have been in person, in writing and through the helpline set up to answer GPs' queries arising from the document "General Practice in the NHS—A New Contract" which set out in more detail our plans for the family doctor service.

62. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the implications of the proposals in his White Paper, "Working for Patients", for waiting lists.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our proposals in the White Paper "Working for Patients" are designed to ensure that all parts of the Health Service offer the best possible service to patients. The better value for money obtained under the new system will in itself ensure an increase in levels of patient care and reduce pressure on waiting lists. To reduce waiting times for non-urgent treatment, the Government are to introduce a scheme under which 100 extra consultants can be appointed over the next three years. We are also changing the funding system used by the Health Service to make sure that patients can receive treatment in hospitals where waiting lists are shortest if they wish.

69. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from the British Medical Association on "Working for Patients"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have yet to receive a formal response from the British Medical Association to the White Paper proposals.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has given consideration to introducing the White Paper reforms initially on a pilot basis in areas of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We gave very thorough consideration to the proposals contained in the White Paper "Working for Patients" during the year in which we carried out a detailed review of the Health Service. I am quite satisfied that the NHS needs reform on the lines proposed to improve its management and to improve the service to patients. Postponing full implementation would lead to uncertainty and anxiety in the Health Service without producing the benefits for patients and staff that will flow from the early introduction of the planned reforms.

Operations (Private Hospitals)

20. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many operations in the London area were contracted out to private hospitals and at what cost during 1988.

Mr. Mellor: The latest year for which information is available is 1986. In that year 1,005 patients received surgical treatment under contractual arrangements made between the Thames regions and the private sector. 1987 data will be available later this year.

Total expenditure on all contractual arrangements made by the Thames regions in 1986-87 was £19·5 million, and in 1987-88 £22·1 million. Comparable information on expenditure is not recorded by specialty.

Treatment Costs

21. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to reduce the variations in cost of treatment between different health districts.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department publishes Health Service indicators annually. These include information on the average cost per acute inpatient case standardised for broad specialty mix. There may be good reasons (such as differences in case-mix not yet identifiable in the statistics) for variations in unit costs. But publication of these variations is intended to prompt action by district health authorities to eliminate unnecessary expenditure. The proposals in "Working for Patients" will provide greater incentives by encouraging both competition and greater regard to cost-effectiveness.

Self-governing Hospitals

23. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how regional health authorities will be required to consult with the local community on proposals for hospitals seeking self-governing status.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Regional health authorities will publicise fully-developed proposals in the relevant local or

regional media as well as consulting community health councils. They will provide details of the application on request to members of the local community and pass on any responses to me so that I can take them into account in making my decision on the application.

Nurses (Pay)

24. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the change in nurses' pay in *(a)* 1975-76 and *(b)* the latest available year.

Mr. Mellor: Nurses received an average pay increase of 8 per cent. in 1975-76, compared with 17·9 per cent. last year. After allowing for inflation nurses pay fell by 4·3 per cent. in 1975-76 compared with an increase of 12·5 per cent. last year. Nurses will get a further average increase of 6·8 per cent. from 1 April.

Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme

25. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to change the pharmaceutical price regulation scheme.

Mr. Mellor: I have no such plans at present.

General Practitioners (Contracts)

26. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the effect will be of the proposed general practitioners' contracts on *(a)* preventive medicine and *(b)* patient service.

60. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the effects of the proposed general practitioners' contracts on *(a)* patient service and *(b)* preventive medicine.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The proposals in the report "General Practice in the National Health Service—A New Contract", which I have sent to all GPs, are intended to improve the quality of the family doctor service, and to place greater emphasis on health promotion and the prevention of ill-health. Specific changes which will improve services to patients include regular check-ups, particularly for children and people aged over 75, more health promotion clinics, more minor surgery in the GP's premises to save patients having to attend hospital and the extension of practice teams to include not only practice nurses, but also counsellors, chiropodists, physiotherapists and other health professionals.

As to preventive care, GPs will be encouraged to optimise cover for childhood immunisation and screening for cervical cancer. This will be achieved through target payments to which GPs will be entitled on reaching certain targets.

National Health Service (Contracting Out)

27. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the savings made in the last available year from the contracting out of services within the National Health Service.

Mr. Freeman: Up to 1987-88 information collected centrally on competitive tendering related only to domestic, catering and laundry services. In the financial year 1987-88, authorities reported new cost improvement savings for these services of £35·4 million. Since 1984-85, health authorities have achieved total savings worth over £100 million for the three services.

For 1988-89, authorities planned cost improvement savings for competitive tendering of all services total £43·2 million. The outcome of these plans will be available later this year.

National Health Service (Capital Projects)

28. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a statement on the value of new capital projects for the National Health Service in the West Hertfordshire constituency where approval has been given since May 1979.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1979 the Department has approved in principle three phases of development at Hemel Hempstead general hospital. The capital cost of each phase at approval in principle stage was for phase 1: £5·9 million; for phase 2: £3·9 million; and for phase 3: £12·4 million.

Treatment and Prevention

29. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his policy regarding the balance to be sought between treatment and prevention at all levels of the Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: We are as much concerned to prevent ill-health and promote good health as we are to ensure that treatment is available to all who fall ill. Not all illness is preventable. Where it is, however, we seek to ensure that the appropriate preventive services are provided (vaccination and immunisation, for example) or that steps are taken to give people the best possible advice on how to look after their health. It is not possible, or indeed appropriate, to try to quantify the balance between preventive and curative activity. Nor is it always possible to differentiate between them. A doctor treating a patient, for example, might well take the opportunity to offer advice about changing to a healthier lifestyle and I would expect any patient recovering from a heart attack to be given advice about steps to try to prevent a recurrence. Nevertheless, it must always be better to try to prevent ill health in the first place than to have to cure, or care for it later. Prevention of ill health and promotion of good health are therefore major priorities for the Government and the Health Service.

Hospital Waiting Lists

30. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about recent changes in hospital waiting lists in the Norwich health authority area.

Mr. Mellor: At September 1988 the in-patient waiting list for the Norwich health authority area stood at 9,995, as against 9,041 at March 1988.

Norwich is one of 22 districts with particular waiting problems which have been selected for special targeted help in 1989-90. Its waiting lists are to be investigated by a management team, and if the team identifies the need for an injection of funds the district will be able to apply for a special allocation from the £6 million reserved from the waiting list fund. Norwich has already received over

£500,000 from the fund in 1987-88 and 1988-89, and the East Anglian regional health authority plans to make further allocations to the district next year.

Treatment (Waiting Times)

31. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will introduce as part of his National Health Service reform proposals targets for minimum waiting times for treatment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Regional health authorities have been asked, as part of the waiting list initiative, to agree with their districts targets for the reduction of waiting time. They are also developing with districts local statements of policy on out-patient and in-patient waiting times. These will eventually include specific targets, for example maximum wait, for specific medical conditions, including the most common waiting list conditions.

The White Paper "Working for Patients" includes a number of proposals designed to reduce waiting time for treatment. We do not, however, propose to set targets from the centre. These are best developed locally, to reflect local needs, demands and resources.

Cervical Cancer Screening

33. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any improvements have been made to the time in which results of cervical cancer screening are issued.

Mr. Mellor: We have asked district health authorities to ensure that laboratories report the results of cervical smears to the smear-taker within one month. We are informed on a quarterly basis of districts not meeting this target. In December 1988, 43 districts reported backlogs exceeding one month's work, compared with 54 in September. Among these districts the average length of backlog in December was 6·93 weeks, as against seven weeks in September. We do not have information on processing times in districts which do meet the one-month target.

Preventive Medicine

35. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement outlining his Department's latest initiatives in the field of preventive medicine.

Mr. Mellor: The Government recognise the essential role of preventive medicine in sustaining and improving people's health and have recently given priority to major initiatives such as the introduction and promotion of the MMR vaccine, the implementation of screening programmes for breast and cervical cancer and important health education campaigns on AIDS, drug abuse and coronary heart disease. We intend to develop these areas of work further and have just announced major new initiatives to combat alcohol misuse and teenage smoking, which we hope to halve by 1993, and on prevention of cancer in conjunction with the European Year of Information on Cancer.

Old Age Psychiatry

38. **Sir David Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what response he plans to make to the proposal of the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Psychiatrists that old age psychiatry should be officially recognised as a specialty within psychiatry, and that every health district should include a specialised service for the psychiatry of old age.

Mr. Freeman: I am pleased to be able to report that the Department has accepted the Royal College of Psychiatrist's formal request for recognition of the psychiatry of old age as a specialty. An important benefit will be that more specific information relating to the new specialty can be collected and arrangements for this are well in hand. The development of specialised services in each district is a key priority in our policy to provide a comprehensive range of services for the elderly mentally ill.

Health Inequalities

39. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his policy towards reducing health inequalities in different geographical areas.

Mr. Freeman: The principles advanced in the report "Public Health in England" of a greater commitment to improving public health, have been accepted. Last December, guidance was issued to health authorities about their responsibilities to improve the health of their populations, including prevention, surveillance and control of communicable disease. The Government seek to maintain the general improvements in the health of the nation and resources available next year will be equivalent to a cash increase of £2 billion which is 5 per cent. in real terms.

GPs (Rural Areas)

41. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has to protect the income of general practitioners in rural areas.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My proposals for changes to the family doctors' remuneration system are set out in the report "General Practice in the National Health Service —A New Contract". These proposals include a rural areas supplement to the basic practice allowance designed to recognise the particular nature of practice in sparsely populated rural areas and to ensure that GPs practising in these areas are not unduly disadvantaged by the nature of the area in which they work.

51. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will assess the likely implications for general practitioners in rural areas of his proposed changes to general practitioners' contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government's proposals for linking family doctors' pay more closely to the range and quality of their services to patients are set out in the report "General Practice in the National Health Service—A New Contract", which I have sent to all GPs. The implications for rural practice are fully considered in that report. My proposals include a rural areas supplement to the basic practice allowance which is designed to recognise the particular nature of practice in sparsely populated rural areas and to ensure that GPs practising in such areas are not unduly disadvantaged by the nature of the area in which they work.

Primary Health Care

42. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has held with the health authorities concerning primary health care.

Mr. Mellor: Following publication of "Primary Health Care—An Agenda for Discussion" in April 1986, Health Ministers chaired 12 public consultation meetings in different parts of the country. Health Authorities were represented at a number of meetings. Full account was taken of the views expressed during the consultation process in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" which was published in November 1987. Ministers also discussed their proposals with the chairmen of all 90 family practitioner committees in England at a series of meetings in April and May 1988. In addition officials have held regular meetings with individual family practitioner committees and with representatives of the Society of Family Practitioner Committees and the Society of Administrators, Family Practitioner Services.

NHS Expenditure

43. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the change in spending on the National Health Service in 1976-77; and what was the change in the latest available year.

Mr. Freeman: In 1976-77 gross spending on the NHS in England rose by £638 million; an increase of about 1 per cent. in real terms. In 1989-90 gross spending is planned to increase by £1,685 million compared with estimated outturn in 1988-89. In addition health authorities will retain savings of nearly £300 million from a reduction in the employers' superannuation contributions. New cost improvements are expected to provide around a further £150 million. Taken together the additional resources available to the NHS in 1989-90 will be equivalent to a real terms increase of more than 5 per cent. over 1988-89.

Nurses

47. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses there were *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: The number of nursing and midwifery staff (including agency staff) employed in the NHS in England at 30 September 1979 and 1987 were 358,400 and 404,000 whole-time equivalents respectively.

AIDS

48. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will place in the Library copies of the reports published as a result of the AIDS (Control) Act.

Mr. Mellor: No. Each regional and district health authority in England is required by the Act to publish reports annually. For information on action being taken in particular regions or districts, hon. Members may like to consult the authorities concerned.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much Government funding has been allocated to research on AIDS in 1986 and each year since; how much he expects to allocate in the next two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Government have allocated the following sums for AIDS research since 1986:

	£ million
1986-87	2·46
1987-88	10·36
1988-89	13·98

So far £14·5 million has been made available for AIDS research for 1989-90, but not all Government Departments and agencies involved in the AIDS research effort have finalised their contributions. Comparable estimates for 1990-91 are not yet available.

Food and Health

50. **Mr. Bright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the Government's response to recent public concern on food and health.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government have introduced a range of measures designed to reduce the risk of food contamination and, with industry, is continuing to consider what further action is necessary.

Both primary and secondary legislation have been under review. I recently announced my intention to consult shortly on changes in the food hygiene regulations, and the Government are presently considering the results of consultation on a wide-ranging review of the Food Act.

We have recently announced the establishment of a committee on food safety, under the chairmanship of Sir Mark Richmond, to advise Ministers on matters relating to the microbiological safety of food.

We have also taken steps, where appropriate, to reassure the public.

"Putting Patients First"

52. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that the proposals contained in the White Paper "Putting Patients First" are understood by members of the public.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My ministerial colleagues and I are taking every opportunity to publicise the review and to ensure that the public fully understands its proposals. We plan to undertake a series of visits and speaking engagements, throughout the country. In addition, a leaflet setting out our main proposals is readily available in post offices, doctors' surgeries, pharmacies and similar outlets.

Residential Care Establishments

53. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many National Health Service establishments have been closed on grounds of unsuitability for residential care for the elderly or handicapped; and what information he has on their subsequent disposal.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

NHS Estate

54. **Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate of the value of *(a)* total National Health Service estate and *(b)* the land and property owned by the National Health Service that is surplus to requirements.

Mr. Freeman: The latest estimates of the value of the NHS estate, as at June 1987, have been placed in the Library. The document is a summary of the valuation of all property including that which is surplus. The realisable value of a specific site is obtained when a sale is in prospect.

Aborted Babies (Organ Sales)

55. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to introduce legislation to ban the sale of organs from living or dead aborted babies.

Mr. Freeman: We are still considering legislation to prohibit the sale of organs for transplantation. The Polkinghorne committee is currently reviewing the existing code of practice about the use of foetuses and foetal tissue for research in the light of recent developments to the field of human tissue transplantation and other relevant research.

Capital Programmes

57. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the increase or decrease in spending on capital programmes between *(a)* 1975 and 1979 and *(b)* the last four available years.

Mr. Freeman: The cash expenditure by health authorities in England on capital programmes rose from £331·71 million in 1975-76 to £367·35 million in 1978-79, an increase of 10·7 per cent. over the period. The corresponding figures for 1984-85 to 1987-88 show a rise of 25·9 per cent. from £795·40 million (1984-85) to £1,001·44 million (1987-88).

Hospital Trusts

58. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from Calderdale health authority concerning the setting up of a hospital trust.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: None, so far.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that the flexibility proposed in pay negotiations for hospital trusts will be limited to supplementary payments in excess of agreed national salary levels within the health service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. Hospital trusts will be free to follow national pay agreements or to adopt partly or wholly different arrangements.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what procedures he will provide to ensure that the standards of medical and clinical care are maintained in hospitals following the new flexibilities and opportunities provided by the creation of hospital trusts and the creation of practice budgets for some general practitioners' practices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government have proposed in its White Paper "Working for Patients" that a framework of quality control known as medical audit should be established in all hospitals and GP practices in the NHS. Medical audit means that doctors keep careful records of how patients are diagnosed and treated and how successful the treatment is. The results can then be considered by other doctors to see if satisfactory clinical standards are being maintained and to advise on possible improvements.

The Government's proposals for medical audit as set out in working paper No. 6 are therefore designed precisely to ensure that the standards of medical and clinical care are maintained. They apply to all hospitals, both self-governing and health authority managed, and to all general practices including those managing practice budgets.

Rural Maternity Units

59. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a statement on the Government's policy regarding rural maternity units.

Mr. Mellor: The Government's principal objective in maternity and neonatal care is to improve the services, and in consequence ensure the safety of mothers and their babies. The second report of the maternity services advisory committee (MSAC), which we have commended to health authorities, although recognising that a woman should have a choice of where her baby is to be born, encourages delivery in a maternity unit where emergency facilities are readily available. It is for health authorities to determine the level and pattern of services, taking into account their detailed knowledge of the needs of local communities.

Hospices

63. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money was allocated by his Department in 1988 to hospice projects.

Mr. Freeman: Most NHS funding for local hospice projects is from health authorities. However, in the current financial year, the Government have provided:

(i) an additional £5·5 million for health authorities towards the extra cost of the nurses' pay award as it affects their contractual and other longstanding arrangements with independent and mainly charitable hospitals and hospices; about a quarter of this sum was for hospices;

(ii) a grant of £400,000 to "Help the Hospices" for disbursement to individual hospice projects;

(iii) grants of £170,000 to the London Lighthouse and of £256,000 to the Mildmay Mission Hospital, which provide in-patient hospice units for the care of people with AIDS.

Hospital Doctors and Consultants (Discipline)

64. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he envisages any early change in the procedure to deal with alleged disciplinary misdemeanours by hospital doctors or consultants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: NHS review working paper 7 "NHS Consultants: Appointments, Contracts and Distinction Awards" states the Government's intention to start negotiations with the profession on the basis of proposals contained in the report of the joint working party which examined hospital and community doctors' and dentists' disciplinary procedures. The report, which was completed last year, contains a number of useful recommendations including a new procedure for dealing with cases of professional misconduct and incompetence

which warrant disciplinary action short of dismissal and improvements both to existing disciplinary procedures and the system of appeals to me against dismissal. The working paper makes it clear that our aim is to introduce new arrangements by the end of the year at the latest.

Medical Technicians and Physicists

65. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if he will make a statement about the recruitment and retention of medical technicians and medical physicists in the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 24 January to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) at column *866*.

Down's Syndrome

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current incidence of Down's syndrome; and what it was *(a)* 10 years and *(b)* 20 years ago.

66. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the incidence of Down's syndrome in newborn infants in *(a)* the latest year for which figures are available, *(b)* 10 years previously and *(c)* 20 years previously.

Mr. Freeman: The information is shown in the table.

Figures are derived from a voluntary system of notification which collects information on cases reported at birth or up to seven days therafter. It is, therefore, likely to be an incomplete measure of the total number of babies affected.

Number of babies born with Down's syndrome and rate per 10,000 total and live births in England and Wales for 1967, 1977 and 1987

Year	All births		Live births	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
1967	613	7·3	594	7·1
1977	425	7·4	413	7·3
1987	450	6·6	443	6·5

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list those hospitals which provide specialist services for the therapeutic and remedial treatment of Down's syndrome;

(2) what recent steps have been taken by his Department to ensure that therapeutic as well as remedial treatment is available for Down's syndrome.

Mr. Freeman: No information is available centrally about hospitals providing such specialist services and no action has been taken by the Department to make treatment available specifically for Down's syndrome. Health care and treatment for people with a mental handicap and associated physical conditions caused by Down's syndrome is provided by the mental handicap and generic services in hospitals and in the community, including primary care services. When specialist care or treatment is required for an acute or chronic condition referral is arranged in the usual way. The Department has been funding research on Down's syndrome, and other departmentally-funded research in the field of mental handicap is also relevant to people with Down's syndrome.

Waiting Lists

67. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to reduce the variations in waiting lists between different health districts.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The proposals in our White Paper "Working for Patients" will help reduce the variations in waiting times between health authorities. 100 extra consultants will be appointed over the next three years, and these will be targeted at the districts and specialities where waiting times are the longest. We will also change the funding system used by the health service to enable patients to receive treatment in hospitals where the wait is shortest if they wish.

We have made £86 million available over three years through our waiting list fund to enable hundreds of thousands of extra patients to be treated from the waiting lists. Next year some £6 million of the fund will be used to give special targeted help to districts with particular waiting problems.

Northern Regional Health Authority

68. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Northern regional health authority.

Mr. Mellor: On 17 May at the next of the regular meetings my right hon. and learned Friend holds with all regional chairmen.

Medical Ethical Committees

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the work of medical ethical committees.

Mr. Freeman: Medical ethics are a matter for the professions concerned. Some medical bodies have established medical ethical committees to advise their members—these are outside the remit of the Department of Health.

Within the National Health Service each health authority is required to have a research ethics committee to supervise the ethics of clinical research investigations. The work of these committees is explained in health circular HSC (IS) 153, which is available in the Library.

Health Authorities (Membership)

72. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received opposing his proposals to remove local government representatives from health authority membership.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: A few. We have also received letters which positively support our proposals.

Child Abuse

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his Department's research effort on the sexual abuse of children.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 27 January at columns *795-98*. Within the Department's research programme child protection was made a priority theme in 1988-89. This reflects the need for research into

child abuse and child sexual abuse. The Department, in collaboration with other Government Departments, is putting together a full and effective programme of child protection research. Government-funded research on child abuse including child sexual abuse has been commissioned and is being planned by the Scottish Office, the Department of Health and Social Services (Northern Ireland), the Economic and Social Research Council and is under consideration by the Home Office.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received a copy of the Children's Society publication entitled "Working with Sexually Abused Children;" and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. I am sure that the resource pack from the Children's Society will prove to be a helpful tool for professionals working with children who have been or may have been sexually abused.

Weil's Disease

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his answer of 10 February to the hon. Member for Stoke on Trent North, *Official Report*, column *851*, why members of angling organisations are not issued with warning leaflets alerting them to be vigilant about Weil's disease.

Mr. Freeman: The leaflets referred to in my earlier reply are also available to anglers in areas where there is risk of Weil's disease.

Alcohol and Drug Addicts

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure the continuance of the services for alcohol and drug addicts provided by Accept.

Mr. Freeman: The funding of local services is a matter for the local statutory authorities concerned. However, I understand that funding to ensure the continuance of Accept's activities is being provided by the London regional health authorities who have such services within their regions.

Secure Units

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which regional health authorities provide secure units for people with mental illness or psychiatric disorder and with mental handicap; how many beds are now open in each unit; and how many further units or beds are firmly planned.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 16 March at columns *327-30*. The only regional secure unit specifically for mentally handicapped people is the Sycamores unit at Borocourt hospital, Reading.

Pharmaceutical Imports

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to require the inspection of pharmaceutical wholesaling establishments supplying the National Health Service with parallel imports, in those countries which are not a party to the pharmaceutical inspection convention.

Mr. Mellor: No. Arrangements for inspection of pharmaceutical wholesalers in other member states are a matter for the competent authorities in such states.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to seek concerted action by the United Kingdom's European Community partners in relation to recent problems associated with an unlicensed counterfeit medicine imported into the United Kingdom from Greece.

Mr. Mellor: The representatives of the drug regulatory agencies in the European Community last week affirmed their commitment to inform each other without delay of any incident involving counterfeit materials. The United Kingdom has requested a meeting of Community experts to discuss aspects of the EC parallel importing scheme and this will include counterfeiting

Toxoplasmosis

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he proposes to set up a national screening service for pregnant women for congenital toxoplasmosis.

Mr. Mellor: As with other maternal infections the question of toxoplasmosis in pregnancy, including the possibility of screening, is kept under regular review. We are currently seeking the views of experts in this field in order to consider what action may be necessary.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give national figures by district health authority area of cases of congenital toxoplasmosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Congenital toxoplasmosis is not a legally notifiable condition; data on incidence are not therefore available. However, data on deaths occurring where congenital toxoplasmosis[1] has been assigned as the underlying cause of death[2] are available. During the years 1983-87 there were six such deaths registered in England and Wales.

[1] International Classification of Diseases, (ninth revision) 271.2 (part).

[2] Ages 28 days and over from 1986 onwards.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give figures, by district health authority area, of recorded screenings for congenital toxoplasmosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We do not collect this information centrally. A recent survey of toxoplasmosis in pregnancy in west Glamorgan found an overall incidence of maternal infection with toxoplasma of two in 1,000.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement concerning his Department's policy on health education in the prevention of toxoplasmosis with special regard to prevention of the infection of pregnant women.

Mr. Mellor: Hygiene measures can help to prevent infection with toxoplasmosis and are especially important for pregnant women. They include washing hands after working with raw meat and handling cat litter, and cooking all meat thoroughly. Pregnant women should also avoid contact with young kittens. The health education authority's leaflet "You and Your Pet" contains advice on toxoplasmosis and on general hygiene in relation to pets.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his Department's research into a vaccine for toxoplasmosis.

Mr. Mellor: The Department does not itself conduct research into vaccines or other medicines, but is always prepared to consider well-founded proposals. Research in the United States of America into a possible vaccine against toxoplasmosis indicates that its development is a long way off.

Fluoridation

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in which regional health authority areas there has been a reduction in the proportion of children suffering from dental caries over the past five years; and which of these areas officially has fluoridated drinking water.

Mr. Freeman: Surveys of dental caries levels in children were carried out in England in 1983 and in 1985-86. The results, given in the table[1], showed that there was little change between 1983 and 1985-86. In none of the regions is drinking water wholly fluoridated.

Recent studies have shown that fluoridation of water has continued to produce important benefits in those areas where schemes operate over and above the general decline in caries over the last 15 years.

[1] Downer MC "Time trends in dental decay in young children" Health Trends 1989; 21: 7-9.

Table: Dental caries experience of 5-year-old children in England

Survey region(s)	*1983 decayed and filled primary teeth*	*1985-86 decayed and filled primary teeth*
Northern, Yorkshire	1·3	1·6
Mersey, North Western	2·1	2·1
West Midlands	1·9	1·6
Trent, East Anglia	1·5	1·6
South Western, Wessex, Oxford	1·2	1·4
North East Thames, North West Thames	1·7	1·1
South East Thames, South West Thames	1·4	1·1
England	1·6	1·5

Operating Department Assistants

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many operating department assistants are trained each year; and how many operating department assistants leave the National Health Service each year.

Mr. Mellor: We do not hold this information centrally.

Whitley Councils

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has for the replacement of the Whitley councils.

Mr. Mellor: None.

General Practitioners (Contracts)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table similar to those contained in the new contract for general practitioners document, for the income of a general practitioner with a list size of 1,000 using the average number of new referrals, night visits and the age of patients for a list size of 1,000.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Member to the first example in appendix F of "A New Contract" which fits his specification. Copies of this document are available in the Vote Office and the Library.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has made any assessment of the consequences which would result from a large number of general practitioners resigning from the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Obviously, the consequences could be serious but I have no reason to believe that anything of the kind will happen.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing for each of the regions of England how many general practitioners are men and how many are women.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is as follows:

Unrestricted principals England as at 1 October 1987

	Total	*Male*	*Female*
England	24,922	19,718	5,204
Northern	1,584	1,309	275
Yorkshire	1,883	1,534	349
Trent	2,335	1,892	443
East Anglia	1,043	876	167
North West Thames	1,971	1,395	576
North East Thames	1,992	1,522	470
South East Thames	1,933	1,518	415
South West Thames	1,537	1,146	391
Wessex	1,534	1,211	323
Oxford	1,301	1,020	281
South Western	1,869	1,541	328
West Midlands	2,694	2,183	511
Mersey	1,259	982	277
North Western	1,987	1,589	398

Voluntary Sector (Grants)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when voluntary organisations will know the level of section 64 grants for the next financial year.

Mr. Freeman: We have received a large number of applications for new and renewal section 64 grants in 1989-90, the total of which far exceed the resources available. I am currently considering with my ministerial colleagues how resources are to be allocated and I expect to be able to notify organisations of their awards shortly.

Medical Students

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if there are any projected increases in medical student numbers by universities and hospitals in the United Kingdom over the next 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The report of the second advisory committee for medical manpower planning was published

in January 1989. In the light of its conclusions, based on projections for the supply and demand of doctors over the next 20 years, we do not consider immediate action is indicated to alter the current medical school intake in the United Kingdom. The report also recommended that the manpower situation should be kept under review and this we intend to do.

Practice Nurses

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make it his policy to provide the same opportunity for practice nurses to attend locally-based courses as are available for other branches of nursing;

(2) what are the criteria for reimbursing practice nurses for training, and what is his policy on practice nurses receiving the same funding for training as other branches of nursing;

(3) what guidance his Department has given to family practitioner committees regarding the apportioning of funding for courses and the restrictions on eligibility for family practice nurses to obtain training and grants for courses.

Mr. Mellor: Health authorities and family practitioner committees should collaborate locally in making arrangements for meeting the continuing education and training needs of nurses, midwives and health visitors. Under a central initiative in 1988-89, more than 500 places were provided in educational establishments, free of charge to practice nurses, based on the curriculum approved by the four United Kingdom national boards for nursing, midwifery and health visiting. We hope to repeat the arrangements in 1989-90. Depending on the outcome of discussions with the representatives of the medical profession on the changes set out in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health", we propose to permit family practitioner committees to take account of the cost of training practice nurses when allocating resources to GPs for staff and premises from 1 April 1990.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Monklands, West of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *802*, what plans he has to improve public awareness in respect of the integration of mentally handicapped people into local communities.

Mr. Mellor: We are discussing with the voluntary organisation CMH completion of the project that we have funded it to undertake to assess ways of improving public acceptance of people with a mental handicap moving into the community. We shall be considering other steps in the light of this project.

Mentally Ill Patients

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what was the outcome of the recent meeting between his Department and the campaigning group, SANE, in relation to the possibility of setting up a study to monitor mentally ill patients discharged from hospital care.

Mr. Freeman: The proposals made by SANE are under active consideration and we expect to reach a decision shortly.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of staff on duty attached to emergency vehicles for each shift for December 1988 and January 1989 of the London ambulance service.

Mr. Freeman: The figures are as follows:

	Early	*Late*	*Night*
1 December 1988	330	290	182
2 December 1988	324	272	170
3 December 1988	282	260	158
4 December 1988	250	240	158
5 December 1988	322	284	172
6 December 1988	338	284	178
7 December 1988	324	278	166
8 December 1988	318	280	164
9 December 1988	318	282	154
10 December 1988	290	256	150
11 December 1988	254	224	162
12 December 1988	328	286	164
13 December 1988	326	280	164
14 December 1988	320	274	172
15 December 1988	316	286	156
16 December 1988	326	266	156
17 December 1988	274	246	148
18 December 1988	244	234	158
19 December 1988	330	272	166
20 December 1988	328	278	174
21 December 1988	322	282	164
22 December 1988	318	266	174
23 December 1988	316	262	164
24 December 1988	280	244	152
25 December 1988	232	186	172
26 December 1988	306	254	168
27 December 1988	312	272	164
28 December 1988	316	276	156
29 December 1988	318	276	162
30 December 1988	314	286	156
31 December 1988	284	248	[1]140
1 January 1989	238	256	164
2 January 1989	324	296	168
3 January 1989	322	296	168
4 January 1989	322	286	170
5 January 1989	322	294	160
6 January 1989	324	292	166
7 January 1989	294	286	146
8 January 1989	262	252	160
9 January 1989	338	284	162
10 January 1989	336	290	166
11 January 1989	334	292	168
12 January 1989	332	294	170
13 January 1989	324	282	164
14 January 1989	288	270	154
15 January 1989	262	242	174
16 January 1989	328	292	174
17 January 1989	334	294	176
18 January 1989	334	290	172
19 January 1989	332	296	174
20 January 1989	334	290	172
21 January 1989	298	278	164
22 January 1989	256	254	164
23 January 1989	328	304	174
24 January 1989	334	302	170
25 January 1989	324	296	174
26 January 1989	330	294	172
27 January 1989	326	288	164
28 January 1989	302	276	156
29 January 1989	258	256	166
30 January 1989	320	298	170
31 January 1989	334	296	166

[1]Service augmented by 50 St. John Ambulance Staff manning their own vehicles in the vicinity of Trafalgar Square from 20.00 hrs until no longer required.

Artificial Limbs

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ask the disablement services authority to reconsider its directive which limits the supply of spare artificial limbs to certain categories of people; and if he will seek an assessment from the authority of how much money it hopes to save by this new ruling.

Mr. Mellor: These are matters for the Disablement Services Authority, to which the right hon. Member should address this question.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, before the disablement services authority was established *(a)* what was the policy regarding the provision of spare artificial limbs, *(b)* which people were entitled to them and *(c)* what proportion of those entitled had them provided.

Mr. Mellor: Spare artificial limbs were issued only where an artificial limb and appliance centre medical officer could see that there were clinical grounds for the issue.

Benzodiazepine

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has discussed the question of benzodiazepine addiction with his counterparts with other European Community member states.

Mr. Freeman: We have had no such discussions.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to see a reduction in the number estimated to be addicted to benzodiazepines.

Mr. Freeman: There are no precise figures to show the level of benzodiazepine dependence, although recent years have seen a reduction in the number of prescriptions dispensed for these drugs. A number of measures have been taken to tackle the problem of benzodiazepine dependence, including the issue of advice to doctors on the careful use of these drugs, the promotion of alternatives to their use, and the development of services to help those dependent on them.

Dr. Owen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is being undertaken into the best methods of coping with the side-effects and withdrawal symptoms caused by benzodiazepines.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* The main agency through which the Government support medical and related biological research is the Medical Research Council (MRC), which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science. I understand that the MRC is supporting a team at the Institute of Psychiatry, London, which is examining the effects of benzodiazepines on mental function, and exploring ways of helping patients to discontinue this medication.

Drugs

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any limits are placed on the inducements given to doctors by drug companies to persuade them to prescribe particular drugs for their patients.

Mr. Mellor: The pharmaceutical price regulation scheme explicitly excludes gifts and hospitality other than that provided for medical symposia from the costs accepted in the price of NHS medicines.

Dementia

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will publish his best estimates of the total number of people suffering from Alzheimer's disease;

(2) if he will publish his best estimates of the total number of people suffering from dementia.

Mr. Freeman: The information available centrally relates only to admissions to National Health Service mental illness hospitals or units with a main diagnosis of dementia (International Classification of Diseases 290·0, 290·1, 290·2, 290·3, 290·4, 290·8, 290·9). Dementia in Alzheimer's disease is included under these diagnoses. In 1986, the most recent year for which information is available, there were 20,848 admissions with a diagnosis of dementia in its various forms. It is not known what proportion of these admissions are in fact dementia in Alzheimer's disease. The total figure above is not the number of patients suffering from dementia as a patient can be discharged and re-admitted more than once during a year. We do not hold information on the number of patients as opposed to admissions. Also not all sufferers are admitted to a NHS mental illness hospital or unit and so do not appear in official statistics.

Ancillary Workers

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the National Health Service ancillary workers' pay claim.

Mr. Mellor: Since the last time this matter was raised during questions on 1 November 1988 we have received two letters from hon. Members and one from a member of the public.

Psychiatric Patients

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been moved into the community from psychiatric institutions in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The table shows the number of discharges to the community from NHS mental illness hospitals and units in England after a duration of stay of one year or more for the last five years for which information is currently available.

Year	*Number of Discharges*
1982	3,465
1983	3,563
1984	3,928
1985	3,441
1986	3,751

Listeria

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to his answer 20 February, *Official Report*, column *528*, he will provide reference to any information concerning listeria considered during his Department's expert group's appraisal.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 27 February 1989]:* As I said in my answer of 20 February 1989 at column *529* the group considered a wide range of information on the scientific basis of the cook-chill system from a variety of sources. To identify any particular material considered by the group would tend to give that aspect of the group's work undue prominence and would not properly reflect the broad information base available to the members of the group.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether a safe level of listeria monocytogenes in pre-cooked chilled food has been established.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The 1988 World Health Organisation working group indicated that virtually nothing is known about the infectious dose of listeria monocythogenes, although it may be related to host susceptibility. This is why we have given advice to pregnant women and other vulnerable groups to avoid certain soft cheeses, and to reheat thoroughly cook-chilled meals and ready-to-eat poultry. We are also working with the food industry to consider optimal production methods which will reduce the levels of listeria in foods as far as is practicable.

NHS (Agency Staff)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide a breakdown of agency staff employed in the National Health Service; intemising *(a)* what jobs they do, *(b)* what the agencies are paid for their work and *(c)* what comparable payments are made to those same grades employed by the National Health Service.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 3 March 1989]:* A breakdown of agency nursing and midwifery staff and medical and dental staff employed in the National Health Service is shown in the table.

We do not collect figures for other agency staff or information on health authorities' expenditure specifically for agency staff centrally.

It is for authorities at local level to determine with agencies rates of pay. However, the Department has set the following guidelines for nursing and midwifery staff and medical and dental staff respectively:

That authorities pay nurse agencies a maximum calculated on the mean of the appropriate NHS nursing staffs pay scale for the grade plus the agency commission and the employer's national insurance contribution.

Payments to locum medical agencies are currently to be restricted to no more than was being charged at 31 March 1988. Future arrangements are under consideration.

NHS staff in post in England
Agency staff in nursing and midwifery and medical and dental at 30 September 1987
Whole time equivalents[1]

	Number
Nursing	5,900
Midwifery	300
Nursing and midwifery	6,100
Medical and dental[2]	600
Nursing and miwifery[2] Medical and dental[2] (Total)	6,700

Source: Department of Health (SR7) annual censuses of medical and non-medical manpower.

[1] Figures independently rounded to nearest 100 whole-time equivalents.

[2] In previous years medical and dental agency locums were not separately identified.

Directly employed locums are now included in medical and dental staff data.

Electronic Tagging

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is his policy to allow electronic tagging of residents or patients in residential homes and nursing homes or hospitals.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The management of a resident or patient is a matter for the local judgment of those professionally concerned with his or her care.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 22 March 1989

NATIONAL FINANCE

Scotland (Taxation)

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give his best estimate on the most recent information available as to the annual amount of direct and indirect taxation raised in Scotland; and what is the annual total of central Government and local government expenditure there for a similar period.

Mr. Major: For the latest information on identifiable Scottish public expenditure I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) on 25 October 1988 at columns *120-29*. The latest available information on income tax in Scotland for 1986-87 amounts to £3,250 million. In the same year national insurance contributions are estimated to have amounted to £2,121 million, and local authority rates (excluding water rates) paid in Scotland totalled £1,653 million. Figures for remaining major elements of direct taxation and for indirect taxation are not collected on a regional basis.

Family Incomes

Mr. Hind: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the percentage increase in the real take-home pay of a married man with two children on half average male earnings from 1978-79 to 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Real take-home pay for a married man with two children on half average earnings is 23 per cent. higher in 1988-89 than in 1978-79.

Personal Allowances

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the personal allowance for a married man would be if it had been increased in line with earnings in each year since 1979.

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the personal allowance for a married man would be now if increased in line with earnings in each year since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: If personal allowances had been increased in line with the growth in male average earnings since 1978-79, the married man's allowance would be £4,525 in 1989-90.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will visit the Nottingham, North constituency to explain the consequences of his Budget.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit the Nottingham, North constituency.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the community charge is to be liable to value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The community charge will not be subject to value added tax.

Pensions

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those areas of public employment for which there is no funded pension scheme; if he will tabulate the liabilities of current funding by category, type, Ministry and any other appropriate description; and if he will list those industries that have been privatised whose employees now have a funded pension scheme.

Mr. Brooke: The majority of public service schemes —Civil Service, armed forces, judiciary, fire, police—are unfunded and financed on a "pay-as-you-go" basis, although two—the National Health Service and the teachers—are "notionally funded" (that is, in his periodic valuations the Government Actuary creates a notional fund, and calculates whether this is in balance, in surplus, or in deficit). Only the local government superannuation scheme and the parliamentary pension scheme are fully funded, although a number of small non-departmental public bodies (for example, Medical Research Council) also have funded schemes.

The local government superannuation scheme in England and Wales comprises 88 separate funds which are valued by an actuary every five years (three years from 1 April this year). Copies of these valuation reports, which contain estimates of the liabilities, are sent to the Secretary of State for the Environment. The information is not collated centrally and could be produced only at disproportionate cost. In the case of the parliamentary scheme, the liabilities are set out in the Government Actuary's report (House of Commons paper No. 13) based on a valuation at 1 April 1984 and laid before the House in 1986.

Private pension scheme arrangements are a matter for the individual company. However, the principal privatised industries—British Gas, British Telecom, British Airways —had funded schemes before privatisation as well as after.

Interest Rates

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: Interest rates are set at an appropriate level to maintain downward pressure on inflation.

Invisible Trade Balance

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what impact payments to the EEC had on the invisible trade balance in *(a)* December 1988 and *(b)* 1988 as a whole.

Mr. Moore: Invisible trade figures are collected only on a quarterly basis. In the fourth quarter of 1988 the invisible trade balance showed a surplus of £821 million after unusually high net payments to the EEC of £840 million. For 1988 as a whole, net payments to the EEC were £1,442 million and invisible trade recorded a surplus of £5,892 million.

Unitary Tax

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to implement section 812 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988; and if he will make a statement on unitary tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Some two years ago Her Majesty's Government announced that they were prepared to defer initiating action under what is now section 812 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 (previously section 54 of the Finance Act 1985) in recognition of the progress that had been made towards resolving the unitary tax issue. The Government further made it clear that if it became necessary to take action after 31 December 1988, it would not apply to dividends paid on or before that date.

The Government believe that progress has been made in the last two years but that problems remain, in particular the election fee which companies have to pay in order not to be subject to worldwide unitary tax. It proposes to review the situation jointly with the United States Treasury later this year. If it became necessary to take action on or after 31 December 1989 this would not apply to dividends paid on or before that date.

Crown Premises

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contributions will be made in lieu of community charges in respect of Crown premises or persons resident in them.

Mr. Major: There are two circumstances in which contributions will be made in lieu of community charges in respect of Crown premises or persons resident in them.

First, persons who are resident in Crown property which is designated by the Secretary of State will be exempt from the personal community charge and, in Scotland, the personal community water charge. A contribution in lieu of those charges will be made to the local authority by the relevant Government Department or Crown body, which will recover those charges from the residents concerned.

Second, any contribution in lieu of the standard community charge and, in Scotland, the standard community water charge which would otherwise be payable in respect of premises which are occupied by a Government Department or other Crown body will be made to the local authority by the Government Department or Crown body occupying those premises.

Finance Bill

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Finance Bill will be published.

Mr. Major: The Finance Bill will be published on Thursday 13 April.

Private Medical Insurance

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the cost of the average private medical insurance policy with comprehensive cover for *(a)* a pensioner aged over 60 years, *(b)* a pensioner aged over 70 years and *(c)* a pensioner aged over 80 years.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* Information broken down in this way is not available.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make available the estimates used in his calculation of £40 million tax relief for 1989-90 for the private medical insurance premium for the average pensioner;

(2) what is his estimate of the average premium paid for private medical insurance by those aged over 60 years who currently hold private medical insurance policies;

(3) what is his estimate of the proportion of the £40 million set aside for tax relief for private medical insurance that will go to top-rate taxpayers.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* Tax relief on private medical insurance for the over-60s will not be available until 1990-91, when about 330,000 tax units (single people and married couples) aged 60 or above are expected to qualify for tax relief on medical insurance. The average subscription per tax unit is estimated to be about £400. Around one half of the cost of relief is expected to be received by higher-rate taxpayers.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the cost of private medical insurance tax relief if *(a)* 1 million *(b)* 1·2 million *(c)* 1·5 million and *(d)* 2 million qualify for tax relief.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* The cost of relief at the various levels of take-up specified would depend on the type of policies taken out and the marginal tax rate of the payers of the premiums. These would be likely to vary with the level of take-up.

Schedule E

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the numbers of taxpayers who will be affected by his proposals to simplify the assessment of earnings under schedule E; and what proportion are on a marginal rate of 40 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* It is estimated that around half a million taxpayers—mainly directors—will be affected by these proposals and that about 40 per cent. will be higher-rate taxpayers.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the transitional arrangements will be applied to those making a new investment in personal equity plans before 5 April.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* The transitional arrangements for PEPs are contained in the personal equity plan regulations 1989 laid before Parliament on 14 March. Plan managers will be able, if they wish, to operate on the basis of the improved provisions announced in the Budget from 6 April 1989, but where plan managers are unable to adapt their systems to apply the improvements by that time, they have until 31 December 1989 to do so. The new requirement that investment and unit trusts must have 75 per cent. of their investments in United Kingdom equities does not apply until 6 April 1990.

Central Office of Information

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each year from 1984-85 the cost of Central Office of Information services recovered from each client Department.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* Information on departmental publicity expenditure incurred through the Central Office of Information is a matter for departmental Ministers and can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Details of departmental expenditure on publicity for the financial years 1984-85 to 1988-89 were supplied by Ministers in response to questions from the hon. Member and published in the *Official Report* November-December 1986; July 1987; December 1987-January 1988; and March 1989.

Taxi Buses

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to ensure that the taxi buses providing scheduled services in consequence of the recent initiatives on transport policy are exempted from value added tax on the same basis as large public service buses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 21 March 1989]:* The zero-rating of bus fares is limited to vehicles capable of carrying 12 or more passengers, that is, those which are used, in the main, to provide the bulk of mass public transport. The Government have no plans to extend zero-rating to smaller vehicles.

TRANSPORT

Hazardous Substances (Road Transport)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will institute an immediate investigation into *(a)* the carriage of dangerous substances by road, *(b)* the numbers of heavy goods vehicles involved in accidents in 1988-89 and *(c)* the numbers of heavy goods vehicles carrying dangerous loads that were involved in accidents over the last five years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The regulations governing the carriage of these goods by road are regularly reviewed and updated. The figure for accidents in 1988 involving HGVs is not yet available. In 1987 it was 15,107. This is some 18 per cent. lower than 10 years ago.

There were 101 accidents involving vehicles carrying these goods reported to HSE in 1986-87. This was the first year separate records were kept. The comparable figure for 1987-88 was 68.

Trunk Road Schemes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list *(a)* the local authorities that have been appointed to design trunk road schemes valued in excess of £1 million and *(b)* where competition has been invited for the design of such schemes the local authorities which have been invited to submit competitive bids.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since fee competition between consultants was introduced in January 1985, the local authorities listed in the Table have been appointed to design trunk road construction and improvement schemes estimated to cost over £1 million.

Local authority	*Number of schemes*
1. Bedfordshire CC	1
2. Cambridgeshire CC	3
3. Cheshire CC	1
4. Cornwall CC	3
5. Cumbria CC	3
6. Devon CC	1
7. Dorset CC	2
8. Durham CC	1
9. Gloucestershire CC	1
10. Hampshire CC	1
11. Hertfordshire CC	1
12. Humberside CC	1
13. Kent CC	1
14. Norfolk CC	1
15. Northamptonshire CC	2
16. Northumberland CC	1
17. North Yorkshire CC	1
18. Shropshire CC	1
19. Staffordshire CC	2
20. Suffolk CC	2
21. Warwickshire CC	1
22. West Sussex CC	1
23. Wiltshire CC	2

As already explained, local highway authorities are also appointed to design major maintenance schemes costing over £1 million in the areas where the trunk road network is managed by them. They do not bid for either type of work.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's policy on whether the design of trunk road schemes valued in excess of £1 million should be carried out in the public or private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our policy is to allocate the design work for trunk road construction and improvement schemes estimated to cost over £1 million to private sector consultants, through competitive tendering. Exceptionally, such work may be awarded without recourse to competition, to the highway authority in whose area the scheme lies. This is where the authority has already carried out some of the design and allocation to a consultant would involve delay or extra costs; where the project is interlinked with an adjacent local highway authority scheme; or where there is a large amount of traffic management and control which would involve the authority in any event.

The design of major maintenance schemes costing over £1 million is handled by the authority or consultant who is responsible for managing the maintenance of the part of the trunk road network in question. Most of the network is managed by local highway authorities.

British Rail (Disciplinary Procedure)

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the role of British Transport police in matters concerning British Rail's disciplinary procedure.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that the British Transport police have no role in British Rail's disciplinary procedures unless it appears that a criminal offence may be involved.

Nuclear Materials Carriage Flasks

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he received any request for a transport licence for nuclear materials carriage flasks that arrived on the Pacific Sandpiper in Barrow on 16 February.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Transport of all nuclear materials must be made in accordance with national and international regulations. The certificates required to comply with these regulations were issued by my Department for the shipment aboard the Pacific Sandpiper that arrived on 16 February.

Dangerous Freight

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations has he received regarding the transport by road of dangerous freight; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many road accidents have taken place in each of the past five years in which at least one of the vehicles involved was carrying dangerous freight, what casualties were caused; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have received several letters from members of the public, either direct or forwarded by hon. Members. On accident figures, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on 20 March at column *397*.

There were no fatalities, and three casualties caused by the goods being carried in the two years 1986-1988. While not complacent, I regard these figures as representing a good safety record.

Springburn-Bellgrove Railway Crash

Mr. Michael Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he expects to receive the results of the railway inspectorate's report on the Springburn to Bellgrove railway line crash; and if he will be making a statement.

Mr. Portillo The inquiry into the Bellgrove accident is to be held on 19-21 April at the Merchants house of Glasgow, 7 West George street, Glasgow. The chief inspecting officer of railways will be presenting his report to me at the earliest opportunity. I cannot, at this time, give any indication when that will be.

Coach Companies (Service)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to monitor the standards of service offered by National Express Bus Company and other national coach companies, and complaints thereon by customers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The services offered by National Express Bus Company and other coach operators are a matter for their commercial judgment. Any customer complaints can be dealt with by normal consumer protection legislation. Long-distance services were deregulated under the Transport Act 1980, but operators are still subject to the control of PSV operator licensing. PSV drivers are subject to driver licensing and driver hours legislation.

Road Deaths

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, upon what information he based his recent statement that the three main causes of road deaths were drunken drivers, dangerous drivers and motor cyclists.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A comma appeared in the press reports after the word 'drivers'. The point I was making was that the main cause of road deaths are drunk drivers, dangerous drivers and dangerous motor cyclists. We know from coroners' reports that alcohol is a key factor in about a third of road deaths.

Accident causation studies show that human error, resulting in dangerous driving is a prime factor in 70 per cent of accidents and a factor in 95 per cent.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many and what percentage of all road deaths in the latest year for which figures are available involved *(a)* motor cycles, *(b)* dangerous drivers and *(c)* drunken drivers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: *(a)* In 1987 about 17 per cent. of road deaths, 870 out of 5,125, occurred in accidents that involved motor cyclists.

(b) As cause of accident is not collected it is not possible to determine from the available data how many accidents involved dangerous driving.

(c) During 1986, the latest year for which complete drink-drive figures are available, it is estimated that 950 out of the 5,382 road deaths, that is, nearly 18 per cent., occurred in accidents where at least one driver was over the legal alcohol limit. Some of these accidents also involved motor cycles and therefore will be included in the previous figure.

Nuclear Materials

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford, 7 February, *Official Report*, column *613*, he will make it his policy to publish the final version of the review report on the international transport of nuclear materials to coincide with its consideration at the standing advisory group of the International Atomic Energy Agency in April.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The review report is an internal International Atomic Energy Agency document. Publication is therefore a matter for the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the national arrangements involving radioactivity scheme does not apply to emergency procedures involving the rail transport or road transport of spent nuclear fuel.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Emergency procedures to deal specifically with incidents involving nuclear fuel flasks have been provided and are administered by the Central Electricity Generating Board in England and Wales and the South of Scotland electricity board in Scotland.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all rail accidents involving trains carrying spent nuclear fuel, by date and place; and if any radioactivity has been released from any flask or container involved in a rail accident since such transport began.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No incident involving a nuclear fuel flask in transit has led to a release of radioactivity since this traffic was started 30 years ago. From time to time there have been minor incidents, usually involving empty flasks. These are of no radiological significance. The Department does not keep statistics on them.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy at the European Council of Transport Ministers in Brussels on 14 March to propose a study of the safety of road, rail and air transport of plutonium, enriched uranium, tritium and spent nuclear fuel within and from the European Community.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No such study is needed. The transport of radioactive materials is required to comply with international standards laid down by United Nations bodies. The regulations are kept under continuous review.

Research Reactor (Greenwich)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what transport regulations will cover the safety of the moving of the Royal Navy's research reactor at Greenwich royal naval college to Plymouth in 1993.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The movement of the Royal Navy research reactor will be made in full compliance with national and international transport regulations for the safe transport of radioactive materials that apply at the time of the transfer.

A list of the current regulations has been sent to the hon. Member.

Rubbish Disposal at Sea

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, 16 March, *Official Report*, column *287*, what reports he has now received from his marine surveyors concerning the adequacy of arrangements made on ships to ensure compliance with annex V of the Marpol convention prohibiting the disposal into the sea of plastic, synthetic rope and other rubbish.

Mr. Portillo: Garbage generated on board ship can be disposed of either into shore reception facilities or, in the case of non-plastics, can be retained on board for disposal at sea outside prescribed limits. Surveyors have not been asked to report on the arrangements on board ships. The essential point of their inspection is to remind those on board that an offence would be committed if garbage is illegally discharged into the sea; and any arrangements made should be designed to avoid such a discharge.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many reports of alleged infringements of regulations S.I. 1988 No. 2292 and S.I. 2293 relating to garbage and merchant shipping have been investigated by his Department since they came into effect.

Mr. Portillo: No reports have been received of specific instances alleging infringements either under the Prevention of Pollution by Garbage Regulations (1988 No. 2292) or under the Reception Facilities for Garbage Regulations (1988 No. 2293).

Pavement Parking

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to announce proposals to tackle problems of pavement parking.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We hope to do so shortly.

Lindane Container (Loss)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are being taken to recover the container of lindane insecticide lost in the Channel; and what is being done to monitor the situation.

Mr. Portillo: A container containing lindane has been lost in an area of the Channel in which, under a bilateral agreement, the French authorities are responsible for co-ordinating counter-pollution action.

The Department's marine pollution control unit has maintained close contact with the relevant French authorities throughout the incident and has offered United Kingdom assistance to locate and recover the missing container. We have been assured that they have all the resources they need for the time being.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the French authorities are taking samples of water, sediments and fish.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what objectives he has given Mr. Newton on taking up his post as chairman of London Regional Transport.

Mr. Paul Channon: I have today sent the following letter to Mr. Newton setting his initial remit.

You take up your position at a time when London Regional Transport faces a number of major challenges.

First, and the highest priority, is to carry through the actions needed following Mr. Fennell's report on the King's Cross tragedy. A vigorous start has already been made on this vital task.

Second, there is a need to provide for the projected continuing increase in traffic particularly on the Underground, and for the growing public transport needs of Docklands.

Third, there is the need to improve the quality of services and the security afforded to the traveller.

Fourth, it is necessary to complete the effective restructuring of London Buses in order to improve performance and prepare for deregulation in the early 1990s.

The Board under your chairmanship will tackle these tasks in the light of LRT's general statutory and financial duties, which include the duty to have due regard to efficiency, economy and safety of operation.

We need a clear long term strategy and a framework of medium term objectives that I would settle with you. For this, I should like you to review LRT's plans in all areas, and put to me by the end of June 1989 your proposals for a management, investment and financial strategy which aims to give London safe and reliable rail and bus services; provides good value for money; and, so far as possible, transfers costs from the taxpayer to the passenger and other beneficiaries. As part of establishing the objectives I would like to agree with you a set of quality of service targets for the Underground.

You should know that the present provision for LRT in the Government's expenditure plans is for external finance of £287 million in 1989-90 and for the following levels of investment:

	£ million
1989-90	486
1990-91	540
1991-92	461

I understand that the London Regional Transport board has today appointed Mr. Newton as chairman of London Underground Limited and Mr. Telford Beasley as deputy chief executive of London Regional Transport. I welcome these appointments.

Vehicle Movements (Monitoring)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce legislation to prohibit the collection of data in a form that can trace or monitor the movements of a particular vehicle; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* Surveys of vehicle movements provide useful statistical data for transport planning and analysis. No such data on individual vehicle movements collected by the Department are divulged to third parties. Computerised data would be subject to the Data Protection Act and all statistical data are dealt with under the Government statistical service code of practice published as Command Paper 9270 in June 1984.

The Road Traffic (Driver Licensing and Information Systems) Bill would provide that the Secretary of State could not require information to be furnished to him in a way which enabled him to identify individual drivers of motor vehicles equipped to receive driver information.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what procedures are operational to provide ministerial permission at short notice to waive the collection of tolls at the Severn bridge when requested in the interests of road safety;

(2) what procedures are available to waive the collection of tolls at the Severn bridge in order speedily to reduce tailbacks of traffic.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 21 March 1989]:* Under section 6(4) of the Severn Bridge Act 1965 the Secretary of State may direct the suspension of toll collection by reason of any accident or other emergency if it appears to him necessary to do so and without making an order or giving notice. Under these powers a procedure has been established for the rapid waiving of tolls when necessary. The use of this procedure would not be justified solely by large volumes of traffic.

Motorway Accidents

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the totals and percentages of motorway fatal and other serious accidents, recorded in tailbacks that are *(a)* predicted and *(b)* unexpected in each of the last 10 years;

(2) how many fatal and other serious accidents on motorways occurred in tailbacks of stationary or slow-moving traffic in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 21 March 1989]:* The stats19 road accident report form does not record whether there was a tailback at the scene of a road accident.

Civil Servants (Air Travel)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what criteria airlines are selected for purchase of tickets for civil servants travelling on official duties *(a)* within the United Kingdom, *(b)* in Europe and *(c)* elsewhere; whether travel agents are used; and whether block bookings are made.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 21 March 1989]:* The overall objective in organising travel for civil servants is to obtain best value for money and airlines are selected on this basis. If British airlines can match others in terms of cost and convenience they would normally be used.

Each Government Department makes its own booking arrangements.

Roads

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give for 1989-90, 1990-91, and 1991-92, the provision for value added tax liability on new construction within the budgets given for local authority capital spending on roads and transport in table 8-1 of "the Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92" chapter 8.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Local authorities have always been able to reclaim VAT paid on any expenditure not for a business activity. This rule now automatically extends to their road construction programme. VAT paid by their business activities, such as their airport companies, is covered by the normal reclaim procedure applicable to the private sector. Extra provision is not needed.

Nuclear Materials

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make it his policy to re-evaluate the suitability of the HS 748 Andover aircraft for the air freighting of plutonium to European destinations;

(2) what studies have been made by his Department of the suitability and safety of *(a)* Prestwick, *(b)* Carlisle, *(c)* Bournemouth Hurn, *(d)* Dounreay and *(e)* Wick airports for the air freighting of commercial plutonium from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All movements of radioactive materials by air must comply with national and international regulations which require safety to be built into the package design and do not depend for their effectiveness on the use of a particular type of aircraft or choice of airport.

Nuclear Materials

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the agreement made on 20 December 1988 between the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Japan Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation for the development of criteria for certification of a plutonium air transport cask; whether British Nuclear Fuels plc has been involved with the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the JPNC in criteria development; and if he will request the United Kingdom advisory committee on the safe transport of radioactive materials, ACTRAM, to evaluate the developments arising from the agreement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Negotiations between the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Japan Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development

Corporation are a matter for the parties concerned. British Nuclear Fuels plc has not been involved in those negotiations.

It would not be appropriate to refer these matters to the advisory committee on the safe transport of radioactive materials which has completed its programme of work.

Commuter Services (North London)

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to authorise any application for additional investment to relieve overcrowding on British Rail's commuter services north of the Thames.

Mr. Channon: In response to a request from the Government early last year, British Rail submitted proposals for additional vehicles for these services. I approved a first tranche of 200 vehicles last October and have today approved a further 124 class 321 vehicles at a cost of £43·4 million to cater for expected future growth in demand. The total of 324 additional vehicles will enable rolling stock north of the Thames to be redeployed in a way which will bring significant relief from overcrowding on commuter services into Liverpool Street, Fenchurch Street, King's Cross and Euston.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drunkenness

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide figures of the number of arrests and subsequent convictions for drunkenness in England and Wales for each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the number of convictions for drunkenness was published in "Offences of drunkenness, England and Wales, 1987" (Home Office statistical bulletin 31/88), a copy of which is in the Library. No information is collected centrally on arrests for drunkenness.

Private Investigators

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration his Department is giving to the statutory registration of private security companies and private investigators; what mechanisms he has for ensuring that the views of private investigators are taken into account; what consultations his Department has had with the Institute of Professional Investigators; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have made it clear that they look to the private security industry to provide self-regulation. Following publication of the report on the industry by the Association of Chief Police Officers, my right hon. Friend asked officials to consider with the police and the industry ways in which self-regulation might be improved and a working group has been set up for this purpose. The Home Office has been in touch with the Institute of Professional Investigators and the institute's views which have been submitted to the Home Office will be brought to the attention of the working group.

National Pet Week

Dame Janet Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to offer support to National Pet Week.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. This does not fall into the Home Secretary's responsibilities.

"Broadcasting in the 90s"

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many responses he has received during the consultation period in relation to the White Paper "Broadcasting in the 90s"; and if he will give the number for each ITV region.

Mr. Renton: We have received over 2,900 responses, and a few late submissions are still coming in. A breakdown by ITV region of those responses which could be attributed to a single region could be provided only at disproportionate cost. We have it in mind in due course to place in the Library a list of the main organisations which have submitted comments.

Steel-cored Bullets

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the results of the tests carried out by Thomas Alfred Warlow of his Department's forensic laboratory at Huntingdon into the special properties of steel-cored bullets in the penetration of laminated windscreens of vehicles.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. Warlow examined 12 of the vehicles hit by bullets during the Hungerford shooting incident. Using unfired ammunition recovered from the scene, he measured the velocities of the bullets discharged from the firearms, calculated the kinetic energies and also made micro sections of different bullets and examined their construction. He did not conduct tests of the kind referred to in the question.

Armed Police

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Avon and Somerset police as to what measures have been taken to improve the training and competence with guns and marksmanship of armed officers in the Avon and Somerset police following reports at the inquest of Glyn Davis, at Cullompton, Devon, in November 1988, that a police officer fired two revolver rounds at the deceased at a range of 9-10 yards, and missed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: After every armed operation in which shots are fired by police officers the incident is carefully examined to identify the lessons to be drawn. Where necessary these are incorporated into firearms training programmes.

An independent inquiry into this incident, which took place in darkness, was carried out under the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority and no criticism was made of selection, training and safety standards. Avon and Somerset constabulary has carried out its own review and is satisfied that its measures are effective and comply with the national standards.

Warning and Monitoring Trials

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the dates, locations and purpose of United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation trials in 1989.

Mr. John Patten: The 1989 exercise dates for the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation are 15 to 16 April, 18 June and 29 October. These exercises, which are designed to practise operational procedures, will involve UKWMO operational controls and monitoring posts throughout the country.

Drink-driving

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the decision to review 742 drink-driving convictions in Greater Manchester after the use there of alcohol-impregnated swabs in taking blood tests and the possible review of 1,117 further cases.

Mr. John Patten: Between March 1987 and December 1988, police stations in the Greater Manchester police area were issued with blood sampling kits in which the alcohol-free swabs had been replaced by the stores department of the force with swabs acquired from an independent source. It was later found that these locally substituted swabs contained a solution with a very small percentage of alcohol. The blood analysis results in a number of these cases may therefore have been affected. At present, there are known to be a total of 742 cases in which prosecution was based on the results of the blood sample; together with a total of 729 cases in which prosecution was based solely on breath test evidence. In addition, there are a further 388 cases where it is not yet possible to say into which category they fall.

I am arranging to review as quickly as possible the convictions in all those cases in which prosecution was based on the results of the blood sample, and I will also consider representations from individuals who believe that they were wrongly convicted. Each case will be considered on its merits.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his estimates of the costs to public funds of *(a)* reviewing 742 drink-driving convictions after use by Greater Manchester police of alcohol-impregnated swabs in taking blood tests and *(b)* the possible review of 1,117 further cases arising from the mistake.

Mr. John Patten: Our present estimate is that the cost to the Home Office is likely to be of the order of £36,000. This figure may be subject to revision when fuller details of the cases are available.

Police Manpower

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people there are to every police officer in *(a)* the north-west and *(b)* nationally; and what were the comparable figures for 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is set out as follows:

[1] *Police/population ratio*

	31 December 1988	*31 December 1979*
(a) North-West		
Cheshire	512	510
Cumbria	426	424
Greater Manchester	372	394
Lancashire	437	437
Merseyside	311	347
(b) England and Wales	407	414

[1] Population per officer is calculated on the basis of the authorised establishment of each force at 31 December.

Betting

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce his determination under section 1 of the Horserace Betting Levy Act 1969 of the horserace betting levy scheme beginning 1 April.

Mr. Hurd: I have today sent the following letter to the chairman of the Horserace Betting Levy Board and written similarly to the chairman of the Bookmakers' Committee. A copy of the scheme has been placed in the Library.

"In your letter of 1 November 1988 you reported to me that the Board and the Bookmakers' Committee has failed to agree the Scheme to have effect for the 28th levy period and that the Scheme accordingly fell to be determined by me. I have now reached my decision and enclose a copy of the Scheme which I have determined.

In reaching my decision I have taken into account all the submissions on the issue made to me by the Government-appointed members of the Levy Board and by the Bookmakers' Committee, together with other submissions and representations, including from the Jockey Club and the Horseracing Advisory Council, on which the Board members and the Committee were afforded the opportunity to comment to me.

As recommended to me both by the Board members and by the Committee, the Scheme is 'shop based', that is to say, levy on the cash horserace betting turnover of betting offices is to be calculated by the reference to the turnover of each individual office, not the turnover of bookmaking companies. Levy on credit betting turnover necessarily has to be fixed on a different basis and is, therefore, to be calculated by reference to a scale which as nearly as practicable equates with the levy rates on cash betting.

The cash yield from the Scheme will depend upon the level of leviable betting turnover. Assuming a turnover of £4,000 million, the total estimated yield will be about £34·5 million. In their final negotiations with the Bookmakers' Committee, the Levy Board sought some £34 million from the scheme, albeit assuming at that time a somewhat lower turnover. Equally, the Committee subsequently indicated that it was prepared for the scheme to produce some £34 million.

Like the schemes recommended to me both by the Board members and by the Committee, the Scheme which I have determined is "leveraged", that is to say, should turnover in the 28th levy period increase beyond £4,000 million, for each 1 per cent. such increase the levy yield would be more than 1 per cent. This means that racing as well as bookmaking would benefit from higher turnover. It is, therefore, all the more important to re-emphasise my expectation that the Levy Board as a whole will continue to aim to achieve value for money in its expenditure, continuing and if necessary building upon the arrangements for that which were introduced following the last determination, of the 23rd levy scheme. It is equally important to put on record my confidence that the bookmakers will be able to make their contributions to the levy at the rates in the Scheme without making any increase in their deductions from the punters.

The rates of levy in the Scheme, whilst in some respects higher than those recommended by the Bookmakers'

Committee, are overall lower than those sought by the Board. It has not been possible for me to accept the contention of some in the racing industry, to which the Board members have referred, that the target levy yield from this scheme should be set by reference to comparisons with the rates of return from betting to racing in other countries. The facts on this point are disputed and remain unclear.

I also believe it to be right, under the current levy arrangements, for the needs of racing to be met by the levy to be quantified annually in cash terms, rather than assuming that what is required is a fixed percentage of turnover. Under the levy legislation the rates of levy are to be settled annually. Both the needs of racing and the capacity of bookmakers to make contributions can increase or decrease as a proportion of leviable turnover; they are not necessarily in a precise relationship to one another.

My statutory duty is to determine a scheme for one year only, and it would not be right for me to say that the rates for the 28th levy period should or should not remain the same in successive schemes. In that it is shop-based, the Scheme represents a novelty. The Levy Board and the Bookmakers' Committee will no doubt wish to monitor its operation as closely and quickly as possible, and to take the results into account in their negotiations on successive schemes.

I understand the arguments for the recommendation from the Government-appointed members of the Board that there should be an inquiry into the long term funding of racing. The possible privatisation of the Horserace Totalisator Board is a relevant factor for me to have in mind in reaching my conclusion on the need for, and scope of, an independent and objective assessment of the issues within that recommendation. I will announce that conclusion when I have received and considered advice of Lloyds Merchant Bank as to the feasibility of that privatisation. That advice is expected soon.

My hope is that the negotiations for the 29th levy scheme will be conducted constructively and in a spirit of co-operation."

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Cordless Telephones

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many prosecutions for breach of the Wireless Telegraphy (Cordless Telephone Apparatus) (Restriction) Order (SI, No. 774) have been made in *(a)* Northern Ireland, *(b)* Scotland, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* England in each of the last three years for which records are available.

Mr. Atkins: The Wireless Telegraphy (Cordless Telephone Apparatus) (Restriction) Order 1987 (SI, No. 774) came into force on 21 May 1987. Persons contravening the order can be prosecuted under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949. They can also be prosecuted for the unlicensed use of cordless telephone apparatus under the 1949 Act. My Department can also apply to a court under section 80 (section 81 in Scotland) of the Telecommunications Act 1984 for cordless telephones held in breach of the order to be forfeited, thereby avoiding criminal prosecutions. Finally, members of the public may decide voluntarily to surrender illegal apparatus to my Department, thereby avoiding all court proceedings. The relevant number of cases is as follows:

	Northern Ireland	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*England*
Prosecutions				
1987	—	1	—	16
1988	—	1	—	3
1989 (to 20 March)	—	—	—	—
Forfeiture orders				
1987	—	—	2	4
1988	—	1	—	13
1989 (to 20 March)	—	—	—	1
Voluntary surrender				
1987	4	—	2	71
1988	6	9	2	141
1989 (to 20 March)	—	—	1	17

INWARD

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by how much his Department's support for INWARD has increased in the last three years; how much investment has been secured thereby; and how many jobs have been created or safeguarded.

Mr. Atkins: Department of Industry support for INWARD was £263,000 in 1986-87, £380,000 in 1987-88 and £450,000 in 1988-89. During the period INWARD has been involved in securing 40 projects which have resulted in known investment in excess of £94 million and the creation/safeguarding of approximately 1,700 jobs.

Overseas Companies (North-West)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many overseas owner companies are located in the north-west; and what was the comparable figure in 1979.

Mr. Atkins: There are over 600 foreign-owned companies operating in the north-west. No comparable statistics are available for 1979.

Foreign Investment (North-West)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many jobs have been created or safeguarded by foreign investment in the north-west since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: There are no comprehensive figures but developments known to the Invest in Britain Bureau indicate that over 11,000 new jobs have been created and approximately 9,300 safeguarded by foreign investment in the north-west since 1979.

South Africa

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will report on how British companies have complied with the European Community code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa during the 12-month period to 30 June 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: By 8 March 1989, 120 companies had submitted reports to the DTI under the code of conduct. Copies of the reports and of the Department's analysis and summary have, as in previous years, been placed in the Library of each House. These documents may also be inspected at the Department's export market information centre, at the British embassy in Pretoria, at the British consulate-general in Johannesburg, and at the British consulates in Cape Town and Durban.

The analysis and summary is the third since the adoption of the revised code of conduct by EC Foreign Ministers in November 1985.

The period under review has seen a further reduction in the number of black employees of British subsidiaries being paid below the code's recommended minimum level, with companies' reports indicating that again over 97 per cent. were paid above this level. In addition, companies continued to report impressive levels of involvement in projects benefiting not only their employees and their families but also the wider communities from which their work forces were drawn. Companies also continued to encourage the growth of black businesses, a new element introduced to the code in 1985.

The Government are once more grateful to companies for their continued co-operation in providing reports, and urge them to maintain this performance and to comply fully with the code.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the individual payments to be made to the members of the national engineering laboratory supervisory board; and what is the projected total cost of the board's activities.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* some of the board's members are civil servants and Scottish Development Agency employees and these members will not receive any membership fee. The five members who are neither civil servants nor employed by the Scottish Development Agency will each be paid a fee of £5,000 per year (plus VAT if the member is registered for VAT purposes). In addition, such members will be entitled to the reimbursement of any travel and subsistence expenses incurred on account of board membership. Because the total cost of meeting expenses claims in a full year cannot be accurately estimated at present, we are unable to give a projected total cost of the board's activities.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Natural Environment Research Council

113. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the location of each natural environment research council establishment in England, showing whether there are any plans to close any of them or to curtail their work in any way.

Mr. Jackson: The table shows the location of each natural environment research council establishment in England indicating where one or more areas of scientific research is to be reduced in 1989. None of the establishments listed are to be closed. In some cases resources from lower priority areas of scientific research are to be redeployed to support new opportunities or expansion in areas of high priority.

Establishment	*Location*	*Curtailment of work*
NERC Headquarters	Swindon, Wiltshire	No
	London	No
British Geological Survey	Keyworth, Nottingham	No
	London	[1]No
	Exeter, Devon	No
	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	No
	Wallingford, Oxfordshire	No
(London Information Office)	Geological Museum, London	No
Institute of Oceanographic Science Deacon Laboratory	Wormley, Surrey	Yes
Proudman Oceanographic Laboratory	Birkenhead, Merseyside	No
Plymouth Marine Laboratory	Plymouth, Devon	Yes
Sea Mammal Research Unit	Cambridge	No
Robert Hooke Institute	Oxford	No
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology		
(Merlewood Research Station)	Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria	No
(Monks Wood Experimental Station)	Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire	No
(Furzebrook Research Station)	Wareham, Dorset	Yes
Institute of Hydrology	Wallingford, Oxfordshire	No
Institute of Virology	Oxford	No
Freshwater Biological Association (until 1 April 1989 when these Institutes become the Institute of Freshwater Ecology)		
(The Ferry House)	Ambleside, Cumbria	Yes
(The River Laboratory)	East Stoke, Dorset	Yes
(Eastern Rivers Unit)	Huntingdon, Cambridge	No
Unit of Comparative Plant Ecology	University of Sheffield	Yes
Water Resource Systems Research Unit	University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	No
British Antarctic Survey	Cambridge	No

Establishment	Location	Curtailment of work
Isotope Geology Centre	London	[1]No
Remote Sensing Applications Development Unit	Farnborough, Hampshire	No
Unit for Thematic Information Systems	University of Reading	No

[1] Relocating to Keyworth 1989.

Student Loans

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received opposing the introduction of the student loans scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Since the publication of the White Paper on top-up loans for students we have received about 3,000 letters, expressing a variety of views. These included 29 petitions against student loans, with about 14,000 signatures, and about 170 formal responses to the White Paper from organisations with a special concern for student support. The responses have given us no reason to doubt that our plans are well judged. We shall take constructive criticisms into account as we proceed to develop a scheme for introduction in the autumn of 1990.

Private Medical School

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, what is his policy on setting up a medical school using private finance.

Mr. Jackson: Any proposal to alter the present arrangements whereby medical schools receive public funds via the University Grants Committee (or, from 1 April, the Universities Funding Council) would need to be considered on its merits by my right hon. Friend together with the Secretary of State for Health. Important factors would include the demand for trained doctors, and the General Medical Council's involvement in setting and maintaining standards.

Medical Schools

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many medical schools there are in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland; and whether there is any plans to change these numbers.

Mr. Jackson: There are no plans to change the numbers of medical schools, which are 21 in England, one in Wales, five in Scotland (including one which offers pre-clinical studies only) and one in Northern Ireland.

Medical Students

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the present cost of training medical students in *(a)* the pre-clinical part and *(b)* the clinical part.

Mr. Jackson: Based on the latest available figures, for the academic year 1987-88, the cost per student charged to the appropriate university cost centre is £9,470 for the two-year pre-clinical part of the course and £23,058 for the three-year clinical part. These figures exclude universities' central costs, associated National Health Service costs and the cost of student support.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many of the medical students presently in universities and hospitals in the United Kingdom originate from Wales;

(2) how many medical students there are in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Jackson: The information is shown in the table:

Undergraduates on pre-clinical and clinical medicine courses 1987-88

	Universities in:				
	England	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom*
Full-time	14,791	754	3,498	724	19,767
Part-time	20	—	48	30	98
Of which domiciled in Wales					
Full-time	649	304	28	4	985
Part-time	—	—	—	—	—

Most students following clinical medicine courses are in hospitals for much of their courses.

Sex Education

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he has taken, following the Women's National Commission's 1985 recommendation that in any future considerations of the scope of sex education in schools attention should be paid to the need for this to cover discussion of stereotypes of men and women, and the dangers these represent in marital relationships, as well as to biological and emotional matters.

Mr. Butcher: Responsibility for the scope and content of sex education in schools rests with the school governors, in accordance with section 18 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.

National Curriculum

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which handbooks relating to the

national curriculum are currently out of print; when they will be available; for what reasons any delays in supply have occurred; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department issued on 23 February two documents offering general guidance on the national curriculum, circular 5/89 on "The School Curriculum and Assessment" and a handbook for teachers entitled "From Policy to Practice". Nearly half a million copies of the handbook were sent direct to teachers in maintained schools, trainee teachers and local education authorities in the week after publication. The circular and handbook have remained in print and copies are available on request. The first orders and associated documents relating to national curriculum subjects, on mathematics and science attainment targets and programmes of study, were issued with an explanatory circular (6/89) on 14 March. Initial copies have already been sent to all maintained schools, and further copies are being sent to LEAs

Human Genome Project

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what scientific research is currently sponsored on the human genome project *(a)* solely by his Department, *(b)* through the research council, *(c)* in conjunction with industry, *(d)* in collaboration with the European Commission and *(e)* within a multilateral international programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) on 20 February at column *518*.

Mossley C of E Primary School

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the points raised by the head teacher of the Mossley Church of England primary school about the way in which his local management initiative is being implemented by the local education authority and which have been forwarded to him by the hon. Member for Congleton.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have written to my hon. Friend about the detailed concerns raised by her constituent. It is a key aspect of local management that schools' funding should be determined on the basis of objective need to spend rather than existing spending patterns. The main determinants of needs will be the numbers and ages of pupils. It will be for LEAs to determine the weightings for pupils of different ages after consultation with the governing body and head teacher of each school to be covered by a scheme. My right hon. Friend will consider LEAs' detailed proposals for allocating resources to schools within the overall framework set out in circular 7/88 on local management.

City Technology College (Surrey Docks)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assurances have been given to the governors of Bacon's school concerning finance for a proposed new city technology college in Surrey docks.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. Friend wrote to the Reverend Canon Gerald Greenwood, director of the Southwark diocesan board of education, the sponsors of the prospective Bacon's city technology college, on 10 March. That letter confirmed that we would be prepared to make capital grant available, up to a total of £10 million, for the establishment of a Bacon's city technology college on the Surrey quays site. My right hon. Friend made clear, however, that that was subject to the city technology college proposal being adopted by the governors of the Bacon's school, to the outcome of a detailed feasibility study of the costs involved, to the sponsors providing their share of those costs, and to his decision on an application by the governors for his leave to their giving notice of their intention to discontinue the school under the provisions of section 14 of the Education Act 1944.

My right hon. Friend also made clear that any such approach from the governors would be treated strictly on its merits. The factors he would take into account in these circumstances were set out in his statements of 28 July last year at column *402* and 23 January this year at column *383*.

British Antarctic Survey (Ship)

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether a contract has been placed for the construction of the new ship for the British Antarctic survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The natural environment research council yesterday signed a contract with Swan Hunter Shipbuilders for the construction of a new ship for the British Antarctic survey, to replace its 33-year-old dual purpose research and logistics vessel, the royal research ship John Biscoe.

The new ship, which will be named the James Clark Ross, will enable the British Antarctic survey to enhance its marine biology, geology and geophysics research programmes and to strengthen the logistical support which it gives to its bases in Antarctica.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Forestry (Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and food if he will list by location the forestry projects currently taking place within the three counties of Yorkshire.

Mr. Ryder: Between 1 April 1988 and 28 February 1989 the Forestry Commission has, under its grant schemes, approved 157 new applications for planting grants in the three counties of Yorkshire. These are listed:

Name	*Location by local authority district*
Halton West	Craven
Acclom House	Hambleton
Moor Close	Hambleton
Patch Wood	Wakefield
Doncaster Golf Club	Doncaster
The Dell Grimethorpe	Barnsley
Spring Wood/St. Helens Wood	Barnsley
Desterell Cottage Farm	Ryedale
Westwood House	Calderdale
Toad Hall Wood	Barnsley
Gaskins Farm	Hambleton
Bailby Wood	Leeds
Catterick Training Area	Richmondshire

Name	Location by local authority district
Lower Pitcher Clough	Bradford
West Moss	Craven
Gaston Hall	Ryedale
Hunmanby Hall School	Scarborough
Ella House Farm	Hambleton
Bilton Beck	Harrogate
Westbank Farm	Craven
White House Farm	Selby
Lord Middleton	Ryedale
East Witton Estate	Richmondshire
Birdsall Estates Co.	Ryedale
Skiers Spring Drift Mine	Barnsley
Harton Lodge Plantation	Ryedale
Kilgram Grange	Richmondshire
Lords/Crag Woods	Craven
East Farm Sedbury	Richmondshire
Longside Woodlands	Harrogate
Aldby Park	Ryedale
Bridge Cross Farm	Harrogate
Hawkshaw Gill/Clarks Carr	Harrogate
Manor House Farm	Calderdale
Claxton House	Ryedale
Catkin Farm	Craven
Copley	Calderdale
Windmill Farm	Harrogate
Carlton Farm	Harrogate
Red House Farm	Richmondshire
Ribston Estate West	Harrogate
Kirkham	Ryedale
Todmorden Golf Club	Calderdale
Hazelwood Castle	Selby
Hook Carr Hill Farm	Hambleton
Longlands	Richmondshire
Lower Green Edge Farm	Calderdale
Hesley Aerodrome	Doncaster
Malton/Norton Golf Club	Ryedale
Gledhow Valley Wood	Leeds
Wyre Hall Farm	Leeds
Ribston Estate East	Harrogate
Howe Estate	Hambleton
Yafforth Road Site	Hambleton
Highfield Farm	Harrogate
Langton Hall	Hambleton
Whitwell	Ryedale
East Witton Estate	Richmondshire
Gaston Hall	Ryedale
Low Fold Farm	Sheffield
Hutton Wandesley	Harrogate
Kirkby Wood	Hambleton
Old Tip Asenby	Harrogate
Manor Farm	Selby
Towton Estate	Selby
Tithe House Farm	Doncaster
Cannon House Farm	Selby
Linton Woods Farm	Hambleton
Wink Lodge	Doncaster
Yorkshire Water Authority	Harrogate
Coverhead Farm	Richmondshire
Pallett Hill Quarry	Richmondshire
Squirrel Hall/Manor Farm	Ryedale
Hauxwell Estate	Richmondshire
Settington House Farm	Ryedale
Barlow Common	Selby
Loscar Wood	Rotherham
Ingbar Plantation	Craven
Manor Farm	Richmondshire
Wood Farm	Ryedale
Upper Helmsley Hall	Ryedale
Constable Burton	Richmondshire
Banks Ghyll	Craven
Halton Dene	Leeds
Oakridge Farm	Calderdale
Busty Pond	Hambleton
Ness Hall	Ryedale
Nine Acre Field	Hambleton
Home Farm	Hambleton
Sleightholmdale	Ryedale

Name	Location by local authority district
Farndale	Ryedale
Land at the Old Brewery Thornton-le-Clay	Ryedale
Daletown Hawnby	Ryedale
North Farm Fryton	Ryedale
Dovecote Cottage	Ryedale
Low Park Farm	Ryedale
Bransdale	Ryedale
Crow Wood	Hambleton
Yeavering House	Hambleton
Elleron Lodge	Ryedale
Carle House Farm	Hambleton
Low Moor Farm	Hambleton
Three Cottages	Ryedale
Cockerdale Farm	Ryedale
Dale Farm	Scarborough
Wombleton Grange	Ryedale
Dale End	Scarborough
Newbiggin High Farm	Scarborough
Prospect Cottage Farm	Scarborough
Whisperdale Farm	Scarborough
Thornflatt Farm	Hambleton
East Harlsey	Hambleton
Kingthorpe	Ryedale
White House	Hambleton
Crow Wood	Hambleton
Low Costa Mill	Ryedale
Head House Farm	Ryedale
Fairfax Farm	Scarborough
Kepwick	Hambleton
Mann Farm Broughton	Ryedale
Home Farm	Hambleton
Wykeham	Scarborough
Nostell Priory	Wakefield
Thirkleby Warren	Ryedale
North House Farm	Selby
Red House Farm	Richmondshire
Willerby Wold	Ryedale
Long Stoop Farm	Harrogate
Manor Farm	Richmondshire
Beggar Hall	Harrogate
Croft	Richmondshire
Hauxwell Hall	Richmondshire
Higher Kingthorpe	Ryedale
Cheese Vat Farm	Ryedale
Neasham	Richmondshire
Manor Farm	Hambleton
Clifton Castle	Hambleton
Bramham Park	Leeds
West Lowfield Farm	Hambleton
Ripley Castle	Harrogate
Arkendale	Harrogate
Low North and Kirklees	Scarborough
Neasham	Richmondshire
Landales Wood	Ryedale
Manor Farm	Hambleton
Little Bottom Plantation	Selby
Nabs Wood	Barnsley
Low Laithe Farm	Rotherham
Ponden Hall	Bradford
Kexby Estate	Selby
Kirkby Wood	Hambleton
Bramham Park	Leeds
YWA Leighton Reservoir	Harrogate
YWA Thrushcross Reservoir	Harrogate
Wentwoodhouse	Barnsley/Rotherdale
Brown Rigg	Scarborough
High Dales	Scarborough

Intervention Stores

Ms. Quin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many European Economic Community intervention stores exist in the United Kingdom; where

they are located; and what were the amounts and products held at each site on the last date for which information is available.

Mr. Donald Thompson: At the end of February 1989 140 stores in the United Kingdom were holding products bought into intervention. Their locations, the products and quantities held are as follows:

Tonnes

Location	*Feedwheat*	*Barley*	*Butter*	*Beef*
Aberdeen	—	—	—	593
Antrim	—	—	—	1,974
Ballymena	—	—	—	1,029
Banbridge	—	—	631	—
Banbury	—	—	515	3
Belford	—	13,508	—	—
Belfast	—	—	415	4,388
Bellshill	—	—	—	13
Birmingham	47,422	—	—	—
Blackburn	—	—	—	286
Blairgowrie	—	—	2	—
Bressingham	18,007	—	—	—
Bristol	—	—	195	—
Bury St. Edmunds	—	—	—	121
Cardiff	—	—	763	106
Chichester	5,937	—	—	—
Clivedon, Yorkshire	1,111	30,923	—	—
Coleraine	—	—	140	1,450
Colnbrook	—	—	—	84
Coventry	—	26,184	—	—
Craigavon	—	—	—	6,531
Cullumpton	—	—	1,955	71
Derby	—	—	133	—
Dumfries	—	61,792	—	—
Dundee	—	—	—	9
Dungannon	—	—	—	600
Duna	—	82,005	—	—
Dysart	—	32,543	—	—
Edinburgh	—	—	1	5
Ely	23,576	21,007	—	—
Evesham	—	—	1,512	—
Exeter	—	—	96	48
Felixstowe	—	33,129	—	—
Fleetwood	—	—	160	—
Fraserburgh	—	—	—	17
Frome	—	—	475	—
Gainsborough	36,171	—	—	—
Glasgow	—	—	9	176
Glenrothes	—	23,821	1	691
Gloucester	23,966	—	—	—
Goole	—	—	476	—
Grantham	—	—	—	477
Grimsby	—	—	11	—
Halesworth	74,190	—	—	—
Haresfield	—	21,172	—	—
Hereford	—	—	—	2
Heywood	—	—	505	—
Hull	—	—	252	242
Huntingdon	12,158	—	—	—
Kidderminister	26,805	30,925	—	—
Leeds	—	—	—	48
Lisburn	—	—	178	2,609
Liverpool	—	—	649	119
London	—	—	1	—
Londonderry	—	—	—	48
Lurgan	—	—	355	—
Maldon	30,717	—	—	—
Market Rasen	—	12,925	—	—
Market Racon	—	10,716	—	—
Newmacher	—	4,148	—	—
Newmarket	12,746	—	—	—
Newport	—	—	1,709	—
Newton Abbey	—	—	610	4,058
Newry	—	—	—	20
North Humberside	16,637	16,386	—	—
Omagh	—	—	—	454
Ormiston	—	59,345	—	—
Paddock Wood	—	—	—	72
Penicuik	—	12,628	—	—
Peterborough	—	—	98	251
Plymouth	—	—	—	9
Portadown	—	—	1,109	—
Portbury	—	—	740	—
Preston	—	—	613	—
Rochdale	—	—	460	—
Salisbury	—	32,364	—	—
Salford	—	—	—	50
Scunthorpe	—	10,837	140	1,417
Selby	—	13,532	—	—
Sheffield	—	—	44	—
Sherborne	—	—	944	—
Shrewsbury	—	—	—	56
South Shields	—	—	10	—
Staughton	—	25,304	—	—
Strabane	—	—	78	744
Strachan	—	51,006	—	—
Sutton in Ashfield	—	—	1	—
Swansea	—	—	237	—
Tamworth	—	—	1,729	205
Telford	—	6,801	—	—
Tranent	—	16,766	—	—
Truro	—	—	80	86
Turriff	—	10,215	—	—
Whitchurch	—	18,510	—	—
Whittlesey	—	10,635	—	—
Wigan	—	—	—	262
Wigston	—	—	—	1
Wimblington	200	—	—	—
Wisbech	18,128	—	—	—
Wolverhampton	—	—	439	—
Total	355,361	689,128	18,479	29,434

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy confirmed in each county of the United Kingdom for the four week period ended 17 March.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the four-week period to 17 March, 643 cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy were confirmed in the following counties and regions of Great Britain:

County	*Confirmed cases*
Avon	14
Bedfordshire	3
Berkshire	2
Buckinghamshire	4
Cambridgeshire	3
Central	1
Cheshire	5
Cleveland	1
Clwyd	5
Cornwall	48
Cumbria	6
Derbyshire	4
Devon	73
Dorset	82
Dumfries	1
Durham	2
Dyfed	29
Essex	1
Glamorgan Mid	1
Glamorgan South	3

County	Confirmed cases
Gloucestershire	17
Grampian	2
Gwent	8
Hampshire	49
Hereford and Worcester	11
Hertfordshire	1
Highland	3
Humberside	2
Isle of Wight	3
Kent	27
Lancashire	16
Leicestershire	12
Lincolnshire	6
Manchester	1
Merseyside	2
Norfolk	12
Northants	2
Northumberland	5
Nottinghamshire	3
Oxon	15
Powys	2
Salop	5
Somerset	39
Staffordshire	6
Strathclyde	4
Suffolk	9
Surrey	7
Sussex East	7
Sussex West	15
Warwickshire	3
Wiltshire	39
Yorkshire North	21
Yorkshire South	1

Salmonella

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1), pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) of 3 March 1989, *Official Report*, columns *373-74*, when he intends to introduce an amendment to the Diseases of Animals Protein Processing Order 1981 requiring protein processors to take samples from each day's production and to notify his Department of the results;

(2), pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) of 3 March 1989, *Official Report*, columns *373-74*, when he intends to lay an order providing for the compulsory bacteriological monitoring of all poultry laying flocks;

(3), pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) of 3 March 1989, *Official Report*, columns *373-74*, when he intends to introduce measures on the registration of breeding and laying flocks and the registration and monitoring of hatcheries;

(4), pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) of 3 March 1989, *Official Report*, columns *373-74*, when he intends to strengthen control measures applicable to rodents to further minimise the risk of spread of salmonella;

(5), pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) of 3 March 1989, *Official Report*, columns *373-74*, when he intends to introduce statutory requirements for the hygienic handling of eggs.

Mr. Donald Thompson: On 16 March I introduced secondary legislation under the Animal Health Act 1981 requiring poultry flock owners to submit samples from their flocks for salmonella testing and to keep records of the test results.

This will be augmented as soon as possible with orders requiring the registration of flocks, the registration and monitoring of hatcheries and introducing statutory requirements on rodent control and hygienic handling of eggs.

An order will also be made as soon as possible requiring protein processors to take samples from each day's production and to notify the results to my Department.

Animal Blood

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restrictions there are on the importation of products containing animal blood.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The importation of any product containing animal blood is subject to licensing controls exercised by orders made under the Animal Health Act 1981. In addition any such product intended for sale for human consumption must satisfy the Imported Food Regulations 1984.

Animal Feed

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he plans to restrict the use of animal blood in animal feed products;

(2) whether he is considering further restrictions on the feeding of animal by-products to ruminants;

(3) what evidence he has on the animal health implications of feeding ruminants with products containing animal blood.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Various pathogens can be transmitted by animal blood. Feeding ruminant animals with protein material, including blood, derived from ruminants has been prohibited since 18 July last year. This ban will remain in place unless processing methods are established which are sufficient to destroy the agent of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Blood from other animals fed to ruminants must be processed to the standards required by regulations under the Animal Health Act 1981.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he intends to introduce legislation requiring the labelling of animal feeds with a list of ingredients;

(2) Whether he has any plans to introduce legislation requiring animal feed products containing animal blood to be labelled as such.

Mr. Ryder: The European Council of Ministers is currently considering a proposal which will require suppliers of animal feeds containing more than one ingredient to declare the materials or categories of materials used in them.

Potatoes

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has determined the market support prices for potatoes to apply in Great Britain of the 1989-90 crop year beginning 1 July 1989.

Mr. MacGregor: Agriculture Ministers have consulted the National Farmers Union about the market support arrangements to apply for the 1989-90 crop year. We have decided to authorise the Potato Marketing Board to enter into pre-season contracts with producers over the period November 1989 to May 1990 at a scale of prices not exceeding a weighted average of £53 per tonne. We have also authorised the board to intervene directly on the market throuhout the season where this will ensure that support can be carried out more cheaply than by purchasing under contract, provided that the total intervention during 1980-90 does not exceed 500,000 tonnes. The target area for potato planting by registered producers in Great Britain was fixed last July at 155,000 hectares.

Nitrates

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 24 November to the hon. Member for St. Ives, (Mr. Harris), *Official Report*, columns *9-10*, what action the Government propose to take to designate areas sensitive of nitrate leaching.

Mr. MacGregor: After further careful consideration, the Government have reached broad conclusions on the type of agricultural measures which could be introduced in nitrate-sensitive areas. These will now be the subject of extensive consultations with farming, water and other interests. We have also decided that the first designated zones should represent a pilot sample of different types of areas in which a range of agricultural measures can be tested.

It remains the Government's policy that, wherever possible, any agricultural restrictions should be on a voluntary basis, with compulsory powers available as a fallback. Where farmers are obliged to restrict their agricultural activities beyond the degree which could be regarded as good agricultural practice, they should be compensated. Under currently foreseeable circumstances the costs of compensation would be offset by CAP support savings resulting from reduced agricultural production. As part of their approach, the Government will be mounting an intensive advisory campaign in selected key areas. This will involve visits to individual farmers on specific aspects of good agricultural practice.

It will be necessary to amend the current provisions in the Water Bill to provide appropriate powers, and the Government will shortly be tabling amendments. We will also be examining carefully the European Commission proposal for a directive on nitrate pollution of water but, in view of the importance the Government attach to this issue, we are anxious to press ahead with pilot schemes.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council in Brussels on 20-21 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Together with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, I represented the United Kingdom at this Council.

The main business before the Council was the Commission's proposals for farm support prices and related measures for 1989-90. No agreement was reached. The Council will return to the subject at its next meeting on 17 April, with the firm intention of reaching decisions.

The Council again considered the Commission's proposal on the level of imports of butter from New Zealand between now and 1992, and the linked qustion of the arrangements for imports of sheepmeat. Several member states were unwilling to take decisions, and the butter import arrangements were therefore rolled forward for a further two months until the end of May 1989 on the basis of [illegible] quantities.

Finally the Council adopted a directive regulating imports of meat products from Third world countries with a view to avoiding human and animal health risks.

DEFENCE

Helicopters

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the cost at time of purchase of the most recent procurements of *(a)* one Sea King HAS 3/5 ASW helicopter and *(b)* one Westland-Augusta EH 101 helicopter.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is no longer our practice to publish unit production costs.

Challenger

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the cost at time of purchase of the most recently procured Challenger FV tank that is currently in service.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is no longer our practice to publish unit production costs.

Air Misses

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many air misses between hang gliders and military aircraft were reported in 1988; and how many of these were in risk category A.

Mr. Neubert: Only one such air miss report was filed in 1988. The joint air miss working group assessed this as category C, that is involving no risk of a collision.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his policy on the publication of the results of inquiries into air misses involving military aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 16 February at columns *331-34*.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the circumstances of the air miss between a British Airways BAC 1-11 and a Royal Air Force Harrier north of Carlisle on 8 November 1988; and when he expects the results of the inquiry to be published.

Mr. Neubert: This reported air miss is currently being investigated by the joint air miss section of the National Air Traffic Services, before being considered by the joint air miss working group. A copy of the group's conclusions will be placed in the Library in due course.

Low Flying

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if low-flying training by Royal Air Force aircraft is planned to take place in Morocco.

Mr. Neubert: Discussions with the Government of Morocco on ways to strengthen links between the Royal Air Force and the Moroccan Air Force are continuing. The details are confidential.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has obtained a copy of the July 1988 report by the West German Federal Health Office in Berlin into the effects of low-flying military aircraft on the health of children in Bavaria; and what evidence he has on the effects of low flying on the health of children in Britain.

Mr. Neubert: Yes, my Department has a copy of the West Germany Federal Health Office pilot study report on "Health Effects of Noise from Military Low level Flights". The Department has no specific evidence on the effects of low flying on the health of children in Britain.

Noise Levels

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the policy of purchasing dwellings subjected to noise levels from military aircraft of 125 db (A) or more, set out in his reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire on 3 February, *Official Report*, columns *447-48*, applies to dwellings not located in the vicinity of a military airfield.

Mr. Neubert: No.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the heights, speeds and aircraft types which were found to produce noise levels of 125 db (A) or more in noise test measurements during Exercise Bedlam.

Mr. Neubert: The information is as follows:

Aircraft	*Speed*	*Power Setting*	*Height (ft)*	*Average decibel level at ground level*
Phantom	507 knots (583 mph)	Full Reheat	315	126dB (A)
Tornado	433 knots (498 mph)	Full Reheat	250	(126db (A)
Jaguar	462 knots (531 mph)	100 per cent. + reheat	250	126dB (A)
Lightning	495 knots (569 mph)	Full Reheat	250	126db (A)
Victor	265 knots (305 mph)	103 per cent.	200	127dB (A)
Vulcan	256 knots (294 mph)	100 per cent.	250	127dB (A)
VC10	298 knots (343 mph)	Full Power	250	125dB (A)

The hon. Member will wish to note that the above figures are not representative of general military low flying in the United Kingdom and I would refer him to my predecessor's reply of 13 June 1988 to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) at column *70*.

Range Activity (Otterburn and Spadeadam)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire of 3 February 1989, *Official Report*, column *448*, if he will now publish figures showing the extent of range activity by aircraft at Otterburn and Spadeadam in each year since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: Otterburn is primarily an Army artillery range and the use of the facility by aircraft is extremely limited. It would not be possible to detail this usage in terms of number of aircraft and sorties flown without disproportionate cost and effort.

The following represents the number of 10-minute flying slots utilised at Spadeadam range in the years 1985-88. Records prior to 1985 no longer exist.

Year	*Number*
1985	6,330
1986	6,348
1987	5,959
1988	4,645

Lindholme Facility

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the function of the Royal Air Force communications facility at Lindholme near Doncaster; which North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces provide personnel to operate the Lindholme facility; how many personnel are based at the Lindholme facility; and what are their ranks and functions.

Mr. Neubert: 840 Signal Unit at Lindholme forms part of the defence communications network and is entirely United Kingdom manned. It is not our practice to give details of the strength and composition of operational units.

Territorial Army

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans for expansion of Territorial Army units based in the west country.

Mr. Neubert: As part of the phase II enhancement of the Territorial Army announced by the Government in 1984 the establishment of the Territorial Army in the west country has been increased by over 850 personnel. Of these additional numbers 175 will have been incorporated into existing Royal Army Medical Corps and Royal Military

Police units and the balance into the formation of new Infantry, Army Air Corps and Royal Army Ordnance Corps units.

The main enhancement to the infantry is the formation of a new home defence battalion, 4 Devon and Dorsets, with companies based at new TA centres at Exeter, which has just been completed, and Paignton and Plymouth which are both under construction. A new company of the RAOC, 94 Ordnance Company, will be based at Keynsham, near Bristol, while the Territorial Army's first and currently, only squadron of the AAC is at Middle Wallop. All these units have been formed and are gradually increasing towards their established strength.

No additional enhancements to the RTA are currently planned.

Tractors

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist for the purchase of tractors capable of transporting light armoured vehicles.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are no plans at present to purchase tractors for transporting light armoured vehicles. The purchase option will however be considered when the arrangements for meeting this requirement in BAOR are reviewed later this year.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations have taken place between his Department and the company currently leasing Mercedes tractors to the British Army of the Rhine regarding their availability in the event of hostilities.

Mr. Sainsbury: Agreement in principle has been reached with the company leasing Mercedes tractors to BAOR regarding their availability in the event of hostilities. Consultations are continuing on the terms of the amendment of the contract to cover this aspect.

6 Brigade

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what helicopters will be specifically assigned to 6 Brigade.

Mr. Neubert: There are no helicopters specifically assigned to 6 Brigade as, following its trial in the air mobile role, it is being converted to an armoured brigade.

M109 Howitzer

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what funding has been provided to Royal Ordnance plc or Vickers Defence Systems plc for trials of their suggested replacement for the M109 self-propelled howitzer.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

British Land Forces (Europe)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the figure for the average number of British land forces stationed on the mainland of Europe that was reported to the council of the Western European Union in 1987.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall write to the hon. Member.

NATO (Nuclear Weapons)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of "Modernising NATO's Nuclear Weapons", by Oliver Ramsbotham.

Mr. Neubert: The Ministry of Defence library has a copy of this book.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will obtain for his Department's Library a copy of "In the Dark—Parliaments, the public and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's Nuclear Weapons", by Scilla Elworth Mclean.

Mr. Neubert: The Ministry of Defence library has ordered a copy of this publication.

Overseas Forces (Members' Visits)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those hon. Members who have visited British forces overseas in the last two years involving expenditure of public money, showing the units visited by each.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) on 10 February 1989, at columns *861-62* with the addition of the following:

Date	*Location*	*Visitors*
February 1989	Falkland Islands	Sir Dudley Smith John Ward Keith Mans Gwilym Jones Bruce Grocott Elliot Morley William Ross
March 1989	Cyprus	Eddie Loyden Frank Cook Jacques Arnold Nicholas Bennett Tim Devlin Harry Cohen

Private Security Firms

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military bases in Yorkshire employ private security firms *(a)* to guard entrances to the bases and *(b)* in any other capacity; and for which armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall write to the hon. Member.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Agriculture

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will set out for each of the last four years the volume of the main agricultural commodities recorded as flowing in each direction between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic and the financial amounts payable from European Community resources in respect of each category.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* The information available from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise records on the volume of trade in main agricultural commodities is given in the table. The financial amounts payable which may have derived from the European Community are not separately identifiable.

Imports and Exports of Agricultural Commodities Northern Ireland—Republic of Ireland

Description	*Imports to Northern Ireland from Republic of Ireland*				*Exports from Northern Ireland to Republic of Ireland*			
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Live animals								
Cattle	206,030	210,974	148,891	177,328	22,717	13,548	14,152	27,998
Pigs	62,116	66,777	59,584	45,371	177,561	64,160	2,909	5,552
Poultry	2,611,066	3,349,596	2,884,803	1,527,165	2,118,484	3,227,280	3,780,784	5,681,032
Products								
Meat of bovine animals Fresh, chilled or frozen[1] (tonnes)	59,757	86,375	89,376	64,321	14,687	9,984	9,459	10,610
Meat of swine Fresh, chilled or frozen (tonnes)	13,046	17,078	20,743	19,911	15,725	16,785	13,067	12,511
Poultrymeat: fresh, chilled or frozen (tonnes)	2,066	2,133	3,536	n/a	7,350	8,368	8,427	n/a
Eggs in shell ('000)	3,830	4,550	7,760	10,896	160,094	114,588	70,151	58,530
Cereals (tonnes)[2]	140,227	230,430	269,328	215,196	10,996	7,904	8,181	4,475
Butter (tonnes)	1,782	2,560	2,307	2,866	464	2,411	3,093	243
Skimmed Milk Powder (tonnes)	300	463	1,562	1,168	878	535	1,242	378

[1] A significant proportion of these imports are believed to have been in transit to Great Britain.
[2] Barley, oats and wheat. Excludes cereal seed.

PRIVY COUNCIL

Salary

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Lord President of the Council what allowances are included in the official income of the Secretary of State for Health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: None. The official salary received by the Secretary of State for Health is set in accordance with the Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 1988. He receives a ministerial salary of £34,479 and a reduced parliamentary salary of £18,148. In addition he retains an entitlement to allowances available to other Members.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Demonstrations (Lhasa)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the Chinese Government about the recent shootings of demonstrators in Lhasa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 17 March to the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) at column *364*. In addition the ambassadors of the troika in Peking have carried out a demarche on behalf of the Twelve at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the situation in Tibet, in context of the commitment of the Chinese authorities to ensure full respect for human rights.

European Court of Human Rights

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of cases to date in which the United Kingdom has appeared before the European Court of Human Rights for breach of article 10 of the European convention; what was the judgment given; how many cases and who are the claimants that are pending to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The European Court of Human Rights has found a violation of article 10 of the European convention in one case brought against the United Kingdom. In *The*

Sunday Times judgment of 26 April 1979, which concerned contempt of court, the court found a violation by 11 votes to nine.

There are five cases pending before the Commission in which the Government have submitted, or have been requested to submit, observations on article 10 of the convention. In three of these cases the applicants have not agreed to their identity being disclosed. The remaining two cases have been brought by Times Newspapers Ltd. and Neil, and by Atkinson and others.

Israel

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further talks he proposes to have with the Israeli authorities about open discussions to seek a solution to mutual problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We remain in close touch with the Israeli authorities and look forward to welcoming Mr. Shamir to London soon.

Council of Europe

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether relations between the European Community and the Council of Europe were discussed at the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Council discussed relations between the EC and the Council of Europe and agreed to continue the existing practical co-operation and to intensify political level contacts between the two organisations.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 20 March.

Mr. Eggar: The Foreign Affairs Council met in Brussels on 20 March. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State represented the United Kingdom, accompanied by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State.

The Council was preceded by an informal meeting of EC and EFTA Foreign Ministers. This noted the close economic and political links between EC and EFTA, and the importance of strengthening and expanding co-operation on the lines laid down in the 1984 Luxembourg declaration. The meeting welcomed M. Delors' call for a more structured relationship and the results of the meeting of EFTA Heads of Government in Oslo on 15 March, and agreed to establish a new bilateral dialogue with a view to a further ministerial meeting in the autumn. The United Kingdom warmly welcomes this new drive to deepen the relationship between the Community and its EFTA neighbours.

The Council discussed progress in the GATT Uruguay round and preparations for the meeting of the GATT trade negotiations committee in Geneva in early April confirming the guidance given to the Commission in November.

The Council also agreed to improve contacts between the Community and the Council of Europe.

An EC-Malta Association Council also took place.

In the framework of political co-operation the Twelve reaffirmed the unacceptability of Iranian behaviour over the Rushdie affair and the continuing ban on high-level visits.

Chemical Weapons

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to investigate the links between the firm Pen-Tsao-Materia-Medica Centre, based in Hong Kong, the firm Imhausen-Chemie A. G. based in Lahr, and the export of chemicals for the alleged chemical warfare agent factory at Rabta in Libya; and if he will raise the matter of dual-use chemicals export from the European Community at the next Foreign Affairs Council meeting of the EEC.

Mr. Waldegrave: Investigations by the Hong Kong authorities do not indicate that there has been any breach of Hong Kong law. We do not have any evidence that material has been shipped through Hong Kong to Libya.

The Foreign Affairs Council on 20 February adopted an EC directive controlling the export of eight "core" chemical precursors. All these chemicals were already subject to United Kingdom export control. The United Kingdom continues to work closely with other countries to tighten restrictions on the export of chemical weapon-related precursors and equipment.

Ex-President Marcos

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonweath Affairs if he has received any representations from the Philippines Government to help them trace such assets of former President Marcos as may be in Britain or have been in Britain.

Mr. Eggar: The Philippines authorities have brought several cases to our attention. We have always co-operated fully.

Namibia

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has concerning the organisations which will be responsible for the registering and processing of Namibian detainees held by the South West Africa People's Organisation after the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 435;

(2) if he will make a statement outlining the provisions which are made in the United Nations settlement plan for the safe return of Namibians held in South West Africa People's Organisation camps in Angola and Zambia;

(3) what information he has on the number and names of Namibians currently detained in South West Africa People's Organisation camps in Angola and Zambia;

(4) what representations he has received during the last year concerning the fate and condition of Namibian detainees held by the South West Africa People's Organisation in Angola and Zambia;

(5) what steps he is taking to encourage the establishment of mechanisms in Angola and Zambia to ensure that Namibians resident outside Namibia are given a free and voluntary choice whether to return to Namibia to take part in free and fair elections under the United Nations plan; and if he will make a statement;

(6) what recent steps he has taken within the United Nations or other organisations to ensure that the lives of those Namibians detained by the South West Africa People's Organisation are not endangered and that they are permitted to return to Namibia to participate in the forthcoming elections;

(7) what recent representations he has made to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees concerning the Namibian detainees held by the South West Africa People's Organisation in their camps in Angola and Zambia; and what response was received to these representations.

Mr. Eggar: We condemn human rights abuses whenever they may occur. We are aware of allegations of ill-treatment by SWAPO of detainees held in their camps in Angola and Zambia. This is primarily a matter for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to investigate, but we have raised the issue with SWAPO. We have also made our concern known to the office of the high commissioner.

The United Nations plan for Namibian independence provides for the release of political prisoners and detainees and the voluntary return of exiles. We shall naturally do everything we can do to assist the United Nations Secretary General and his staff to ensure that all the provisions of the United Nations plan are implemented.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make a statement on the status of the informal understandings reached in 1982 on the question of United Nations impartiality during the implementation of the United Nations settlement plan for Namibia;

(2) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy as to the extent to which the United Nations is to be regarded as responsible for guaranteeing that relevant parties adhere to the letter and spirit of the impartiality package referred to in the United Nations Secretary General's report of 23 January on the question of Namibia;

(3) whether he has any information about any mechanisms which may be in place to ensure that all relevant parties concerned with the United Nations settlement plan for Namibia adhere to the provisions of the impartiality package;

(4) whether he will place in the Library a copy of the details of the impartiality package referred to in the United Nations Secretary General's report on 23 January on the question of Namibia.

Mr. Eggar: The provisions of the impartiality package referred to in the hon. Member's question have not been made public. However, the United Nations Secretary General confirmed in his report of 23 January (United Nations document S/20412) that the package remained binding on the parties. The Secretary General's report was in turn approved by United Nations Security Council resolution 632 of 16 February. We for our part shall do all we can to assist the United Nations Secretary General and his staff in ensuring that the provisions of the impartiality package are fully applied.

Brazil

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent progress by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank on development loans to Brazil, relating to the power sector and rain forest.

Mr. Chris Patten: The World Bank has development lending for the Brazilian power sector under consideration. The scope of the bank's proposed second power sector loan is under review between the bank and the Brazilian authorities. I cannot say when these discussions will be concluded or what the outcome will be. I have given an assurance to concerned non-governmental organisations that we will consult them, if and when a loan is put to the World Bank's executive board, before we decide what line to take.

Kampuchea

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the conditions under which Her Majesty's Government will be prepared to give reconstruction aid for use internally in Kampuchea.

Mr. Chris Patten: We shall not consider Government-to-Government aid for reconstruction until Vietnam has fully withdrawn from its illegal occupation of Cambodia.

ENVIRONMENT

Rights of Way

18. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has had about the working of the footpath and rights of way sections of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A number of representations on these sections have been received. We are awaiting the advice of the Countryside Commission, which is monitoring the operations of the rights of way provisions in the 1981 Act and which has already published two reports.

Rating Reform

19. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate what the average community charge would have been in April 1989, based on the estimated level of domestic rates.

Mr. Ridley: Illustrative community charge figures for 1989-90 will be published when local authority budget returns have been received.

25. **Sir Hugh Rossi:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what a ward sister would pay *(a)* in community charge and *(b)* in a system of capital value rates plus local income tax paid in the proportions of 80-20, respectively, if she lived in a typical one-bedroom flat in Hornsey.

Mr. Ridley: A ward sister earning £15,000 living in a flat in Hornsey worth £70,000 would pay a community charge of £291 (disregarding the transitional safety net) and £875 under a system of capital value rates plus local income tax.

32. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on the same basis as table E5 in the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government", what percentage

of householders in Barnsley, Central constituency whose equivalent net income falls in the range of *(a)* £100 to £200 per week and *(b)* £400 to £500 per week would, on 1988-89 figures, pay a higher net community charge, un-safety netted, than net rates.

61. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on the same basis as table F5 in the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government", what percentage of householders in The Wrekin constituency, whose equivalent net income falls in the range of *(a)* £100 to £200 per week and *(b)* £400 to £500 per week would, on 1988-89 figures, pay a higher net community charge, un-safety netted, than net rates.

100. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on the same basis as table F5 in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", what percentage of householders in Norwich, South constituency whose equivalent net income falls in the range of *(a)* £100 to £200 per week and *(b)* £400 to £500 per week would, on 1988-89 figures, pay a higher net community charge, un-safety netted, than net rates.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is not available. The table in the Green Paper was based on a sample survey which cannot provide reliable estimates for individual constituencies.

101. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received on the proposed introduction of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend and I receive a variety of representations about the new system of local government finance. Recently, they have tended to be concerned with the detail of the community charge regulations.

103. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the proposed timetable for the community charge regulations for England and Wales being laid before the House.

Mr. Gummer: The following statutory instruments on the community charge in England and Wales were laid before the House on 17 March.

The Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989
The Personal Community Charge (Students) Regulations 1989
The Personal Community Charge (Exemptions) Order 1989
The Valuation and Community Charge Tribunals Regulations 1989
The Valuation and Community Charge Tribunals (Transfer of Jurisdiction) Regulations 1989
The Community Charge (Information Concerning Social Security) Regulations 1989

These form the bulk of the regulations on the community charge. Further regulations will be laid later this year, in the summer and autumn.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the present status of the Price Waterhouse study on the forecast of costs; and whether he intends to carry out any further assessments of the unit costs of implementing and calculating the community charge.

Mr. Gummer: The Government commissioned the firm of Price Waterhouse to undertake an independent study of preparation and collection costs of rates reform in England and Wales. The report was published in June 1988 and its findings taken into account in allocating resources to charging authorities. I have no plans to carry out a further study.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations from the European Commission of the implementation of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: No.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider exempting from the community charge those who have been deemed educationally subnormal or statemented under the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Gummer: The Local Government Finance Act 1988 provides a community charge exemption for adults who are severely mentally impaired, as defined in the Act. I have no plans to amend that definition.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to seek to enable local authorities to make arrangements with individuals who wish to pay the community charge on behalf of another charge payer.

Mr. Gummer: It was always envisaged that local authorities could offer this facility, and practice note No. 12 published last month contained advice on its implications.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those organisations which have requested copies of "You and the Community Charge", published in December 1988 and the number of copies distributed.

Mr. Ridley: The booklet has been requested by local authorities; educational establishments; charitable, church and voluntary bodies; businesses; and political organisations.

In addition, hon. Members and many members of the public have asked for copies. In total, approximately 900,000 copies have been distributed so far. Orders for a further 100,000 are currently being dealt with. Demand continues.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, how many copies of "You and the Community Charge", published in December 1988, have been printed to date; what were the initial one-off costs of art work and creative design; and what is the total cost to date of copies printed.

Mr. Ridley: My Department has printed 1,800,000 copies so far, reflecting a continuing high demand for this booklet. Art work and design cost £10,227. Printing has cost £115,427.

Agricultural Land (Building)

20. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to encourage the release of agricultural land for building at a faster rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No. It is frequently inappropriate to release agricultural land for building.

Young People (Housing)

21. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any new proposals for enabling young people to enter the housing market either as tenants or owner-occupiers.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have provided for an 80 per cent. increase over the next three years in the finance available to the Housing Corporation to provide new houses to rent and to promote low-cost home ownership including shared ownership. The deregulation of new private lettings will also encourage landlords to make more homes available to rent

Land Disposals

22. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many directives he has made to owners of land on the land register under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to dispose of their holdings; and, of these, how many have been disposed of.

31. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many directives he has made to owners of land on the land register to dispose of their holdings; and, of these, how many have been disposed of.

40. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many directives he has made to owners of land on the land register to dispose of their holdings; and, of these, how many have been disposed of.

Mr. Trippier: The power to direct disposal of land entered on the land register can only be exercised site by site. By the end of February 1989 I had directed the owners of 77 sites to take steps to dispose of their interest in the Land. To date 42 of the sites have been sold.

Wildlife Preservation

23. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further steps he is taking to preserve wildlife.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 already afford protection to all birds and to other species of animal or plant considered to be endangered and to any area of land considered to be of special scientific interest by reason of its flora, fauna or geographical or physiographical features. The schedules of protected species are reviewed every five years and, as a result of the last quinquennial review, 48 species of animals and 31 species of plants received added protection. The next review is scheduled for 1991.

County Hall, London

24. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his response to the request by the County Hall Development Group for a waiver from Lambeth Council's request for an environmental impact statement.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend directed on 14 March that an environmental statement was not required.

Chlorofluorocarbons

26. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received seeking the ban on the use of products in his Department which contain chlorofluorocarbons.

Mr. Ridley: I have received a number of representations about the use of chlorofluorocarbons by Government Departments.

45. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the world's chlorofluorocarbon production is made in Britain.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Figures for United Kingdom production of CFCs are not available for reasons of commercial confidentiality. In 1986, it is estimated that the European Community accounted for some 40 per cent. of world CFC production.

65. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he has taken since the international ozone conference to encourage the replacement of chlorofluorocarbons and halons; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A message will be delivered from my right hon. Friend as chairman of the "Saving the Ozone Layer" conference on the first day of the meeting of the parties to the Montreal protocol in Helsinki on 2 May.

75. **Mr. Harry Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what percentage cuts in *(a)* consumption and *(b)* production of chlorofluorocarbons Her Majesty's Government are committed; and by when.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under the Montreal protocol and the implementing European legislation, production and consumption of CFCs must be reduced by 20 per cent. by 1994 and by a further 30 per cent. by 1999. On 2 March the EC Environment Council, in response to a United Kingdom initiative, called for the protocol to be strengthened so as to require a cut in production and consumption of CFCs of 85 per cent. as soon as possible, and their complete elimination by the end of the century.

99. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to reintroduce legislation to tackle the problem of chlorofluorocarbons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Montreal protocol requires cuts in production and consumption of CFCs of 50 per cent. by 1999. Within the overall framework of the EC regulation implementing the protocol in the Community we are strongly encouraging industry to reduce use of CFCs to the maximum possible extent. As a result of the steps industry is taking on a voluntary basis the United Kingdom will more than halve its consumption of CFCs by the end of 1989, 10 years ahead of the protocol requirement. If, however, extra powers are needed to back up this voluntary action we shall take them. The United Kingdom and its EC partners have now called for CFC production and consumption to be cut by at least 85 per cent. as soon as possible with a view to their complete elimination by the end of the century, and for the protocol to be strengthened accordingly.

108. **Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many countries which attended the

current month's London conference on the ozone layer indicated that they would sign the Montreal protocol on reducing chlorofluorocarbon consumption.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 20 countries attending the "Saving the Ozone Layer" London conference indicated their firm intention of ratifying or acceding to the Montreal protocol. A further 14 countries stated that they would give serious consideration to becoming parties to the protocol

Rivers (Discharge Consents)

27. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to seek to increase the penalties currently available to the courts for dealing with those who breach their consents to discharge into rivers.

Mr. Howard: The maximum penalties which may be imposed by magistrates for offences under section 32 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 are fines not exceeding £2,000 and terms of imprisonment of up to three months. On indictment in the Crown court there is no limit on the fine that may be imposed and terms of imprisonment can be up to two years. Penalties for pollution offences are kept under regular review but there are no immediate plans for increasing them.

Field Heath Nurseries, Uxbridge

28. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce a decision on the appeal concerning Field Heath nurseries, Uxbridge.

Mr. Howard: As my hon. Friend will recall from the answer given on 27 January 1989 the further views of the parties are under consideration. A decision will be reached as soon as this process has been completed.

"Environment in Trust"

29. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many "Environment in Trust" leaflets have been printed to date; and at what cost.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 25,000 sets of "Environment in Trust" leaflets have been produced so far, at a print cost of £99,760. In addition, the one-off costs of creative design and artwork are £117,594.

Rate Increases

30. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Association of County Councils in respect of rate increases in 1989-90.

Mr. Gummer: None, although I met it to discuss the rate support grant settlement for 1989-90 on 30 November last.

Unleaded Petrol

33. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the use of unleaded petrol in the European Community.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government are committed to promoting unleaded petrol in the European Community and have played a major role in securing the agreement to directives which cover the requirement for new cars to run on the fuel and its availability in Europe.

107. **Mr. Franks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the increase in demand for unleaded petrol since January 1987.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the month to mid-February, unleaded petrol accounted for 5·5 per cent. of the market. Demand has increased more than fiftyfold since figures were first made available in April 1987 when uptake stood at less than 0·1 per cent.

111. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals the Government have for encouraging wider use of unleaded petrol.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Budget raised the duty differential between 4-star leaded and unleaded fuel by an additional 4p a gallon. This should result in a price difference of about 10p per gallon at the pump. It is the second largest differential in the European Community. I am confident that it will ensure a continued rapid increase in take-up of unleaded fuel. The average motorist travelling 10,000 miles in a year stands to save about £35. The Chancellor has also increased the duty on 2-star leaded petrol which will encourage the switching of storage facilities to unleaded petrol, and ensure that the number of outlets continues to rise rapidly. The Government will continue to take steps to promote the widest possible use of unleaded petrol.

Water Pollution

34. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department is taking to ensure that water authorities are penalised for supplying polluted water as drinking water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Clause 51 of the Water Bill will make it an offence for a water undertaker to supply water unfit for human consumption. The penalty for an offence may take the form of a fine or imprisonment. Under clause 19 of the Bill my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be able to enforce compliance with drinking water quality standards set by regulations made under the Bill.

Stonehenge

35. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of English Heritage to discuss the improvement of visitor facilities at Stonehenge.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I met Lord Montagu on 28 February.

English Heritage produced a very imaginative scheme for a new visitor centre some time ago. There has been a delay in taking it forward through the normal planning procedures because of the need to find a route for access to the centre which satisfactorily balances the Army's security and operational needs with the interests of visitors, other landowners and the local community. However, I very much hope that we are now close to a solution.

Norfolk Structure Plan

36. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any representations about the Norfolk structure plan during the last six months.

Mr. Chope: No.

Departmental Publicity

37. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's publicity budget for 1989-90.

Mr. Ridley: The provisional budget is £7·5 million including support costs.

Toxic Waste

38. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government expect to publish their response to the second report from the Environment Select Committee on toxic waste HC22-I.

83. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to respond to the Environment Committee's second report on toxic waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As soon as possible.

44. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to strengthen the regulatory regime for policing sites for the dispersal of toxic waste.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Extended and strengthened controls over waste disposal were announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 29 June 1988 and I put forward supplementary proposals on 23 November 1988. In addition, on 24 January 1989 the Government issued a consultation paper, "The Role and Functions of Waste Disposal Authorities", proposing to separate those authorities' operational and regulatory functions and promote the more effective control of waste disposal. Legislation to enact these measures will be introduced as early as possible during this Parliament.

Council House Sales

39. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take to ensure that councils deal promptly with applications by their tenants to buy their homes.

Mr. Trippier: As I announced in my answer of 10 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) at column 699, provisions came into force on that date enabling tenants whose applications are delayed by the landlord to have rent payments put towards the purchase price.

60. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in England since May 1979.

Mr. Trippier: From April 1979 to December 1988 about 1 million tenants bought their homes from English local authorities and new towns.

77. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures he proposes to encourage council tenants to buy their homes.

Mr. Trippier: As I announced in my answers of 9 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) at column *672* and 10 March to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) at column *699*, we intend to increase the maximum value of discount from £35,000, and have brought into force new measures to help tenants whose applications are delayed by their landlord.

Public Housing (Transfers)

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he will make to ensure an orderly interaction between tenants' choice and other mechanisms for transferring public housing to the private sector.

Mr. Trippier: The Department of the Environment and the Housing Corporation have today issued a joint statement. This sets out detailed arrangements for ensuring a smooth and sensible interaction between tenants' choice on the one hand; and voluntary disposals by local authorities and transfers by new town development corporations, the Commission for New Towns and housing action trusts on the other hand. The main principle proposed is that particular dwellings should be subject to only one transfer proposal at any one time, and that proposal should be allowed to run its course before any other transfer proposal affecting the same dwellings can be put in train. Copies of the statement have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

105. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications have been received under the tenants' choice provisions of the Housing Act 1988 for transfer of the housing stock of local authorities; and how many he has approved.

Mr. Trippier: None. Regulations have recently been laid before Parliament to implement the tenants' choice scheme on 5 April.

Land Registers

41. **Sir Gerard Vaughan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of sites, and their area, on land registers for each of the bodies listed in schedule 16 to the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, as amended.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested has been placed in the Library of the House today.

47. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many requests he has received to include specific vacant sites of under one acre to be listed on land registers under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

104. **Sir Charles Morrison:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many requests he has received to include specific vacant sites of under one acre to be listed on the land registers.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave today to my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes).

84. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how long it will take for the land currently on the land registers to be removed therefrom.

Mr. Trippier: Land is removed from the land registers either when it is brought into use, or sold, or where part X of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 ceases to apply to the owning body. The large number of separate public bodies whose unused or underused land is entered on the registers and the variety of circumstances related to each site make any prediction as to the time taken for the land currently on the register to be removed meaningless. At the end of February 1989 there were 84,400 acres of land on the registers: in 1986 10,200 acres of land were removed; in 1987 15,460 acres and in 1988 10,940.

85. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether all vacant, unused and underused land held by Government Departments is now included on the land registers.

87. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether all vacant, unused and underused land held by Government Departments is now included on land registers under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

Mr. Trippier: From the time the first land registers were compiled, Departments have provided details of land that meets the criteria for entry on the registers of unused and underused publicly-owned land maintained by my right hon. Friend under part X of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. Generally, sites less than one acre in area are not entered on this register.

52. **Mr. Heddle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of sites, and their area, on land registers under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 owned by each Government Department.

57. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites, and of what area, on land registers are owned by each Government Department.

72. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites, and of what area, on the land registers are owned by each Government Department.

Mr. Trippier: The information is set out in the table which shows the position on 28 February 1989.

Department	*Number of sites*	*Total area (acres)*
Department of health	230	4,605
Department of the Environment	35	1,005
Ministry of Defence	39	699
Department of Transport	40	382
Department of Energy	12	140
Home Office	3	5

Planning Decisions

42. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of planning reports from his Department's inspectorate awaiting his decision, and if he will list them, giving the dates they were submitted by the inspectorate.

Mr. Chope: At the end of February 182 reports on planning appeals by the planning inspectorate were awaiting decision by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I will write to the hon. Member with details of these cases.

Sports Council

43. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the chairman of the Sports Council; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Moynihan: I met the chairman of the Sports Council on 20 March together with the chairmen of the regional councils of sport and recreation. We discussed a number of issues relating to sport and recreation. I also had a private dinner with the chairman of the Sports Council yesterday evening.

Rate Increases

46. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the average percentage increase in domestic rates in 1989-90.

Mr. Gummer: The available figures now show an average domestic rate increase in England of between 8 and 9 per cent.

Urban Development Corporations (Land Sales)

48. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by urban development corporation the cash sums raised from land sales each year since designation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Of the 10 UDCs established in England, only London Docklands and Merseyside development corporations reported receipts from land sales up to the end of 1987-88. For the figures for London Docklands I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 21 February 1989, at column 569 to the hon. Member for Ilow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon). Receipts reported for Merseyside development corporation are as follows:

Financial Year	*£000*
1982-83	6
1983-84	120
1984-85	—
1985-86	72
1986-87	291
1987-88	225

Manchester City Council

49. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the leader of Manchester city council; and what was discussed.

Mr. Trippier: The Secretary of State for the Environment last met the leader of Manchester city council, Mr. Graham Stringer, during a visit to the Central Manchester urban development corporation on 28 July 1988, which was the main topic of discussion.

Refrigerant Gases

50. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will launch a programme to finance the safe disposal of existing refrigerant gases.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Both United Kingdom manufacturers of chlorofluorocarbons, and some refrigeration companies, already offer a recycling service for used chlorofluorocarbon refrigerants free of charge.

Pollution

51. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the contribution that individual citizens might make towards reducing pollution.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The individual citizen can make a considerable contribution towards the reduction of pollution. The prevention of litter and the choice of environmentally friendly products—for instance the use of lead-free petrol—are among the many examples of the action that can be taken.

Overbuilding (Outer London)

53. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the further representations he has received from London borough representatives and others on overbuilding in outer London, including during the 23 February meeting at his Department and since that date.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend and I discussed several planning issues with hon. Members and councillors representing a number of the London boroughs at a meeting on 23 February. Those present have not made any further representations about overbuilding. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) on 8 March at column *525*, which sets out the further advice we have given to local planning authorities in London about residential densities.

Football Membership Scheme

54. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when next he will meet the football authorities to discuss the implementation of identity cards for football supporters.

Mr. Moynihan: I have no present plans to meet the football authorities but would be happy to do so whenever they feel this would be helpful and a mutually convenient date can be found.

76. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the likely cost to football clubs of introducing a football membership scheme.

Mr. Moynihan: It is not possible to estimate the financial effects of the scheme until its details, particularly the technology to be employed, have been settled. I understand that a number of companies have said that with co-operation from the football authorities and proper marketing and management, the scheme could be set up and run at no cost to the clubs.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what his proposals are for the transfer of football passes between one person and another.

Mr. Moynihan: The details of the national membership scheme for football supporters will be for the football membership authority to draw up and submit to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for approval. A central premise of the scheme is that membership cards will not be transferable.

Rivers (Discharge Consents)

55. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the maximum level of fines for breaching consents to discharge into rivers.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given today by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Water and Planning to my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway).

Black Country Development Corporation

56. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last visited the Black Country development corporation; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend last visited the development corporation on 15 February this year. Matters discussed related to the regeneration of the corporation's area including major projects such as the propose Sandwell mall and the Black Country spine road.

Council Officers (Political Activity)

58. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the acceptable extent of party political activity by local government officers earning above £13,500.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Representations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have concentrated on the appropriateness of applying political restrictions to the staff concerned rather than the extent of party political activity allowed to them. The representations have reinforced us in our view, that public political activity by such staff is unacceptable where it could conflict with the officers' duties. Our proposals in the Local Government and Housing Bill focus on those cases.

Dogs (Registration)

59. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals for a national dog registration scheme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 23 January to my hon. Frined the Member for Thanet, North, (Mr. Gale) on 23 January 1989 at column *461*.

Ozone Layer (Conference)

62. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the ozone conference.

110. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the international conference on the ozone layer held in London.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The outcome of the highly successful "Saving the Ozone Layer" London conference

was summarised in the chairman's message prepared by my right hon. Friend. Copies of the message, together with a more detailed account by the conference rapporteur, have been placed in the Library.

Water Privatisation

63. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to complete the sale to the public of the nine English water authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: The nine English water authorities will be privatised by the end of 1989.

97. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next proposes meeting the chairmen of the water authorities to discuss water privatisation.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend met the chairmen on Monday 20 March. Further meetings will be arranged as necessary.

Childhood Cancer (Humberside)

64. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much funding has been made available by his Department for the London School of Hygiene's small area health statistics unit; and what progress has been made to date by the unit in analysing the incidence of childhood cancer in Humberside.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The costs for the small area health statistics unit so far total £507,894 of which the Department has provided £167,605. As I explained to my hon. Friend in my letter of 20 March 1989, the unit is not yet fully operational and has not so far been able to undertake studies in specific areas. However, the question of the SAHSU analysing the incidence of childhood cancer in Humberside has been referred to the steering committee for the unit and I should expect the committee to reach an early decision on whether further investigation would be worthwhile and should be undertaken.

Bathing Waters

66. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many bathing waters in England and Wales met European Community standards in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985 and *(c)* 1987.

Mr. Moynihan: In December 1979, the Government identified 27 bathing waters in England and Wales under the terms of the EC bathing water directive (76/160/EEC); 18 of these met the mandatory standards for coliform parameters in the directive. This continued to be the position until 1986 when an extended survey of 354 bathing waters in England and Wales was carried out. The Government announced early in 1987 that these waters would be included within the scope of the bathing water directive. In 1987, 197 out of 360 identified waters in England and Wales (55 per cent.) met EC standards. In each year compliance has been assessed on the basis that at least 95 per cent. of the samples met the mandatory standards.

Sheffield UDC

67. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the first corporate plan from the chief executive of the Sheffield urban development corporation.

Mr. Trippier: I expect to receive Sheffield development corporation's first corporate plan early in the summer.

Cheap Housing

68. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on his proposals on cheap housing deals between councils and developers.

Mr. Howard: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the announcement in the House by my right hon. Friend on 3 February 1989 at columns 433-34 about the role of the planning system in securing the release of land for low-cost housing to meet specific local needs in rural areas.

My Department has received a considerable number of inquiries and representations in response to our announcement which has been generally welcomed as a positive measure in helping to meet the need for suitable low-cost housing in rural areas.

Rate Support Grant (Basildon)

69. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the rate support grant for Basildon district council 1989-90.

Mr. Gummer: Basildon district council is not entitled to block grant in 1989-90. Its block grant position has not changed since 1988-89. Basildon's proposed 74 per cent. rate increase cannot, therefore, be justified by changes in its block grant.

Sewage (Discharge Consents)

70. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many temporary relaxations in sewage works discharge consents have been allowed within the past 12 months.

Mr. Howard: This information is not at present held centrally. Details of applications made and consents granted under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 are held on each water authority's register although in the past the consents may not always have included details of any time limits which had been agreed. Current practice is however, that any time limits which apply to consent conditions are specified as part of the consent and therefore included on the register.

Competitive Tendering

71. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress local councils are making in putting their services out to competitive tender under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Gummer: The competition provisions of the Local Government Act 1988 are being implemented in stages under regulations made in July 1988. The first round of work won in competition has to be under way by 1 August this year with further rounds by 1 January and 1 August in subsequent years. A substantial number of authorities are going out to tender well ahead of the timetable and dividing up the work into sensible packages. Where anti-competitive practice is alleged by contractors my officials are following up the cases vigorously.

Waterways (Pollution)

73. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many miles of British waterways fall below acceptable European Community standards for pollution.

Mr. Moynihan: There is no European Community legislation setting general quality standards for waterways. However, the United Kingdom has designated some 50,000 km of waterways for the purposes of the EEC directive on the "Quality of freshwater needing protection or improvement in order to support fish life" (78/659/EEC).

In 1984, a survey showed that over 90 per cent. of these waterways met all the directive's mandatory standards.

Homelessness

74. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his current plans for addressing the problem of homeless families in the light of the recent Audit Commission report, "Housing the Homeless: the Local Authority Role".

Mr. Trippier: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) on 22 February at column *700*.

88. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance his Department is giving to help overcome the problems faced by the single homeless in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: We have taken a number of measures designed to assist the single homeless who do not fall into a priority need category. These include funding the Housing Corporation's programme of hostels and shared housing, which nationally has approved at least 18,500 places since 1981, and giving priority to key workers through the Housing Corporation's mixed funding programme with a total of £58 million being made available in 1988-89 for this initiative. The Department has produced a leaflet which has been widely distributed, encouraging householders to take in lodgers; and we have also funded a IYSH trust leaflet which informs young people of their housing options before they leave home. The Housing Act 1988 will, of course, increase the amount of private rented accommodation, in the sector where young people have traditionally sought accommodation.

94. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider reallocating capital receipts in stress areas to help local authorities provide homes for homeless households.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend has no powers to do this. The incidence of homelessness is, however, taken into account when capital allocations for housing are distributed to local housing authorities.

Tenants' Incentive Scheme

78. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce details of the tenants' incentive scheme.

Mr. Trippier: The Housing Corporation invited comments by 6 March on its proposal to introduce a tenants' incentive scheme in 1990. The corporation is considering the responses.

Rent Arrears

79. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the highest rental arrears recorded for *(a)* Langbaurgh borough council and *(b)* Middlesbrough borough council; in which months they occurred; and what is the present position.

Mr. Trippier: Tables showing the rent arrears outstanding to English local authorities as at 1 April 1987 and 1988 are in the Library. I have no information for other months of the year.

Rural Housing

80. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further proposals he has for enabling local authorities in rural areas to make provision for local housing need.

Mr. Howard: I refer my hon. Friend to the announcement made by my right hon. Friend on 3 February at column 433. A further announcement, about increased Housing Corporation funding for housing associations, was made by my noble Friend the Minister for Housing in another place on 7 February. Together, they will significantly increase low-cost housing provision for local need in rural areas.

Drinking Water (Oxford)

81. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the monitoring of the quality of drinking water supplied by the Thames water authority to the Oxford area.

Mr. Howard: Thames Water carries out daily monitoring for a number of substances in water supplied to the Oxford area, and undertakes about 7,000 analytical determinations a year. Further information may be obtained from the water authority.

Rented Accommodation

82. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current trend in the supply of affordable rented accommodation.

Mr. Trippier: The annual number of lettings of local authority and housing association housing has held up well in recent years. Our plans to increase private investment in the housing association sector and the 80 per cent. increase in the Housing Corporation's programme should significantly raise the output of new subsidised housing association dwellings.

Rates (Derbyshire)

86. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much Derbyshire county council's rate has increased since 1981-82; and what was the average for all other counties over the same period.

Mr. Gummer: Derbyshire county council's precept has increased by 161 per cent. since 1981-82. The average rise for all other counties since 1981-82 is 106 per cent.

Archaeological Sites

89. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that

unscheduled archaeological sites of importance discovered in the course of site clearance following the granting of planning permission for redevelopment can be excavated and recorded prior to redevelopment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration for the determination of planning applications, whether or not that monument is scheduled. Local planning authorities may also wish to impose conditions requiring developers to allow access for archaeologists to observe work and record items of interest.

Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation

90. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the section 7(1) submissions received by him from the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation in the last three months.

Mr. Trippier: In the last three months the development corporation has submitted one section 7(1) application in respect of housing, associated uses and open space on a 16·7 ha site at Norton Fields, Runcorn. Statutory consultations in relation to this application are being undertaken.

Water Privatisation

91. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he is making in his discussions with private water companies concerning his request that they shall not raise water charges for 1989-90 by more than 10 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave him on 14 March at column *211-12* pursuant to the answer I gave to his question of 23 February.

Association of County Councils

92. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the officers of the Association of County Councils; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. Friend met representatives of the Association of County Councils and the other local authority associations on 29 November last year. The matters discussed were the associations' responses to the consultation papers "Capital Expenditure and Finance" and "Local Authorities' Interests in Companies".

Enterprise Zones

93. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to revise the granting of tax allowances to large corporations in enterprise zones; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I have no plans at present to revise enterprise zone benefits.

District Plans

95. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether planning inspectors take into account draft district plans before they complete their statutory confirmation.

Mr. Chope: In dealing with called-in planning applications and appeals, inspectors may have regard to local plans that are going through the statutory procedures leading to their adoption or approval. The weight to be accorded to such a plan will increase as successive stages in the statutory procedures are reached. Further advice is given in DOE circular 22/84.

Sewage Discharges

96. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sewer outfalls discharge untreated sewage into coastal waters.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 20 March at column *420*.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when concessions were granted by his Department to South West Water to discharge raw sewage into fresh watercourses in the South Hams constituency; for how long the concessions last; and if he will review the arrangements;

(2) what quantity of raw sewage is discharged into fresh watercourses, following concessions granted by his Department to South West Water; how regularly it is permitted; and what steps are taken to neutralise that discharge so that the waters are purified to an acceptable standard;

(3) how many concessions have been granted by his Department to the South West Water authority to discharge raw sewage into fresh watercourses on the South Hams constituency; and how many have been granted for the towns of Dartmouth, Salcombe, Totnes, Ivybridge, Brixham and Kingsbridge.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* No such concessions have been granted by the Department.

Information is not held by the Department in a form which would allow the identification of discharges in any particular area or, where appropriate, any time limits imposed. Details of all consents granted a water authority are, however, held on the register maintained by the water authority which may be inspected, free of charge, at all reasonable hours.

The only discharges of untreated sewage to inland waters are from storm and emergency overflows. By definition, the operation of these is intermittent and thus conditions imposed reflect this and prescribe when a discharge may take place.

Business Rates

98. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next proposes meeting representatives of small businesses to discuss non-domestic rating.

Mr. Gummer: Ministers and officials from my Department frequently meet representatives of both large and small businesses to discuss the Government's arrangements for a fairer and more stable non-domestic rating system from 1 April 1990.

Pollution Control

102. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action has been taken by Her Majesty's Government to implement part II of the Control of Pollution Act since 1974.

Mr. Moynihan: The main provisions of part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 were brought into force between July 1984 and October 1986. These provided for more effective protection of inland surface and underground waters, the extension of controls to cover all coastal and estuarial waters and public involvement, for the first time, in the water pollution control system.

These provisions are to be re-enacted and where appropriate strengthened in the Water Bill.

Water Rates

106. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the average percentage increase in water rates to be charged by the statutory water companies over the coming year.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) on 14 March at columns *211-12*, pursuant to his question on 23 February.

Urban Dereliction

109. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by urban development corporations in tackling urban dereliction over the last year.

Mr. Trippier: Excellent progress has been made. Many illustrations were recorded in "Progress on Cities", produced on 9 March to mark the anniversary of the action for cities initiative. Three particular projects announced that day give an indication of the scope and diversity of UDC activities: a major subsea research, development and testing centre (Teesside DC); a £1·8 million environmental improvement scheme for the historic Castlefields area of Manchester (Central Manchester DC) and a construction industry training centre in conjunction with Henry Boot Training Ltd. (Black Country DC).

Housing (Brent)

112. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the housing investment programme allocation for 1989-90 for the London borough of Brent.

Mr. Trippier: An initial allocation of £15,233 million has been made.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the first report of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will be published.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The first report of HMIP was published today.

The report gives a full account of the inspectorate's activities and achievements in its first year of existence, from April 1987 to March 1988, and touches on some of the major developments in 1988-89. HMIP's first annual report comes at a time of increased awareness of environmental and pollution issues. It should be of interest to everyone with a direct concern in pollution control including central and local government, industry, pollution specialists, pressure groups and researchers.

We set up HMIP in 1987 to provide a more effective and efficient basis for carrying out pollution control. Its formation laid the foundation for an integrated approach to pollution control. We accept that improving environmental standards demands high levels of monitoring and enforcement and adequate resources. The inspectorate's first report demonstrates the vitally important contribution that its activities are making to the protection and enhancement of the environment.

We have already taken the lead in Europe in preparing an integrated pollution control system. Integrated pollution control is the way legislation on environmental protection will develop across Europe in the 1990s.

The system will enable us to achieve a real and lasting overall reduction in pollution. We have recently strengthened the inspectorate's professional capability by the addition of 13 posts. This will ensure that they will remain in the vanguard of the Government's initiatives on environmental policy.

Copies of the report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Rate Defaulters (Imprisonment)

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were imprisoned in England year by year since 1979 for defaulting on their domestic rate payments; and what was the average term of imprisonment.

Mr. Gummer: The number of people imprisoned in England and Wales since 1979 because of non-payment of rates was:

	Number
1979	525
1980	465
1981	415
1982	483
1983	461
1984	420
1985	384
1986	366
1987	350

Information for England only and on the average term of imprisonment could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Magpies

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further studies he has made, since 1985, of the increase in the number of magpies in England and Wales, and the effect of this on the songbird population, particularly in the south of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Nature Conservancy Council has supplied information on the magpie population from the results of the common bird census

carried out annually by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). The NCC advise that magpie numbers in parts of southern England have increased markedly in recent years. Present evidence, pending the outcome of further studies, is that predation by magpies is only one of a number of complex factors affecting the population of small birds.

I understand that a research project by the BTO and the university of Sheffield, sponsored by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, will commence shortly to assess the effect of magpies on songbird populations. The Game Conservancy has a study under way of magpie predation of gamebirds.

Housing Associations

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average housing association rent in Camden, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Islington, Westminster and the City of London; and what this is predicted to be for (i) fair rent tenancies and (ii) assured tenancies by 1991 and 1994-95.

Mr. Trippier: In 1988 the average annual registered rents for housing association property in the London boroughs specified, with the exception of the City of London for which no information is available, were as follows:

	£
Camden	1,424
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,382
Kensington and Chelsea	1,339
Islington	1,299
Westminster	1,630

The figures include both furnished and unfurnished accommodation, but do not include rents for property let under assured tenancies or occupied under licence for which information is not available.

No predictions are made of future rent levels.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many housing associations and local authority homes have been completed annually between 1978-79 and 1988-89 in the central London boroughs of Camden, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Islington, Westminster and the City of London.

Mr. Trippier: Housebuilding completions reported as taking place in these housing authorities in each calendar year from 1980 to 1987 appear in the "Housebuilding in England by Local Authority Areas; 1980 to 1987". Figures for 1978, 1979 and the first half of 1988 were published in "Local Housing Statistics" issues 49, 59 and 87 respectively.

Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Water Quality

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of breaches in 1988 in the EEC guide levels and maximum concentrations for *(a)* iron, *(b)* manganese, *(c)* copper, *(d)* zinc, *(e)* phosphorus, *(f)* barium, *(g)* cadmium, *(h)* chromium, *(i)* mercury, *(j)* nickel and *(k)* lead in water intended for human consumption supplied by the Thames water authority from the Hampton treatment works;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of breaches in 1988 in the EEC guide levels and maximum concentrations for *(a)* herbicides, *(b)* fungicides, *(c)* PCBs, *(d)* insecticides, *(e)* total bacteria counts, *(f)* faecal coliforms and *(g)* faecal streptococci in water intended for human consumption supplied by the Thames water authority from the Hampton treatment works;

(3) if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of breaches in 1988 in the EEC guide levels and maximum concentrations for *(a)* chlorides, *(b)* sulphates, *(c)* magnesium, *(d)* sodium, *(e)* potassium, *(f)* nitrates, *(g)* aluminium, *(h)* nitrites and *(i)* phenols in water intended for human consumption supplied by the Thames water authority from the Hampton treatment works.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand from Thames water authority that the water leaving the Hampton treatment works complied with the standards set in the EC drinking water directive for all the parameters listed by the hon. Member during 1988 except for a single sample which exceeded the herbicide standard.

I have no information in relation to EC guide levels.

Rain Forest

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has had from Dr. John Houghton, director general of the Meteorological Office, about his request for information about the climatological consequences of the destruction of the Brazilian rain forest.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department will continue to keep in touch with the work led by Dr. John Houghton which I described in my reply to the hon. Member on 17 March, *Official Report*, column *367*.

Sewage Discharges

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sewerage outlets discharge untreated raw sewage into the sea.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave today to the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy).

Construction Aggregates

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish new guidance on the supply of construction aggregates.

Mr. Chope: Planning guidelines for aggregates provision in England and Wales are being published today in mineral planning guidance note 6 and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library. It updates and replaces advice issued previously in DOE circular 21/82 and Welsh Office circular 30/82 and has been prepared following a public consultation exercise in 1988. The guidelines recognise that there is a need to ensure continuity of supplies to the construction industry of basic raw materials, and to meet demand. However, it is very important to strike the best balance of social, environmental and economic costs, and the guidelines demonstrate the burden of responsibility on mineral planning authorities in deciding applications for aggregate mineral extraction.

Aggregates working is often noisy, dusty and visually intrusive and the Government believe that industry, in consultation with local planning authorities, should make every effort to reduce these damaging effects. There is also a need to apply the national and regional guidelines at the mineral planning authority level and the Government believe that this important work should be treated as a priority task by the planning authorities and the regional aggregates working parties. In addition this recent review of the guidelines and the public consultation exercise have highlighted a number of long-term supply issues and these will be addressed by the Government through the Department of the Environment's mineral planning research programme.

London Residuary Body (Superannuation Fund)

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has received from the London residuary body in respect to the transfer of its superannuation fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend has received proposals from Sir Godfrey Taylor, chairman of the London residuary body (LRB), under section 67 of the Local Government Act 1985 for the transfer to a new corporate body on 1 April 1990 of the superannuation fund and associated functions, rights and liabilities which it inherited on the abolition of the former Greater London council.

My right hon. Friend is minded to accept the LRB's proposals, with certain modifications, and will shortly be commencing consultations with the London boroughs, including the City, and other interested parties over an outline for the transfer of these responsibilities. The scheme proposes the establishment of a new "London Pensions Fund", a corporate body with a membership of between seven and 11 members appointed by my right hon. Friend. It would have an independent chairman, with the remaining board members being drawn equally from London local government and independent sources. It is proposed that the London Pensions Fund would be brought within the scope of local government legislation.

My right hon. Friend will also be seeking views on the establishment of a voluntary consultative committee which he might consult over appointments to the London Pensions Fund.

Transferred Property (Sales)

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what his policy will be in relation to requests for his consent under sections 105 and 133 of the Housing Act 1988 to sales of transferred property by a mortgagee or chargee in possession.

Mr. Trippier: Subject to certain exceptions (notably sales under the right to buy), sections 105 and 133 of the Housing Act 1988 require my consent to be obtained before property which has been transferred by local authorities under section 32 or 43 of the Housing Act 1985 or by public sector landlords under part IV of the 1988 Act ("tenants' choice") may be disposed of by its new owners.

We understand that some prospective acquirers of property under these powers have it in mind to apply, at the time when a mortgage or other charge is granted on transferred property as security for a loan, for my consent to subsequent disposals should certain defined circumstances arise. My right hon. Friend will, of course, consider all applications for consent under sections 105 and 133 on their merits. Subject to that, however, my right hon. Friend will be prepared in principle to consider sympathetically applications at the time when such mortgages and charges are to be granted for my consent under either section 105 or section 133 to subsequent disposals of transferred dwellings by named mortgagees and chargees in the exercise of a power of sale, provided:

that the dwellings to be disposed of are vacant when the power of sale is exercised;

that the sales are to individuals intending to use the dwellings as their only or principal homes; that the sales are at the best price that can reasonably be obtained; and that the sales are by the mortgagee or chargee in exercise of the power of sale contained in the original mortgage or charge.

Forest Proposal (Midlands)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has considered and responded to the Countryside Commission's proposal for the creation of a new forest in the midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 21 March 1989]:* I understand that the Countryside Commission intends to submit proposals for the creation of a new forest in the midlands to the Department later this year, after considering a feasibility study by consultants and carrying out consultations with the Forestry Commission and other interests.

Docklands (Tourism)

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to develop tourism in docklands.

Mr. David Trippier *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* The LDDC fully recognises the tourism potential of docklands. It has responsibility for tourism and leisure, projects to improve information to tourists and the tourism industry, projects to conserve and improve the environment and restore historic buildings, and it is attracting imaginative private sector developments, including proposals likely to bring in visitors. Public transport improvements are also helping.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what tourist facilities are being built into Canary wharf.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* Canary wharf is planned to include 500,000 sq ft of retailing and other leisure facilities and extensive public places.

Air Pollution

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce new limits for diesel engine pollutants emissions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

We shall be consulting shortly on regulations which will apply limits on gaseous emissions from diesel engined vehicles for the first time.

For cars we shall apply European standards in two stages. The first stage (directive 83/351/EEC) sets

standards identical to those which currently apply to petrol-engined vehicles. It will take effect on 1 October 1990. The second stage (directive 88/76/EEC) will apply the same limits that will mean the general fitment of catalysts to petrol-engined cars. It will take effect by 1 October 1993.

On 1 October 1990 we shall also apply the European particulate limits for diesel-engined cars (directive 88/436/EEC). Special arrangements in line with all these directives will be made for direct injection diesel-engined cars.

For all other diesel-engined vehicles we shall apply the recently agreed European standard on gaseous emissions (directive 88/77/EEC) at the earliest date permitted, 1 October 1990.

Discussions are continuing in the European Community on a tightening of the 88/77/EEC standards and on the introduction of particulate limits for these other categories of vehicle.

UN Environment Programme

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who represented Her Majesty's Government, at the latest United Nations environment programme conference in Basle on the international trade and regulation of hazardous and toxic wastes; what proposals were made at the conference by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement about the outcome of the conference.

Mr. Ridley: My noble Friend the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside led the United Kingdom delegation at the diplomatic conference in Basle. I will make a statement about the conference as soon as possible.

SCOTLAND

Regional Assistance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the projected residual regional develpment grant expenditure for Scotland for 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Rifkind: Estimated gross expenditure on regional development grant, including both the original and revised schemes, in 1988-89 is expected to be around £76 million. Planned net provision for 1989-90 is £61·2 million—details are published in the supply estimates.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the projected regional selective assistance expenditure in Scotland for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Rifkind: Planned net provision for regional selective assistance and related schemes (including regional enterprise grants), consistent with the figures published in "Public Expenditure to 1991-92, A Commentary on the Scotland Programme," for 1989-90, 1990-91 aand 1991-92 is £63 million, £80 million and £80 million respectively.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total expenditure on regional development grant for each of the years 1983-84 to 1987-88 inclusive, and the estimated expenditure for 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* Total gross expenditures on regional development grant under both the original and revised schemes in the years 1983-84 to 1987-88 inclusive are £143 million, £109·2 million, £107·5 million, £170·2 million and £78 million respectively. Estimated gross expenditure in 1988-89 is expected to be around £76 million. Planned provision for 1989-90 is published in the Supply estimates. Planned net provision, consistent with the figures published in "Public Expenditure to 1991-92, A Commentary on the Scotland Programme", for each of the years 1990-91 and 1991-92 is approximately £30 million.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the Scottish Development Agency about its future.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have regular meetings with the board of the Scottish Development Agency about its future plans. Most recently, my right hon. and learned Friend met the Chairman, Sir David Nickson, on 7 March.

Landfill Sites (Inspectors)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inspectors responsible for landfill sites are currently employed in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* The authorities responsible for landfill sites are the district and islands councils. The hazardous waste inspectorate of the Scottish Development Department, which examines the management of hazardous waste by the responsible authorities, employs six staff for a part of their time equivalent to about two full-time officers.

Illegal Dumping

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy towards central Government subsidy of incinerators as a means of removing the cost incentive for illegal dumping.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* Government policy is that the full costs of disposal and treatment should be met by waste producers. The Government have proposed strengthened and extended controls, including a duty of care on producers and holders of waste to ensure its legal disposal.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy towards the imposition of heavier fines on people convicted of illegal waste-dumping.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* Fine levels are set against a five point standard scale, which is subject to periodic review. The penalty imposed in any individual case is for the court to determine.

Re-Chem Incinerator (Bonnybridge)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the closure of the Re-Chem incinerator at Bonnybridge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* The Government received four representations in 1984, two from industry, one from the industrial

waste panel (Scotland) and one from Glasgow college of technology expressing concern about the closure. None has been received since then.

Hazardous Waste

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's policy towards the compilation of a register of hazardous waste producers, with information relating to the means of waste disposal in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* The disposal of controlled waste in Scotland is governed by the Control of Pollution (Licensing of Waste Disposal) (Scotland) Regulations 1977 and the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980. All waste must be disposed of at a site which is being used in accordance with a licence issued by the waste disposal authority for the area, and the waste disposal authority must keep available at its principal office a register of these licences. The special waste regulations make provision for a system of consignment notes to be used by those who produce, transfer for disposal or dispose of special waste so that the waste disposal authority concerned is properly informed.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make it his policy to give statutory powers of enforcement to the hazardous waste inspectorate in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* The proposals for amendments to waste disposal law, which were announced by the Scottish Development Department on 14 February, including the placing of the inspectorate on a statutory footing.

Waste Disposal

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures are proposed for giving citizens in Scotland greater access to information about the transportation and disposal of waste in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* Under the Control of Pollution (Licensing of Waste Disposal) (Scotland) Regulations 1977, every waste disposal authority keeps a register of site licences, which is available for public inspection at its principal office. Some of the Government's proposals to strengthen and extend the controls on waste disposal, including the registration of waste handlers, will result in greater public access to information.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take in order to deter illegal waste dumping in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* The Government support the proposals in the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Bill to deter illegal waste dumping. The Scottish Development Department will shortly be issuing a follow-up consultation paper on waste disposal law amendment, which will address the subject.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the transportation of waste from Scotland to Third world countries in exchange for foreign currency.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* This information is not held centrally, but the hazardous waste inspectorate of the Scottish Development Department is not aware of any traffic of this kind.

Landfill Sites

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of landfill sites by district in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* Our latest information on the number of landfill sites where an operating licence or council resolution is in force is as follows:

	Number
Borders	
Berwickshire	3
Ettrick and Lauderdale	5
Roxburgh	3
Tweeddale	1
Central	
Clackmannan	6
Falkirk	19
Stirling	8
Dumfries and Galloway	
Annandale and Eskdale	5
Nithsdale	6
Stewartry	10
Wigtown	9
Fife	
Dunfermline	20
Kirkcaldy	17
North East Fife	9
Grampian	
Aberdeen	16
Banff and Buchan	19
Gordon	14
Kincardine and Deeside	8
Moray	11
Highland	
Badenoch and Strathspey	2
Caithness	7
Inverness	1
Lochaber	8
Ross and Cromarty	5
Skye and Lochalsh	3
Sutherland	8
Lothian	
East Lothian	9
Edinburgh	12
Midlothian	11
West Lothian	15
Strathclyde	
Argyll and Bute	1
Clydebank	1
Clydesdale	7
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	8
Cumnock and Doon Valley	3
Cunninghame	16
Dumbarton	5
East Kilbride	6
Eastwood	3
Glasgow	12
Hamilton	10
Inverclyde	4
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	4
Kyle and Carrick	4

	Number
Monklands	6
Motherwell	8
Renfrew	17
Strathkelvin	14
Tayside	
Angus	11
Dundee	7
Perth and Kinross	21
Islands	
Orkney	18
Shetland	6
Western Isles	7
TOTAL	469

Labour Statistics

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what change there has been in the level of employment in Scotland since 1979.

Mr. Lang: Between June 1979 and June 1988 the civilian work force in employment in Scotland is provisionally estimated to have fallen by 77,000, but in the most recent five years there was an increase of 106,000. These estimates are subject to revision when the results of the 1987 census of employment become available.

Wildlife Poisoning

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each of the last five years the number of cases of wildlife poisoning in Scotland caused by the illegal use of pesticides or poisoning; and if he will identify the species involved and if possible the poison or pesticide involved.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of incidents and affected species involving the illegal use of pesticides or misuse of poisons against wildlife in Scotland, as confirmed by the wildlife incident investigation service, in each of the years from 1984 to 1988, are given in the table.

Number of incidents

Year	Wildlife	Domestic animals	Number of victims (baits only)	Species involved	Number of species	Pesticides involved
1984	10	12	2	Eagles	2	Aldrin
				Buzzards	4	Chloralose
				Peregrine Falcon	1	Mevinphos
				Tawny Owl	1	Strychnine
				Corvids	10	
				Gulls	4	
				Pigeons	4	
				Song birds	8	
				Domestic animals	17	
1985	20	8	4	Eagles	3	Chloralose
				Buzzards	9	Mevinphos
				Sparrow Hawk	1	Strychnine
				Corvids	12	
				Gulls	18	
				Pigeon	1	
				Foxes	2	
				Domestic animals	13	
1986	19	6	2	Eagle	1	Chloralose
				Buzzards	10	Mevinphos
				Sparrow Hawks	2	Strychnine
				Kestrel	1	
				Herons	6	
				Corvids	4	
				Gull	1	
				Pigeons	2	
				Fox	1	
				Domestic animals	13	
1987	23	8	7	Eagles	2	Chloralose
				Buzzards	9	Fenthion
				Corvids	40	Mevinphos
				Gulls	3	Strychnine
				Pigeons	2	
				Song birds	3	
				Domestic animals	9	
1988	20	9	6	Eagles	4	Bendiocarb
				Buzzards	7	Carbofuran
				Tawny Owls	2	Chloralose
				Corvids	27	Metaldehyde
				Gulls	6	Mevinphos
				Pigeons	4	Strychnine
				Song birds	10	
				Fox	1	
				Hen Harrier	1	
				Domestic animals	11	

Conservation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is Forestry Commission policy on leaving unplanted areas of archaeological, scientific or wildlife value on Forestry Commission land; and whether the commission has a rule of thumb as to the percentage of unplanted land it will maintain in its operational forests;

(2) whether the Forestry Commission has examined the wildlife conservation value of its properties in the lowlands of England and Wales; what is the policy of the commission on leaving areas in such properties unplanted if this is seen to be in the best interests of nature conservation; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The wildlife conservation value of the Forestry Commission's properties throughout Great Britain has been carefully examined in the course of drawing up conservation plans for each of its forest districts. These plans contain environmental management policies for the forests as a whole and prescriptions for sites of particular conservation value.

All well-designed forests have a proportion of open space within them for environmental as wel as practical reasons. These include not only roads and rides needed for operational purposes, but open spaces left for the protection of sites of archaeological value, the provision of deer glades, the needs of particular flora and fauna, and the development of recreation. Open spaces near water are of particular value. Since each conservation plan is tailored to the circumstances of individual sites, there is no fixed percentage of land to be left unplanted, but it is often of the order of 15 per cent. Where open space is lacking in existing forests opportunities are sought to create it at the earliest practical opportunity.

Further information is given in the four environment leaflets published recently by the Forestry Commission, copies of which are in the Library. In addition, the commission is preparing a more comprehensive booklet giving guidelines on nature conservation in forests.

Woodland Grant Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names, locations and areas of woodland grant scheme applications in excess of 100 hectares submitted since the start of the scheme in Scotland, showing for which of these an environmental assessment has been requested by the Forestry Commission; and if he will give reasons why environmental assessment has not been requested for any remaining applications.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Those applications received under the woodland grant scheme for more than 100 hectares of new planting in Scotland are listed in the tables. Environmental assessments have been requested for nine of these applications. An environmental assessment was not requested for the others, either because the applications were received before the environmental assessment provisions took effect or because they did not meet the criteria specified in the Forestry Commission booklet "Environmental Assessment of Afforestation Projects". A copy of this booklet is in the Library.

In addition, environmental assessments have been requested for six applications of less than 100 hectares.

Name	*Region*	*Area (ha)*
Applications for which an Environmental Assessment was requested		
Auchenroy and Dalcairnie	Strathclyde	419
Brabster farm 2	Highland	564
Corrielair	Highland	458
Cnoc Nan Gall	Highland	231
Gorteneorn	Highland	296
Gulls Nest	Grampian	298
The Hope	Highland	233
Pitcarmick	Tayside	160
Turbiskill Farm	Strathclyde	207
Applications for which no Environmental Assessment was requested		
Ashkirktown	Borders	228
Lumsdane	Borders	130
Philogar	Borders	161
Shankend II	Borders	154
Bannockburn	Central	223
Castlewood	Central	117
Albierigg and Barascroft	Dumfries and Galloway	178
Archbank and Pirnierig	Dumfries and Galloway	209
Breckonside	Dumfries and Galloway	189
Drumhumphrie	Dumfries and Galloway	127
Ericstane	Dumfries and Galloway	168
High Muir	Dumfries and Galloway	105
Knockower Plann A	Dumfries and Galloway	278
Knockower Plann B	Dumfries and Galloway	215
Ballindalloch	Grampian	214
Ben Rinnes the Convals	Grampian	596
Berryley	Grampian	164
Berrymoss	Grampian	129
Boghead of Inverkeithley	Grampian	107
Chraad farm	Grampian	160
East Side Glendye	Grampian	1,077
Hillpark	Grampian	110
Hillside	Grampian	203
Jocks Hill	Grampian	309
Parkmore	Grampian	170
Shians	Grampian	245
West Touxhill	Grampian	161
Achany	Highland	147
Coishletter	Highland	602
Corrary	Highland	163
Dundreggan	Highland	107
Glentruim	Highland	365
Knoydart	Highland	681
Limekiln and Whitewell	Highland	1,072
Lochluichart (1)	Highland	253
Lochluichart (2)	Highland	218
Lochluichart (3)	Highland	211
Lochluichart (4)	Highland	250
Loubcroy	Highland	202
Maoi Donn	Highland	272
Moll	Highland	101
Sciberscross	Highland	790
Strathvaich	Highland	360
Trien plantation	Highland	164
Tulchan	Highland	373
Wyvis Estate	Highland	317
Craigshiel Block A	Strathclyde	176
Crossaig	Strathclyde	142
Darbyburn Forest	Strathclyde	657
Kilwhannel	Strathclyde	115
Lambhill	Strathclyde	554
Lambhill	Strathclyde	619
Lennox	Strathclyde	255
Lochorodale	Strathclyde	259
Mosslingal	Strathclyde	530
North Carse	Strathclyde	359
Pennyghael	Strathclyde	105
Upper Beoch	Strathclyde	582
Brerachan	Tayside	189
Fossoway	Tayside	165
Glen Sherup	Tayside	123
Kinnaird	Tayside	214
North Hill	Tayside	103

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of the Forestry Commission's planting operations in 1987-88, in terms of *(a)* direct costs of the planting in the year and *(b)* supervisory costs and overheads related to that planting.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

£ million

	New planting	Restocking
Direct (forest) costs	4·37	6·59
Supervisory costs and overheads	1·53	3·51
Total costs	5·90	10·10

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the names, locations and purchase dates of the blocks of land of areas greater than 100 hectares which were newly planted by the Forestry Commission in 1987-88.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Name	Location[1]	Area (hectares)	Year of purchase
Glenforsa	Mull (North)	160	1977
Dyke	Dornoch (North)	163	1976
Dalnessie	Dornoch (North)	243	1957
Invershin	Dornoch (North)	171	1978
Achormlarie	Dornoch (North)	257	1983
Dunans	Cowal (Mid)	129	1980
Skipness	Kintyre (Mid)	182	1972
Camusericht	Perthshire (Mid)	243	1975
Glassie Hill	Perthshire (Mid)	298	1982
Kinnelhead	Nithsdale (South)	121	1965
Dalwyne	Ayrshire (South)	323	1984
Drumlamford	Newton Stewart (South)	164	1983
Laggish	Newton Stewart (South)	147	1983

[1]All the land was in Scotland. The locations shown are by Forestry Commission forest districts, with the conservancy indicated in brackets.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what areas of land the Forestry Commission proposed to newly plant in the year 1988-89; and if he will list, by Forestry Commission conservancies, the total area to be planted and the names and locations of the blocks over 100 hectares.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Areas proposed for planting

Conservancy	Area (hectares)
North England	81
East England	16
West England	17
Wales	81
North Scotland	1,929
Mid Scotland	1,092
South Scotland	955
Total	4,171

Areas over 100 hectares

Name	Location[1]	Area (hectares)
Scotsburn	Easter Ross (North)	199
Glenforsa	Mull (North)	150
Corriemonie	Fort Augustus (North)	139
Loch an Doire	Lochaber (North)	114
Invershin	Dornoch (North)	183
Achormlarie	Dornoch (North)	193
Tannach Hill	Dornoch (North)	120
Skipness	Kintyre (Mid)	387
Carron	Loch Awe (Mid)	127
Kinharvie	Nithsdale (South)	126
Lamdoughty	Ayrshire (South)	259
Whiteknowe/Badrochat	Newton Stewart (South)	388

[1] All the land was in Scotland. The locations shown are by Forestry Commission Forest Districts, with the Conservancy indicated in brackets.

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will expand his response to "Forestry in Scotland" by the Countryside Commission and "Forestry in Scotland: Planning the Way Ahead" by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Mr. Rifkind: My letters to the chairman of the Countryside Commission for Scotland and the president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities provide a full response to the reports by the commission and the convention respectively. I have placed copies in the Library of the House.

Roads

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for 1989-90, 1990-91, and 1991-92, the provision for value-added tax liability on new construction within the budgets given for capital expenditure on roads by his Department and the local authorities in Scotland in chapter 17 of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1989-90 to 1991-92."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The relevant provision for trunk roads is £13·9 million, £19 million and £20·7 million respectively for the years in question. Allocations to local authorities for capital expenditure on road construction do not include provision for VAT liabilities. Local authorities are able to reclaim VAT where supply is not for the purpose of business activities.

Drinking Water (Contamination)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all water supplies in Scotland that are in breach of the EEC directive on water quality in respect of safety limits in lead in drinking water; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The water supplies concerned are listed in the table. Improvement work is in hand for all these supplies and in most cases will be completed by the end of this year. Of the remaining 17 supplies, all in Strathclyde and Lothian regions, 15 are expected to comply with the EC limit not later than mid-1991 and two major schemes, of which lead remedial work is only a part, will extend into 1992.

Authority and Supply

Dumfries and Galloway Region

Arrenning (Springholm)

Auchneel (Stranraer)

Black Esk (Annandale/Eskdale)
Carsphairn
Creetown
Euchan (Kirkconnel)
Glengap (Kirkcudbright, Gatehouse)
Kettleton (Central Nithsdale)
Killylour (Dumfries)
Landheads (Annan)
Langholm
Lochfoot
Lochinvar (Castle Douglas, Dalbeattie)
Loch Rosn (Castle Douglas)
Millburn (Palnure)
Moffat
New Abbey (South-West Nithsdale)
Newton Stewart
Penwhirn (Wigtown District)
Sanquhar
Wanlockhead
Winterhope (South-East Annandale, Eskdale)

Grampian Region
Aberlour, Dufftown, Tomintoul
Black Hills (Lossiemouth)
Craigmill (Forres)
Cullen
Forehill (Peterhead, St. Fergus)
Fortrie (Macduff, Gardenstown)
Herricks (Keith)
Hillhead (Fraserburgh)
Newbigging (Inverurie)
Terpersie (Strathdon, Strathbogie)
Upper Deeside (Aboyne, Ballater)
Wrack (Banff)

Highland Region
Ardnamurchan
Calder and Hoy (Thurso)
Corpach/Caol
Fort William
Helmsdale
North Speyside
Oldtown (Inverness)
South Speyside

Lothian Region
Fairmilehead/Alnwickhill
(parts of Edinburgh)

Strathclyde Region
Afton (Cumnock and Doon Valley)
Bradan (North Ayrshire)
Camphill (North Ayrshire, Paisley)
Camps (parts of Clydesdale, Hamilton, Motherwell districts)
Garshake (Dumbarton)
Loch Ascog (Rothesay)
Loch Eck (Dunoon area)
Loch Lomond (bulk) (North Glasgow)
Loch Lomond (Dumbarton, Leven)
Loch Sloy (Arrochar, Gareloch)
Luss
Millglen (Ardrossan)
Muirdykes (Paisley, Johnstone, etc.)
Overton (Leven)
Picketlaw (Eaglesham, Clarkston)
South Moorhouse (Newton Mearns, Giffnock, etc)
Spallander (Kyle and Carrick)

Tayside Region
Aberfeldy
Acharn
Alyth
Burnhead (Blairgowrie)
Camserney
Clash (Kirriemuir)
Grandtully
Kenmore
Kinloch Rannoch
Lintrathen (Couper Angus)

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in implementing section 5 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, in respect of its obligation to place duties upon educational authorities and social services authorities to identify, assess and provide for the needs of people with mental handicaps at the time that they move out of full-time education; and what arrangements have been made to ensure that these facilities are being monitored in respect of their implementation in terms of quality of life.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Section 5 does not apply in Scotland. The relevant provision is section 13 which came into operation on 1 February 1988. We are currently considering appropriate monitoring arrangements.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to implement sections 1 and 2 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and whether he will meet the cost implications required to appoint authorised representatives for all people with mental handicaps in connection with the provision of services and the right to obtain relevant information to facilitate an informed choice of a selection of appropriate support services.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A date for implementing sections 1 and 2 has not yet been set. The cost implications of those provisions will be the subject of consultations with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and other interests.

Legal Aid

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Scottish legal aid board will be authorised to pay legal aid accounts in cases where prior to the commencement of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations, work carried out by the solicitor had the effect of bringing proceedings to an end before a full section 1 application was determined.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In terms of a determination under section 4(2)(c) of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986, as amended, dated 29 July 1988, the Scottish legal aid board may make payments under specified conditions in cases where full civil legal aid is not made available.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, which date will be fixed by the Scottish legal aid board as the date of notification by a solicitor that the £60 limit has been exceeded, under the terms of the Advice and Assistance (Scotland) Prospective Cost (No. 3) Regulations, 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The date of the solicitor's letter notifying the Scottish legal aid board that the £60 limit has been exceeded.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance is given concerning any provisions there are for payment in full of legal aid to solicitors, under the Civil Legal Aid (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) and (No. 3) Regulations 1988, where work is undertaken in good faith for a client who was believed to be eligible for legal aid; and from whom it was agreed to accept payment by instalments towards his estimated legal aid contribution, on which the client subsequently defaults after legal aid has been refused.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In a letter to the profession dated 5 August 1988, and in the winter 1988 edition of its quarterly journal *The Recorder*, the Scottish legal aid board has advised solicitors to make such arrangements with clients as will protect them against the possibility of a refusal by the client to pay, noting that this is ultimately a matter between solicitor and client.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking to increase the number of management agreements negotiated to date in environmentally sensitive areas in Scotland and improve their attractiveness to farmers and crofter within environmentally sensitive areas in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland has published explanatory leaflets and held public meetings in each of the designated areas in Scotland to publicise the scheme. Local officers of the Department and Scottish agricultural college advisory staff are available to provide information and advice to farmers or crofters in the designated areas.

Sports Medicine

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what proportion of health expenditure is devoted to sports medicine; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will state the number of consultants engaged in sports medicine and the health boards by whom they are employed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to expand the practice of sports medicine within the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provision of medical services for the treatment of injuries whether sporting or otherwise is for individual health boards.

Education Initiatives

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the main education initiatives which the Government have undertaken in Scotland since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A list, with short descriptions, of the main initiatives undertaken in Scottish education since 1979 follows:

1. *Standard Grade*—Introduction to schools of new courses and examinations for age 14-16 that give every pupil credit for his or her achievements.

2. *Action Plan*—A new deal in education and training for age 16+, bringing pre-vocational and vocational training up to date and fitting it to the needs of employers and individuals.

3. *Technical and Vocational Education Initiative* (TVEI)—A national programme to provide within the school curriculum for the practical and applied skills and attitudes needed in employment in the years ahead.

4. *Industry/Education Initiative*—A national measure to increase links between schools and employers so that each has a better understanding of the others needs and requirements.

5. *Curriculum and Assessment*—A review of the primary and early secondary curriculum and of assessment procedures, to introduce better quality and greater consistency in the delivery of education, and make the good practice of some the standard for all.

6. *Modern Languages*—Planned extension of competence in a modern European language to all pupils.

7. *Special Educational Needs*—More effective procedures to identify, record and make suitable provision for pupils with severe handicap. 1981 Act.

8. *Pupils with Learning Difficulties*—Development of better provision and support for those pupils.

9. *Information Technology*—Support for provision of computers in all schools.

10. *Equipment for Science and Technology*—Support for extension and modernisation of equipment in schools.

11. *Research*—Research projects to support all major Government initiatives.

12. *Publication of Inspection Reports on Schools*—Reports produced on all schools which have been subjected to a full inspection, for information to parents and exemplification of good practice.

13. *Training for Teachers*

13.1 All graduate entry to teaching announced in 1983. New degree course for primary teaching introduced in 1984; degrees for music and technology teaching in 1987.

13.2 Revised and extended postgraduate courses with more emphasis on school experience and the integration of theory and practice (primary-1986, secondary-1987).

13.3 Better delivery of in-service training by:

the introduction in 1984 of a specific grant to education authorities to encourage priority to nationally important topics; indentification of priority areas through the creation of the Scottish Council for Staff Development in Education (SCOSDE) in 1987; and

an enabling clause in the self-Governing Schools Etc (Scotland) Bill currently before Parliament to introduce the appraisal of teachers' performance.

14. *Teachers' Pay and Conditions of Service*—Revision through agreement of teachers' pay and conditions of service in 1987, which made specific provision for

14.1 the appointment of a new grade of senior teacher;

14.2 time away from the classroom for parents' evenings;

14.3 time for in-service training and other forms of professional development (PAT).

15. *Staff Development*

15.1 A major management training programme for headteachers has been launched.

15.2 More training support is planned for probationer teachers.

15.3 Views have been invited on a voucher scheme to stimulate teachers' personal professional development.

16. *Parental Choice*—Introduction of a right for parents to choose their children's school. More than 13 per cent. of pupils at P1 stage are now the subject of a placing request, more than 10 per cent. of pupils at S1. More than 90 per cent. of placing requests are granted.

17. *Parental Involvement in Schools*—Establishment of School Boards in every local authority school in Scotland by October 1989; membership to include parents, teachers and co-opted members. This will give parents an effective voice in their children's education and in the management of schools.

18. *Assisted Places Scheme*—The Assisted Places Scheme, introduced in 1981, has widened the scope for exercise of choice by parents and the range of educational opportunity for children, by enabling parents of modest income to send their children to independent fee-paying schools if they so prefer. The Scheme assists 2,670 pupils, at 41 schools. From 1989-90 the Scheme will be extended to include pupils in the later stages of preparatory schools. The total number of pupils benefiting is expected to rise to about 3,000 by 1991-92.

19. *Technology Academies*—An initiative involving private sector sponsorship to extend the scope for choice, to widen the range and diversity of schools available and to raise standards and expectations of pupils, parents and teachers.

20. *Parent Involvement in Discipline*—Regulations made in 1982 require parents to be involved in decisions about disciplinary behaviour at a very early stage where exclusion from a school is in prospect. The closer involvement of parents with schools through School Boards will also encourage the partnership between home and school in maintaining good standards of behaviour.

21. *Abolition of Corporal Punishment*—Since 1987 corporal punishment has been abolished as a sanction for pupils whose education is directly provided in whole or in part from public funds.

22. *Playground Supervision*—Some £4 million has been provided in the Revenue Support Grant settlement in 1989-90, to enable education authorities to provide for proper playground supervision at lunchtimes.

23. *Educational Expenditure*—Between 1979-80 and 1987-88 net current expenditure per pupil by local authorities on schools increased in real terms by 39 per cent. (now £1,587 per pupil compared with £1,143 in 1979-80 at 1987-88 prices).

Burrell Gallery

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much of the cost of building the Burrell gallery in Glasgow was met by the Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have today authorised the payment of £595,662 in full and final settlement of the Government's grant contribution towards the cost of building the gallery. This will make the final total of Government grant £9,426,160. A total of £1,742,336 was contributed by the Burrell fund and the balance of just under 50 per cent. was met by Glasgow district council.

Investment Grants

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if the will give the total number of applicants *(a)* received and *(b)* approved for investment grants from 1 April 1988 to 31 December 1988; what was the total amount of expenditure involved; and what the total estimated expenditure planned for that period;

(2) if he will give the total number of applicants *(a)* received and *(b)* approved for innovation grants, from 1 April 1988 to 31 December 1988; the total amount of expenditure involved and the total estimated expenditure involved and *(c)* the total estimated expenditure planned for that period.

Mr. Lang *[pursuant to his reply, Thursday 16 March 1989]:* The information requested is shown for the period 1 April to 31 December.

Regional Enterprise grants

	Number
(i) Investment grants	
Number of applications received	247
Number of applications approved	125
Value of applications approved	£772·7 thousand
(ii) Innovation grants	
Number of applications received	66
Number of applications approved	21
Value of applications approved	£481·5 thousand

The present provision for regional enterprise grants, which covers both investment and innovation grants, for the financial year 1988-89 is £1·6 million.

Development Corporation Houses

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses from development corporation stock have been sold in each of the new towns since vesting day, expressed as a percentage of the total stock.

Mr. Lang *[pursuant to his reply of 23 January, 1989]:* The information, as amended, is set out in the table.

	Total stock	*Total sales*	*Percentage sales*
East Kilbride[1]	22,585	9,794	43·4
Glenrothes[1]	12,095	5,216	43·13
Cumbernauld[1]	14,206	6,857	48·3
Livingston[2]	12,120	2,780	22·9
Irvine[1]	5,264	1,016	19·3

[1] As at 31 December 1988.
[2] As at 30 September 1988.

HEALTH

Pharmaceutical Imports

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the value of pharmaceutical imports from Greece in 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have been asked to reply.

Imports of medicinal and pharmaceutical products from Greece in 1987 and 1988 were £6·7 million and £11·8 million respectively.

Expenditure

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give the total national United Kingdom expenditure on health care provision, including both public and private sector provision, but excluding any double counting, in money terms, for the latest 10 financial years for which figures are available; and whether this includes the voluntary sector;

(2) if he will give the national United Kingdom expenditure on private sector health care provision in money terms, for the latest 10 financial years for which figures are available; and whether this includes the voluntary sector.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* The following table shows annual United Kingdom public and private health care expenditure in the period 1979 to 1988. The figures are derived from the United Kingdom national accounts prepared by the Central Statistical Office and do not double-count expenditures. The voluntary sector is not separately identified in the national accounts.

Expenditure on health care in the United Kingdom

£ billion

Year	*Net public expenditure*	*Private expenditure*
1979	8·7	1·1
1980	11·9	1·3
1981	13·7	1·7
1982	14·5	2·0
1983	16·3	2·3
1984	17·2	2·5
1985	18·4	2·8
1986	20·0	3·0
1987	22·0	3·3
1988	23·8	3·8

South Cumbria District Health Authority

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes in revenue have been made in South Cumbria district health authority since 30 September 1982 in cash, real terms and percentages.

Mr. Freeman: I will write to my right hon. Friend.

Vehicle Exhaust Emissions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the health hazards presented by those exhaust emissions of vehicles which are capable of being reduced or eliminated by catalytic converters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The effects of the relevant primary pollutants, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and oxides of nitrogen, and of secondary pollutants, notably ozone formed by subsequent reactions in the air, have been considered in consultation with United Kingdom experts and through the World Health Organisation. Their assessment is that there is no evidence that current environmental concentrations in the United Kingdom arising from traffic sources present health hazards.

Social Workers (Training)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he has plans for his Department to make a direct contribution to the improvement of the training of social workers dealing with mentally disordered people;

(2) whether he has had discussions with local authority associations and directors of social services with a view to improving the training and supervision of social workers dealing with mentally disordered people.

Mr. Mellor: Social work training is essentially a matter for the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work. We have had no discussions with the local authority associations or directors of social services about training for those social workers dealing with the mentally ill.

General Practice Finance Corporation Ltd.

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to complete the sale of the General Practice Finance Corporation Ltd.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pleased to announce that I have accepted an offer of £145 million from Norwich Union Life Insurance Society for the acquisition of all the ordinary share capital of the General Practice Finance Corporation Ltd., and the repayment of the company's indebtedness to the Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt. The transaction is being completed this morning.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many ambulances from the London ambulance service were deployed at the Clapham rail crash; how many St. John ambulance brigade vehicles were brought into use as a result; and if any non-London ambulances were used in London on the day in question.

Mr. Freeman: The LAS deployed 35 ambulances, 11 large sitting case vehicles and three small sitting case vehicles. A further seven vehicles attended the scene from the LAS training school, as well as the emergency control vehicle. In addition, six ambulances from the Surrey ambulance service with support from its control unit and three vehicles from their training school attended. These were the only non-London ambulances used in London on that day. No St. John ambulances were used as a result of the incident.

Sports Medicine

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state the number of consultants engaged in sports medicine in England and Wales and the health authorities by which they are employed.

Mr. Mellor: Sports medicine as such is not a recognised medical speciality so no such figures are available.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what proportion of health expenditure in England and Wales is devoted to sports medicine; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to expand the practice of sports medicine within the National Health Service in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Treatment for injuries sustained as a result of sport are not separately costed. Some sports injuries will be treated by general practitioners, and others in accident and emergency departments or, for example, hospital orthopaedic departments. This is a matter for clinical judgment by the responsible doctor.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state for each health district and health region in England and Wales the size of the waiting list on 30 September 1988, the percentage increase or decrease since 31 March 1988, and the national rank order of the district by size of waiting list.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is in the Library. Information for Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Population Statistics

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the population of England and Wales in 1986, 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Freeman: The estimates of resident population for England and Wales at mid-1986 and mid-1987 are 50,075,000 and 50,243,000 respectively. An estimate for mid-1988 will be available shortly.

Electoral Registers

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each parliamentary constituency in England and Wales the number of electors on the register for each of 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Freeman: The figures requested for 1988-89 have been published in "Electroal Statistics, 1988" (Series EL no. 15), a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Similar figures for 1989-90 are still being assembled centrally; they will be published in "Electoral Statistics, 1989" (Series EL no. 16) at the end of May.

Mental Hospitals

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many mental hospitals have been closed in the past year.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is routinely collected but not yet available for 1988. I will place a list in the Library in the near future.

Children (Secure Accommodation)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children aged under 16 years are detained in Her Majesty's prisons; and when he expects to provide suitable secure accommodation.

Mr. Mellor: Provisional figures for 31 December 1988, the latest date for which information is available, show there were 24 untried males aged 15 remanded to prison department establishments.

The provision of appropriate alternative facilities including secure accommodation is the statutory responsibility of local authorities. The Department has powers to make grant aid available to meet the capital cost of providing secure accommodation, and is always prepared to consider any application which might be made by local authorities to increase the stock of such facilities.

Applications from a number of authorities are actively under consideration for the provision of new or extended secure facilities and approval has already been given to build two new secure units in Birmingham and Humberside, which will provide a further 16 secure places.

Hospital Trusts

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the arrangements for opting for trust status for hospitals will affect the status and appointment of hospital chaplains.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Hospital chaplains who transfer from health authority employment will retain their existing contracts and rights. For the future, NHS hospital trusts will be free to appoint chaplains on such conditions as they may determine.

General Practitioners (Contract)

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when formal negotiations on the proposed new contract for general practitioners began; how many meetings have taken place between the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association negotiators and his officials; how many hours of negotiation have taken place; how many departmental papers have been sent to the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association negotiators in the context of the negotiations: and how many papers have been received by his officials from the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association in response;

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Formal negotiations on the proposed new contract for general practitioners began in March 1988. They followed on from the Green Paper "Primary Health Care—an agenda for discussion" published in 1986 and the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" published in 1987. Since March 1988 there have been 18 meetings between the general medical services committee negotiators and my officials and some 100 hours of negotiations. Thirty-three papers from my Department and five from the GMSC have been considered at negotiating meetings.

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times he has met the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association to discuss the proposed new contract for general practitioners.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have had three meetings with the general medical services committee to discuss the proposed new contract for general practitioners on 8 September 1988, 9 February 1989 and 20 March 1989. The first two meetings were to review progress on the continuing discussions on the new contract and covered the policy aims of the revised contract very fully. The last meeting was a three-hour discussion of the eight detailed points that the GMSC wished to put to me and its requests for outstanding detailed information.

The GMSC has always agreed with me that revised regulations and a new statement of fees and allowances are required and should take effect in April 1990. We have agreed a number of points of the new contract including some originally proposed by the GMSC. I have stressed at all three meetings that I believe that we should make progress in the discussions because of the need to give GPs as much notice as possible of the new terms and conditions so that they can adjust their practices to prepare for them.

I explained to the GMSC at our last meeting that I would reflect on the detailed submissions it put to me and respond to them in the draft regulations and statement that I will now put to it. Further consultation will take place on the terms of the draft regulations and statement.

Private Residential Homes

34. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will meet Age Concern to discuss the rapid increase in the number of private residential homes and its relevance to the report by Sir Roy Griffiths on community care.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 21 March 1989]:* We are currently giving active consideration to the future organisation and management of community care following Sir Roy Griffiths' report. We hope to bring forward our proposals soon and will consider requests for meetings from organisations involved in community care at that stage.

Hearing Aids

40. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the waiting lists for hearing aids in the Leicester health authority; and what action the Government propose to take to cut them.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 21 March 1989]:* Provision of local health services is a matter for the relevant district health authority, in this case Leicestershire. The hon. Member may care to write to the chairman of the authority for the information he seeks.

No-fault Compensation

56. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with the British Medical

Association concerning the introduction of a partial no-fault compensation system for high risk medical practitioners.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 21 March 1989]:* We have had no such discussions.

Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list by each district health authority area the overall levels of spending per head of population;

(2) if he will list by each district health authority area the levels of spending per head of population by each identifiable cost centre.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 19 December 1988]:* District based figures of total revenue expenditure per head of resident population for 1987-88 are shown in the table.

For information on average treatment costs by type of hospital for health regions and England as a whole I refer the hon. Member to the Department's annual publication "Health Services Costing Returns" (the latest being for 1986-87)—copies of which are held in the Library.

District health authorities	*Total revenue expenditure per resident £ cash 1987-88*
Northern region	
Hartlepool	233
North Tees	181
South Tees	253
East Cumbria	229
South Cumbria	169
West Cumbria	195
Darlington	253
Durham	149
North West Durham	215
South West Durham	223
Northumberland	220
Gateshead	168
Newcastle	514
North Tyneside	134
South Tyneside	161
Sunderland	223
Districts total	229
Yorkshire region	
Hull	236
East Yorkshire	212
Grimsby	207
Scunthorpe	151
Northallerton	139
York	225
Scarborough	167
Harrogate	211
Bradford	214
Airedale	191
Calderdale	187
Huddersfield	224
Dewsbury	162
Leeds Western	275
Leeds Eastern	263
Wakefield	339
Pontefract	172
Districts total	218
Trent region	
North Derbyshire	143
South Derbyshire	201
Leicestershire	196
North Lincolnshire	228
South Lincolnshire	172
Bassetlaw	167
Central Nottinghamshire	196
Nottingham	254
Barnsley	178
Doncaster	191
Rotherham	170
Sheffield	322
Districts total	212
East Anglian Region	
Cambridge	282
Peterborough	202
West Suffolk	177
East Suffolk	206
Norwich	219
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	184
West Norfolk and Wisbech	166
Huntingdon	189
Districts Total	209
North West Thames Region	
North Bedfordshire	159
South Bedfordshire	171
North Hertfordshire	149
East Hertfordshire	118
North West Hertfordshire	283
South West Hertfordshire	126
Barnet	263
Harrow	218
Hillingdon	282
Hounslow and Spelthorne	211
Ealing	158
Brent	220
Paddington	599
Riverside	514
Districts Total	236
North East Thames Region	
Basildon and Thurrock	185
Mid Essex	199
North East Essex	202
West Essex	175
Southend	161
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	188
Hampstead	592
Bloomsbury	1,076
Islington	334
City and Hackney	483
Newham	227
Tower Hamlets	485
Enfield	166
Haringey	270
Redbridge	193
Waltham Forest	288
Districts Total	273
South East Thames	
Brighton	218
Eastbourne	203
Hastings	202
South East Kent	158
Canterbury and Thanet	217
Dartford and Gravesham	229
Maidstone	208
Medway	164
Tunbridge Wells	260
Bexley	190
Greenwich	300
Bromley	205
West Lambeth	568

District health authorities	Total revenue expenditure per resident £ cash 1987-88
Camberwell	374
Lewisham and North Southwark	386
Districts Total	251
South West Thames	
North West Surrey	217
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	134
South West Surrey	271
Mid Surrey	276
East Surrey	288
Chichester	199
Mid Downs	179
Worthing	162
Croydon	209
Kingston and Esher	258
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	176
Wandsworth	543
Merton and Sutton	227
Districts Total	231
Wessex Region	
East Dorset	183
West Dorset	199
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	172
Southampton and South West Hampshire	262
Winchester	198
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	199
Salisbury	278
Swindon	201
Bath	190
Isle of Wight	207
Districts Total	203
Oxford Region	
East Berkshire	171
West Berkshire	173
Aylesbury Vale	315
Wycombe	126
Milton Keynes	143
Kettering	148
Northampton	205
Oxfordshire	229
Districts Total	187
South Western Region	
Bristol and Weston	279
Frenchay	255
Southmead	221
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	181
Exeter	254
North Devon	199
Plymouth	241
Torbay	190
Cheltenham	165
Gloucester	208
Somerset	192
Districts Total	218
West Midlands region	
Bromsgrove and Redditch	177
Herefordshire	192
Kidderminster	273
Worcester	195
Shropshire	185
Mid Staffordshire	153
North Staffordshire	223
South East Staffordshire	178
Rugby	160
North Warwickshire	213
South Warwickshire	215
Central Birmingham	521
East Birmingham	211
North Birmingham	223
South Birmingham	283
West Birmingham	322
Coventry	220
Dudley	190
Sandwell	136
Solihull	155
Walsall	174
Wolverhampton	228
District Total	214
Mersey region	
Chester	283
Crewe	171
Halton	128
Macclesfield	208
Warrington	265
Liverpool	325
St. Helens and Knowsley	182
Southport and Formby	234
South Sefton	321
Wirral	196
Districts Total	237
North Western region	
Lancaster	353
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	186
Preston	582
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	181
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	300
West Lancashire	228
Chorley and South Ribble	79
Bolton	181
Bury	152
North Manchester	434
Central Manchester	562
South Manchester	518
Oldham	165
Rochdale	143
Salford	363
Stockport	176
Tameside and Glossop	148
Trafford	146
Wigan	172
District Total	241

Sources:

(a) 1987-88 annual accounts of district health authorities.

(b) Mid-year estimates of resident population:—1987 (Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).

Notes:

1. District capital expenditure and all expenditure incurred by regional health authorities on behalf of their regions as a whole is excluded.
2. Expenditure on family practitioner services is excluded: such expenditure is accounted for by family practitioner committees (FPCs) and cannot strictly be attributed to particular districts.
3. Significant variations in per capita expenditure figures at district level arise principally because:
   i. people travel across district boundaries for treatment and sub-regional resource allocations reflect the pattern of service provision locally.
   ii. the population figures used make no allowance for people resident in one district who receive treatment in another or for the difference in morbidity and age/sex structure of particular population.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Payments

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether a disabled person, in receipt of a disablement pension or the relevant disability allowances, is able to transfer such payment to another country, should that person decide to reside in another country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Disablement pension is payable to a person who resides abroad. Reduced earnings allowance is generally payable only during temporary absences but is payable for permanent absence if the disabled person goes to a country with which we have a social security agreement which provides for this or goes to another EC country (provided he is a national of an EC country, or a stateless person or refugee living there). Attendance allowance and mobility allowance are payable during temporary absence of up to six months, or temporary absence for the specific purpose of being treated for an incapacity or a disabling condition which began before leaving Great Britain.

Severe disablement allowance (SDA) is payable during temporary absence for the specific purpose of being treated for an incapacity which began before leaving Great Britain; or during temporary absence if the person had been continuously incapable of work for six months when the absence began and remains continuously so incapable. However, if the disabled person is going to another EC country and is helped by the EC regulations on social security for migrant workers he will be able to continue to receive SDA even if he does not meet the above rules.

Community Charge Benefits Regulations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what representations he has received from computer companies on the timetable for the preparation of the community charge benefits regulations;

(2) if he will make a statement on the progress being made on the preparation of the community charge benefits regulations; and when he expects that they will be laid before the House.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No representations have been received from computer companies about the timetable for preparing the Community Charge Benefits (General) Regulations 1989. Copies of the draft regulations were sent on 16 March to the Social Security Advisory Committee and to the local authority associations in accordance with the consultation requirements set out in section 61 of the Social Security Act 1986. The regulations will be laid before the House once the Social Security Bill has been enacted. In order to assist local authorities and the computer companies in their preparation for the introduction of the community charge benefits scheme, it is intended to send copies of the draft regulations to each authority as soon as possible after the completion of the consultation process.

Disablement Income Group

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration his Department has given to the report published by the Disablement Income Group entitled, "Am I Entitled? Problems With The Take Up And Administration Of Attendance And Mobility Allowance"; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Department co-operated with this study, and commented on a draft of the report but we have not yet had an opportunity to consider the final version. We shall take careful account of the findings, together with the other recent Disablement Income Group report, "Being Disabled Costs More Than They Said," in our consideration of the OPCS findings.

Social Fund

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate as to how much of the funds allocated to the social fund will have been unspent by the end of the 1988-89 financial year, broken down into (i) budgeting loans, (ii) crisis loans, and (iii) community care grants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Based on expenditure to the end of February 1989 the gross underspend on the loans budget at the end of the 1988-89 financial year is estimated at £18 million. The estimated underspend on the grants budget is £20 million. Crisis loans and budgeting loans are paid from a single loans budget.

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will announce the revised social fund allocation for the office at Chatham following the transfer to that office of responsiility for the area covered by Rochester area office.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: On 31 March 1989 the office at Rochester will close and merge with the office at Chatham on 1 April 1989. Accordingly the social fund allocation for Chatham has been adjusted. The revised allocation is:

	£
Grants budget	159,467
Loans budget	385,634

Departmental Staff

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of officers in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, respectively, in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* Information is not available in the form required because records are held on a combined basis with the Department of Health.

Information for both Departments is as follows:

Grade	*Total staff*	*Female staff*		*[1]Ethnic minority staff*	
		Number	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*
1	3	—	—	—	—
2	12	2	16·7	—	—
3	39	6	15·4	—	—
4	29	6	20·7	1	3·4
5	268	75	28·0	14	5·2
6	373	58	15·5	34	9·1
7	1,049	173	16·5	13	1·2
TOTAL	1,773	320	18·0	62	3·5

[1] Ethnic minorities figures are based on questionnaires voluntarily completed by staff (75 per cent. response rate to date).

ENERGY

Drilling Rigs

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, in the light of his Department's instructions to operators, following the blowout on the Ocean Odyssey, to suspend drilling using flexible jumper hoses at high pressure until an alternative acceptable to his Department can be found, he will now present an interim report on the scope and methods of his Department's review and give an estimate of the completion date and if he will also release details of the number of well drilling operations which are prevented from proceeding until his Department's review is satisfactorily completed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: A full report of my Department's investigation into the Ocean Odyssey accident has been passed to the procurator fiscal in Aberdeen. The report takes account of both operational practices and the failure of the flexible hoses. Work is continuing on assessing all applications for consent to drill high pressure wells in order to ensure that they can be carried out safely giving full regard to the lessons learnt from the accident. Ten well operations are being delayed. Consent will be given when my Department is satisfied that it is safe to proceed.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, in the light of his Department's order that the drilling rigs Neddril Trigon, Glomar Labrador, Glomar Moray Firth, KCA Sandpiper, Shelf Driller, Trident X and Trident XI, are to be dry docked for inspection and remedial work following the discovery of serious cracking in the spud cans of one rig, he will now release the report of these inspection findings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Conclusions and recommendations will be published when the results of the inspections have been fully assessed.

Oil and Gas Pipelines

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will provide a list of all installations of submarine emergency shutdown valves in oil and gas pipelines which have been or are being, or are planned to be carried out since the Piper Alpha disaster;

(2) how many existing oil and gas pipelines were fitted with submarine emergency shutdown valves prior to the Piper Alpha disaster; and what are their locations;

(3) if he will provide a list of all oil and gas pipelines with an operating pressure in excess of 600 lb per sq in and a diameter of 6 in or greater which do not contain submarine emergency shutdown valves; and if he will also provide a list of the production platforms, onshore reception terminals and other facilities which are connected to these pipelines.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There are approximately 124 offshore oil and gas pipelines with an operating pressure in excess of 600 pounds per sq in and a diameter of 6 in or greater that do not have sub-sea emergency shut down valves fitted. Full details of these have been placed in the Library.

Six pipelines had sub-sea emergency shut down valves fitted prior to the Piper Alpha accident, located adjacent to the Brent Alpha, Fulmar, Murchison, Balmoral, Buchan and Argyll platforms. It was also intended that two valves would be installed on the new pipeline, yet to be commissioned, in the Ivanhoe/Rob Roy field.

Following the Piper Alpha accident and in response to a letter from my director of safety asking for pipeline isolation arrangements to be reviewed, the industry has to date made proposals for the installation of an additional 26 sub-sea pipeline isolation systems, seven of which have already been installed. A list of these has also been placed in the Library. My Department is giving urgent consideration to the proposals from operators and I expect the completion of the review work to identify the need for additional systems.

These systems together with the mandatory offshore installation isolation systems, the proposals for which were issued for consultation this week, will provide a further step to greater safety offshore.

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy why the list of major changes to the Piper Alpha platform in annex B to the technical investigation interim report does not mention the tie-in of the Tartan field gas export pipeline to the Piper platform.

Mr. Peter Morrison The tie-in of the Tartan field gas export pipeline to the Piper Alpha installation was outside the scope of annex B of the technical investigation interim report but is covered elsewhere in the report.

Electricity (Cost)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the price which would be charged for electricity if the cost of fuel for generation provided the same proportion of that price as it did three years ago.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This a matter for the electricity supply industry. I will ask the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to the hon. Member.

Water Quality

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his answer of 13 March, he will list the criteria of the European Community directive on drinking water which the supply in his Department's head office failed to meet in 1988.

Mr. Parkinson: The responsibility for monitoring the quality of drinking water in my Department's headquarters building rests with the Property Services Agency.

I am advised that the criteria of the European Community directive on drinking water for the permitted maximum admissible levels which the supply in my Department's head office failed to meet in 1988 are:

	Permitted maximum admissible levels
Sulphate	250mg/litre
Fluoride	1500ug/litre
Potassium	12mg/litre
Sodium	175mg/litre
Magnesium	50mg/litre
Iron	50ug/litre
Manganese	50ug/litre
Nickel	50ug/litre
Conductivity	1500us/cm
Turbidity	4NTU

Nuclear Materials (Transport)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will set out the liaison arrangements between his Department and the international safeguards authorities at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna and Euratom in Luxembourg over the transport and transfer of nuclear materials to and from the Atomic Weapons Establishment to the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Commission regulation (Euratom) 3227/76 and the United Kingdom/Euratom/IAEA safeguards agreement make provision for the receipt from and shipment to a facility not under safeguards.

Sellafield (Safeguards)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if full facility attachments and particular safeguards provisions are now in force for all facilities at Sellafield containing safeguardable nuclear materials; and what has been the cost of implementation of a comprehensive safeguards regime for Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The particular safeguards for provisions for facilities at BNFL Sellafield are currently under discussion and to date four have been brought into force. Facility attachments for certain facilities which the IAEA inspect are also being negotiated.

The costs of meeting safeguards requirements cannot be separately identified among the general running costs of the facilities concerned. The costs incurred by Euratom and the IAEA are a matter for the authorities concerned.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 23 March 1989

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Self-defence

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he has taken following the Women's National Commission's 1985 recommendation that he give attention to the need for self-defence education, as part of physical education, in secondary schools, and to the necessary training for physical education teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: At the time of that recommendation, responsibility for determining the content of the school curriculum locally rested with individual schools, governing bodies and local education authorities as appropriate. The Education Reform Act 1988, however, establishes a national curriculum which includes physical education. Arrangements for considering the content of guidelines on PE will be set up by June 1990 with a view to beginning to implement them in schools from autumn 1992. Self-defence education may be among the matters to be considered. It will be for LEAs to determine the necessary in-service training for teachers of PE, and for teacher training institutions to decide upon the content of initial teacher training courses.

School Leavers

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the change in the proportion of school leavers in the north-west going on to further or higher education in the north-west since 1979-80.

Mr. Jackson: In 1979-80, 18·2 per cent. of leavers from maintained schools in the North-west intended to proceed to a course of further or higher education. The comparable figure for 1986-87 was 27·6 per cent.

Pupil-teacher Ratios

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the change in pupil-teacher ratios in the north-west since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: The pupil-teacher ratios in maintained primary and secondary schools in the north-west in 1979 and 1988 were as follows:

January each year	*1979*	*1988*	*Percentage change*
Primary	23·6	22·5	−4·7
Secondary	16·4	15·0	−8·5

Indic Languages

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received urging that Indic languages be specified as eligible for the modern foreign languages foundation subject; what ethnic minority representatives and other interested parties he is meeting to discuss this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Indic languages are among those specified as eligible for inclusion in the national curriculum, within the framework of the proposals announced by my right hon. Friend in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) on 3 March at columns *338* and *339*. Since that announcement, my right hon. Friend has received a small number of representations on this matter, including one from the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). The proposals already take account of earlier representations about the inclusion of Indic languages, which had been received after the passage of the Education Reform Act. My right hon. Friend has no present plans to meet ethnic minority representatives or other parties, but will consider carefully any further representations made during the consultation period on the proposals.

Teaching as a Career

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide further resources towards recruiting people back to teaching; and if so if he is prepared to increase the budget to its teaching as a career promotion unit.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend announced on 27 January that the remit of TASC would be extended for a further three years beyond April 1990. The future level of funding of the unit is at present under consideration. An important part of TASC's activity will continue to be to promote the re-employment of former teachers.

Teachers' Pay and Conditions

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the gap between the rate support grant additional allocation and the net effect of improvements to teachers' pay and conditions of employment, will be met in full from central sources.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend is consulting the local authority associations and others about his proposals to give effect to the recommendations of the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay and conditions in 1989-90. Paragraph 4 of my right hon. Friend's consultative letter of 16 February made clear that the Government do not intend to revise the rate support grant settlement on account of those proposals. The additional cost to local authorities of the proposals will be offset in part by the greater than expected reduction in the employers' contributions to the teachers' superannuation scheme which my right hon. Friend announced on 10 February.

University Staff

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional funds have been earmarked specifically for university staff salaries for each of the years *(a)* 1989-90, *(b)* 1990-91 and *(c)* 1991-92; and what conditions have been attached.

Mr. Jackson: Following the 1987 salary settlement the Government have earmarked £67 million for the salaries

of academic staff in institutions to be funded by the Universities Funding Council in 1989-90 on condition that the universities produce satisfactory evidence of the implementation of staff appraisal. The Government have also offered to make additional sums available over the three years for staff pay if all industrial action ceases and settlements which introduce differentiation into the pay of lecturers and technicians are agreed.

Nursery and Primary Education

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total capital expenditure for nursery and primary education for each of the last 10 years in absolute cash terms and in real terms using 1979 as the base year.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information available is as follows:

Local authority expenditure on nursery and primary education England only

£000

	Cash	Real terms
1979-80	104,712	104,712
1980-81	135,813	114,561
1981-82	106,902	82,163
1982-83	107,998	77,517
1983-84	122,904	84,310
1984-85	144,000	94,131
1985-86	161,187	99,895
1986-87	177,768	106,585
1987-88	n.a.	—
1988-89	n.a.	—

The above figures do not include expenditure for voluntary aided and special agreement primary and nursery schools, for which information is not readily available.

Teacher Training

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many students who entered initial teacher training are specialising in nursery education for each of the last 10 years;

(2) how many students who entered all forms of initial teacher training are specialising in early years education, up to seven years old, for each of the last 10 years;

(3) how many post graduate certificate for education students have entered initial teacher training specialised in primary school teaching for each of the last 10 years;

(4) how many students have entered all forms of initial teacher training specialising in primary education for each of the last 10 years.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information is not available on the number of students entering initial teacher training who specialise in nursery education. The first table gives the numbers of students entering courses of initial teacher training specialising in early years education since 1986. The second table shows numbers of students entering primary courses of initial teacher training since 1982. These are the years for which, in each case, information is available.

Table 1. Recruitment to Initial Teacher Training Courses for Early Years.

	1986	1987	1988
PGCE	292	437	836
BEd	1,105	1,168	1,771
Total	1,397	1,605	2,607

Source: DES annual survey of recruitment to initial teacher training.
Note: Figures include all courses of initial teacher training for the age ranges 3-7, 3-8, 4-7 and 4-8.

Table 2. Recruitment to Primary Phase Courses of Initial Teacher Training

	PGCE	BEd	Total
1982	1,357	5,078	6,435
1983	1,740	5,682	7,422
1984	2,003	6,254	8,257
1985	2,328	6,466	8,794
1986	2,707	6,257	8,964
1987	3,134	6,970	10,104
1988	3,727	7,646	11,373

Source: DES annual survey of recruitment to initial teacher training.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the governors of a school seeking grant-maintained status, and where a ballot of parents has received a majority yes vote, will have the same right to comment on objections subsequently submitted by the local education authority as the authority itself has for commenting on objections to section 12 notices; and whether this applies where the school in question is itself the subject of a section 12 notice.

Mrs. Rumbold: Objections to proposals from schools seeking grant-maintained status are submitted direct to my right hon. Friend and are not automatically shown to the governing body. However in considering the proposals my right hon. Friend takes steps to ensure that he has all the information necessary for him to make a decision, including where appropriate comments from the governing body on objections to the proposals. Proposals for grant-maintained status are treated in the same way for a school which is also the subject of a section 12 notice, but in that case both proposals are considered together.

Lecturers (Dispute)

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action is being considered to ensure that students' examinations will not be jeopardised as a result of the current lecturers' dispute.

Mr. Jackson: This is a matter for the university authorities. I understand that they are actively considering a range of possibilities.

National Curriculum

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if sufficient copies of the national curriculum are available in schools in preparation for September.

Mrs. Rumbold: Following the publication of national curriculum documents for mathematics and science on 14 March, initial copies were sent to schools in time to arrive before the end of their Easter term. A second instalment

will be distributed by local education authorities after Easter, which will allow one copy for every primary teacher and secondary teacher of mathematics or science. It is intended that national curriculum documents for key stage 1 in English will be distributed to schools in early June.

Derbyshire County Council

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much Derbyshire county council has spent on primary and secondary education each year since 1981-82, in total, and per pupil.

Mrs. Rumbold: The available information is given in the table:

Net institutional expenditure[1] and spend per pupil[2]

Year	Primary schools: Net institutional expenditure £ million	Primary schools: Unit cost £	Secondary schools: Net institutional expenditure £ million	Secondary schools: Unit cost £
1981-82	46·9	575	60·1	795
1982-83	49·5	635	65·5	870
1983-84	51·7	690	70·5	950
1984-85	54·1	730	73·6	1,020
1985-86	58·1	780	78·1	1,125
1986-87	65·3	875	86·6	1,305
1987-88	[3]75·2	[3]990	95·9	1,530

[1] Net institutional expenditure includes the cost of salaries and wages, premises and certin supplies and services. It does not include the cost of school meals, central administration and inspection, debt charges or revenue contributions to capital outlay.
[2] The figures are based on LEA expenditure returns to DoE and pupil number returns to DES.
[3] The figures for 1987-88 include nursery schools.

Education Costs

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much the Government have spent on primary and secondary education each year since 1981-82.

Mrs. Rumbold: Local authorities determine their own education budgets. Rate support grant paid by the Government in support of local authority spending is not hypothecated to individual services, and education specific grants are not necessarily paid on a sectoral basis. The information requested is not therefore available.

Books (Expenditure)

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the spending on books in England per primary school child for every year for the last 10 years.

Mrs. Rumbold: While local authorities' expenditure returns to the Department of the Environment show separate figures for books, these need to be treated with caution because of differing local authority practices in allocating spending between books and equipment. The table therefore shows spending figures for books and equipment together as well as for books separately.

Expenditure per pupil on books and equipment
Primary schools, England, £ cash

	Books and equipment	Within which, books
1977-78	11·40	3·60
1978-79	12·80	4·20
1979-80	14·30	4·70
1980-81	16·00	5·30
1981-82	18·20	5·90
1982-83	20·90	7·00
1983-84	22·80	7·10
1984-85	23·50	7·30
1985-86	24·90	7·50
1986-87	28·00	8·20

The Government's expenditure plans for 1989-90 allow for provision per primary pupil for books and equipment to increase by 32 per cent. in cash over the 1986-87 level.

Nursery Schools

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing, by local authority areas, the number of full-time equivalent 0-4 year-olds in nursery schools in January.

Mrs. Rumbold: In January 1988 the number of full-time equivalent pupils under five in maintained nursery schools in each local education authority in England is given in the table.

Full-time equivalent pupils under 5 in maintained nursery schools
January 1988

	Full-time equivalent pupils
Barking	0
Barnet	268
Bexley	99
Brent	225
Bromley	0
Croydon	244
Ealing	275
Enfield	0
Haringey	210
Harrow	0
Havering	0
Hillingdon	60
Hounslow	0
Kingston upon Thames	150
Merton	0
Newham	515
Redbridge	0
Richmond upon Thames	36
Sutton	120
Waltham Forest	192
Inner London	3,173
Birmingham	1,592
Coventry	250
Dudley	221
Sandwell	162
Solihull	0
Walsall	436
Wolverhampton	422
Knowsley	0
Liverpool	374
St. Helens	39
Sefton	160
Wirral	146
Bolton	339
Bury	111
Manchester	473

	Full-time equivalent pupils
Oldham	0
Rochdale	494
Salford	675
Stockport	507
Tameside	180
Trafford	0
Wigan	108
Barnsley	91
Doncaster	0
Rotherham	207
Sheffield	460
Bradford	335
Calderdale	65
Kirklees	332
Leeds	150
Wakefield	232
Gateshead	32
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	549
North Tyneside	178
South Tyneside	373
Sunderland	537
Isles of Scilly	0
Avon	1,194
Bedfordshire	834
Berkshire	1,081
Buckinghamshire	256
Cambridgeshire	374
Cheshire	434
Cleveland	77
Cornwall	74
Cumbria	411
Derbyshire	687
Devon	153
Dorset	0
Durham	1,354
East Sussex	143
Essex	132
Gloucestershire	0
Hampshire	130
Hereford and Worcester	0
Hertfordshire	913
Humberside	605
Isle of Wight	0
Kent	41
Lancashire	1,765
Leicestershire	25
Lincolnshire	195
Norfolk	202
North Yorkshire	186
Northamptonshire	307
Northumberland	88
Nottinghamshire	322
Oxfordshire	290
Shropshire	83
Somerset	0
Staffordshire	1,435
Suffolk	55
Surrey	252
Warwickshire	378
West Sussex	230
Wiltshire	0
England	30,501

Examinations

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of school leavers in each education authority achieved five or more GCSE passes or equivalent qualifications, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* The information is given in the table. The figures relating to examination results are derived from a 10 per cent. sample of school leavers from each school. Sampling error is a major consideration where information for individual local education authorities is concerned. To help mitigate the effects of sampling error, the figures are presented in the form of a three-year aggregate covering the academic years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87.

School leavers from maintained secondary schools: aggregation for the academic years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87

	Numbers (thousands)	*Percentage achieving 5+ graded results at GCE O-level/CSE*
Local education authorities:		
Barking	6·68	52·99
Barnet	10·35	81·35
Bexley	10·40	76·54
Brent	8·68	68·55
Bromley	10·27	77·22
Croydon	12·88	73·76
Ealing	9·77	67·14
Enfield	10·40	68·94
Haringey	6·05	65·12
Harrow	6·01	82·86
Havering	11·03	72·26
Hillingdon	8·81	77·98
Hounslow	8·31	66·43
Kingston upon Thames	4·63	76·77
Merton	6·13	70·80
Newham	9·08	57·27
Redbridge	8·29	65·14
Richmond upon Thames	4·39	77·45
Sutton	6·22	81·99
Waltham Forest	7·19	53·41
Inner London	73·43	58·68
Birmingham	48·88	66·67
Coventry	14·27	69·80
Dudley	14·52	75·96
Sandwell	14·54	61·35
Solihull	10·82	83·27
Walsall	14·87	70·07
Wolverhampton	12·90	63·72
Knowsley	7·98	50·25
Liverpool	21·10	53·51
St. Helens	8·87	68·43
Sefton	13·77	69·72
Wirral	13·47	70·72
Bolton	12·93	74·40
Bury	8·09	75·28
Manchester	22·23	51·15
Oldham	9·78	64·93
Rochdale	9·38	63·25
Salford	11·03	62·65
Stockport	12·82	70·67
Tameside	11·56	70·42
Trafford	8·63	73·93
Wigan	17·29	74·67
Barnsley	11·28	62·85
Doncaster	13·50	67·04
Rotherham	13·54	68·46
Sheffield	25·64	72·19
Bradford	22·22	57·56
Calderdale	9·01	63·15
Kirklees	18·26	70·04

	Numbers (thousands)	Percentage achieving 5+ graded results at GCE O-level/CSE
Leeds	30·57	69·55
Wakefield	16·09	65·94
Gateshead	9·35	66·42
Newcastle upon Tyne	10·32	63·18
North Tyneside	8·85	75·82
South Tyneside	7·14	76·33
Sunderland	14·82	72·81
Avon	37·28	76·77
Bedfordshire	22·42	78·70
Berkshire	29·00	82·76
Buckinghamshire	24·90	81·57
Cambridgeshire	24·31	74·04
Cheshire	44·91	75·46
Cleveland	29·60	73·01
Cornwall	20·70	77·39
Cumbria	21·55	74·71
Derbyshire	43·65	77·25
Devon	38·27	73·53
Dorset	25·27	82·43
Durham	27·86	72·83
East Sussex	22·63	74·68
Essex	66·24	71·56
Gloucestershire	21·82	78·51
Hampshire	66·78	82·73
Hereford and Worcester	27·54	78·36
Hertfordshire	43·45	76·16
Humberside	41·81	71·27
Isle of Wight	4·93	78·09
Kent	65·93	77·54
Lancashire	62·58	69·45
Leicestershire	38·28	73·51
Lincolnshire	24·93	77·10
Norfolk	31·34	63·59
North Yorkshire	29·25	79·18
Northamptonshire	26·16	77·45
Northumberland	12·90	80·08
Nottinghamshire	46·85	74·34
Oxfordshire	22·94	81·17
Shropshire	19·32	79·30
Somerset	17·79	73·86
Staffordshire	48·29	76·99
Suffolk	25·80	70·16
Surrey	37·43	83·44
Warwickshire	21·04	81·56
West Sussex	27·20	84·67
Wiltshire	21·43	73·45

PRIME MINISTER

Canadian Prime Minister (Visit)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister if during the visit of the Canadian Prime Minister to Downing street on 13 March, she discussed the prospects of the sale of British nuclear submarines to Canada.

The Prime Minister: Yes, expressing the hope that the Canadian order would go to the United Kingdom. Mr. Mulroney told me he had still to take a decision.

NHS (Clwyd)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit the Rhyl offices of the National Union of Public Employees to hear its views on *(a)* Her Majesty's Government's proposals for the National Health Service and *(b)* Clwyd health authority's proposals to close Lluesty hospital, Holywell; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be meeting a range of organisations in Wales to hear their views on the White Paper "Working for Patients".

I understand that no proposal to close Lluesty hospital has been put to Clwyd health authority. It would therefore not be appropriate for my right hon. Friend or myself to enter into any discussions at this stage.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she will meet the Clwyd local medical committee and representatives from 40 general practitioner practices in Clwyd to hear the views of general practitioners concerning the White Paper "Working for Patients";

(2) if she will visit Wrexham-Mealar district hospital, Glan Clwyd district hospital and Mauceot community hospital to meet representatives of the nursing and ancillary staffs concerning Her Majesty's Government's White Paper "Working for Patients": and if she will make a statement;

(3) if she will meet Clwyd general practitioners to discuss their views of the National Health Service Review "Working for Patients";

(4) if she will meet the Clwyd local medical committee at Tegfryn, Mold, Clwyd, to discuss matters concerning the National Health Service; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be meeting a range of organisations in Wales to hear their views on the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Policing (North Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit North Wales police headquarters, Colwyn Bay, to meet the chief constable and the Gwynedd-Clwyd police committee to discuss police manning levels and to discuss developments in the level of crime; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to visit the North Wales police. Since the Government took office 51 extra police posts have been approved for North Wales. The police authority has applied for the further 10 posts in 1990-91. This will be considered. It is encouraging to see that recorded crime in North Wales fell by 6 per cent. in 1988.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Prime Minister who is representing the United Kingdom at the global convention on the control of transboundary movement of hazardous waste; and if she will make a statement on the remit of the United Kingdom's representative.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom's delegation to the diplomatic conference at Basle to draw up a convention on the transboundary movements of hazardous wastes was led by the Minister for Housing, Environment and Countryside. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will make a statement about the conference as soon as possible.

Dangerous Substances

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Prime Minister, if she will make a statement on the role of each Government

Department involved in the licensing of dangerous substances, the controls over the shipment of such substances, the rescuing and disposal of cargoes containing such substances in case of accident and the monitoring and clearing up of the after effects of any accident.

The Prime Minister: The Department of the Environment is responsible for the general oversight of waste, including dangerous waste. A scheme for the notification of new substances is run jointly by the Health and Safety Executive and DoE. On registration of agricultural pesticides, the lead is taken by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The Department of Transport is responsible for the regulation of the carriage of dangerous goods including waste, with specialist advice from the Health and Safety Executive and the Civil Aviation Authority as necessary.

EC Directive 84/631/EEC, and the related United Kingdom regulation, deal with the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste. International movement of dangerous substances by sea is governed by the Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) Regulations 1981 and in practice means compliance with the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code.

The marine pollution control unit in DTp is responsible for dealing with spillage and clearing up after accidents. If such goods are brought ashore here for disposal they would have to be dealt with at a suitable facility by a local authority. In serious cases advice on disposal would be available from Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions she has had with the Jordanian Government concerning the sale of eight Tornado aircraft to that country.

The Prime Minister: I have discussed the possible sale of Tornado to Jordan with King Hussein on a number of occasions, most recently on 13 March. I understand that the Jordanian Government, after reviewing their financial commitments, and in the light of the current economic situation in Jordan, have informed us that they would like to postpone further negotiations on the sale until more favourable circumstances prevail. This has been agreed.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Prime Minister what contacts she has had with the West German Government concerning the sale of eight Tornado aircraft to Jordan.

The Prime Minister: Since the Tornado is a collaborative project I have had occasion to have discussions with the Federal Republic of Germany authorities about financing arrangements for this possible sale.

Newspapers (Legal Proceedings)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister what injunctions or other legal proceedings have been brought by the Government or members of the Government against individual newspapers or publishing organisations over the last 12 days.

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of any such proceedings.

Pamella Bordes

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister what discussion took place between on the one hand Downing street officers or representatives of Her Majesty's Government and on the other hand representatives of national newspapers on the question of Miss Pamella Bordes between Sunday 12 March and Monday 20 March.

The Prime Minister: Downing street press officers discharge their duties as appropriate.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Junior Counsel

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide for the latest available 12 month period *(a)* the number of junior counsel regularly practising and *(b)* the number of junior counsel regularly practising in the criminal courts; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The number of junior counsel regularly practising is 5,343 for the 12-month period ending 1 October 1988[1]; the number of junior counsel regularly practising in the criminal courts is 2,926 as at 17 March 1989[2].

[1] Figures supplied by the Bar Council based on those registered as at 1 October.

[2] Figures supplied by the Bar Mutual Indemnity Fund as at 17 March 1989.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide for the latest available 12-month period in respect of the Crown prosecution service *(a)* the total number of lawyers employed, *(b)* the number of barristers employed, *(c)* the number of solicitors employed, and *(d)* the number of cases prosecuted in (i) the magistrates' courts and (ii) the Crown court, *(e)* the average cost of cases prosecuted in the magistrates' courts, *(f)* the average cost to the Crown prosecution service, of prosecution in the Crown court excluding counsels fees and *(g)* the average counsel's fee in Crown court cases; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The latest 12-month period for which the information requested is available is from January to December 1988. The information requested is as follows:

(a) 1,539.
(b) 549.
(c) 990.
(d) (i) 1,354,000 defendants.
(ii) 123,000 defendants.
(Records are kept of the number of defendants, rather than the number of cases, prosecuted in each court).
(e) £47.
(f) £170.
(g) £267.

Legal Reform

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Attorney-General what instructions the Director of Public Prosecutions has given to lawyers in the service of the Crown prosecution service on the public expression of any views they might have on the Lord Chancellor's Green Papers, and on their sending such views to the headquarters for collation.

The Solicitor-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions has reminded all members of the Crown prosecution service that, in accordance with standard civil service practice, they should not comment publicly on matters of current political controversy. The director has expressed the view that if members of staff wish to make comments on issues raised in the Green Paper, the most appropriate course is to send them to the working party which has been set up under the chairmanship of the deputy director/chief executive to consider the Department's response to the Lord Chancellor's proposals.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General how many appeals against entrance clearance were upheld by adjudicators in 1987 and 1988; and in how many of such appeals entry clearance thereafter was issued by the relevant immigration authorities.

The Solicitor-General: In 1987, 1,612 appeals against refusal of entry clearance were upheld; in 1988, 978 such appeals were upheld. Figures on the number of such appeals where entry clearance was subsequently granted by the immigration authorities are not available.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Miss Pamella Bordes

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has made, or is intending to make, any changes in the vetting system for pass applications following upon the issue of a pass to Miss Pamella Bordes.

Mr. Wakeham: As the hon. Member will be aware, the House has already approved the Services Committee's Second Report, "Access to the Precincts of the House", which includes recommendations about security matters. These are in the process of implementation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) what inquiries have been instituted by the authorities of the House into the issue of a pass to Miss Pamella Bordes;

(2) whether the matter of the providing of a pass to Miss Pamella Bordes has been referred to those persons responsible for security in the House;

(3) what instructions have been given to the police as to the nature of inquiries that should be made into the background of applications for a pass for entry to the House.

Mr. Wakeham: It is not appropriate to comment in detail on matters of security of the House.

Division Bells

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) whether he will list the location of all division bells in the SW1 area in the homes of persons other than right hon. and hon. Members and Members of the House of Lords;

(2) on what date approval was given for the fitting of division bells at *(a)* 6 Stockton court, Greycoat street, London SW1 and *(b)* 69A Winchester street, London; and who made the application in each case.

Mr. Wakeham: It would be inappropriate for me to provide information about the specific location of Division bells. It is the policy of the authorities of the House not to approve the fitting of Division bells in homes of persons other than right hon. and hon. Members.

Passes

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) what security checks were instituted in the case of Mr. Michael Middleton, employee of Messrs. Kingfisher of Ferndown, Dorset, in the case of his access to the House of Commons for the purpose of delivering food provisions;

(2) whether he will list the categories of convictions which preclude a person from receiving *(a)* a day pass or *(b)* other passes authorising access to the House of Commons.

Mr. Wakeham: It is not appropriate to comment in detail on matters of security of the House.

WALES

Wildlife Poisoning

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each of the last five years the number of cases of wildlife poisoning in Wales caused by the illegal use of pesticides or poisons; and if he will identify the species involved and if possible the poison or pesticide involved.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of cases of wildlife poisoning in Wales caused by the illegal use of pesticides or poisons identified by the wildlife and storage biology service were as follows:

	Number of incidents	*Species involved*	*Pesticide/poison involved*
1984	12	8 dogs, 2 carrion crows, buzzard, duck, magpie, water rail	Strychnine, mevinphos, alphachlorose, famphur, parathion
1985	4	2 cats, 2 carrion crows, 2 magpie, 1 pheasant	Alphachlorose, famphur, metaldehyde
1986	10	3 dogs, 2 cats, 2 foxes, buzzard, gull, carrion crow, jackdaw, lamb, rabbit, pheasant	Mevinphos, strychnine, alphachlorose, metaldehyde
1987	7	4 dogs, buzzard, jackdaw, herring gull, peregrine, pheasant, raven	Strychnine, alphachlorose, endrin, mevinphos
1988	6	5 dogs, cat	Strychnine, metaldehyde

Roads

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, the provision for value added tax liability on new construction within the budgets given for capital expenditure on roads by his Department and the local authorities in Wales in chapter 17 of the Government's expenditure plans 1989-90 to 1991-92.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy in the Library of the House.

Small Businesses

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the disruption being caused to development projects of small businesses in rural Wales arising from the suspension of the rural conversion grant scheme in February; if he has discussed this with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency with a view to re-establishing the scheme; if he will make available to the Welsh Development Agency the necessary finance to enable them to meet their obligations under this scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Welsh Development Agency has earmarked £3 million to the rural conversion grant programme over the next three years, sufficient to stimulate nearly 1,200 new jobs. The record resources allocated by the agency to conversion grants in the current financial year, broadly double the amount available in 1987-88, are fully taken up, though payment in relation to new schemes will commence in April. The impact on the development of small businesses in rural Wales of the slight delay in payments is therefore minimal.

Development Areas

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the latest average unemployment rate for development areas in Wales and *(b)* the unemployment rate on the same date for each travel-to-work area which had an unemployment rate higher than the average for development areas in Wales, denoting which of these areas have in their territory a development area.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

Unemployment rate as at February 1989

	Percentage	
(a) Average for development areas in Wales	12·6	—
(b) Travel-to-work areas with a higher unemployment rate than the average for the development areas in Wales:		
Aberdare	17·7	IA
Bangor and Caernarfon	13·3	DA
Blaenau Gwent and Abergavenny	13·8	DA
Cardigan	18·0	DA
Fishguard	16·1	IA
Haverfordwest	14·0	IA
Holyhead	17·7	DA
Lampeter and Aberaeron	13·2	DA
Merthyr and Rhymney	14·1	DA
Pwllheli	19·0	IA
South Pembrokeshire	17·6	DA

Notes:
1. DA denotes development area.
2. IA denotes intermediate area.
3. Development areas are defined in terms of travel-to-work areas.

Alcohol

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has issued any guidance to health authorities in Wales on the development by each such authority of an alcohol planning strategy; and whether he is satisfied with the provisions being made by health authorities in this area.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department, along with others, has recently issued a joint circular to health authorities, and a wide range of other organisations, on planning to tackle the problem of alcohol misuse. A copy of Welsh Office Circular 8/89 is in the Library of the House. Progress is to be monitored: relevant aspects of health authorities' work are to feature in forthcoming performance reviews.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made in implementing section 5 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, in respect of its obligation to place duties upon education authorities and social services authorities to identify, assess and provide for the needs of people with mental handicaps at the time that they move out of full-time education; and what arrangements have been made to ensure that these facilities are being monitored in respect of their implementation in terms of quality of life.

Mr. Peter Walker: The attention of local authorities was drawn to their detailed responsibilities under section 5 and 6 of the Act at the time of their implementation and it is upon them that the responsibilities now lie. No central record is held of individual assessments but social work service officials will be conducting a survey of local authority services for disabled people in the coming months.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to implement sections 1 and 2 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986; and whether he will meet the cost implications required to appoint authorised representatives for all people with mental handicaps in connection with the provision of services and the right to obtain relevant information to facilitate an informed choice of a selection of appropriate support services.

Mr. Peter Walker: As my ministerial colleagues in the Department of Health have repeatedly said, each section of the Act will be implemented as and when the necessary resources can be identified and made available. We are making good progress on implementation with six key sections now in force. We have agreed with the local authority associations that section 7 is the next priority and detailed work on sections 1, 2 and 3 will follow as soon as possible. Local authorities will be consulted about the potential cost implications at an appropriate time.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many social workers trained to deal with physically handicapped people are employed by each county council in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information relating to the number of senior social workers, social workers and community workers with qualifications is given in the following table[1]:

	Number
Clwyd	134
Dyfed	120
Gwent	175
Gwynedd	72
Mid Glamorgan	201
Powys	25
South Glamorgan	156
West Glamorgan	102

[1] Full-time staff only, as at 30 September 1988, with a certificate of qualification in social work of the CCETSW or equivalent, a declaration of recognition of experience, a certificate in social service or a senior certificate in residential care.

Rural Water Supply

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many rural water supply schemes have been requisitioned of the Welsh water authority by district councils in Wales in each year.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information requested is not held centrally. I am asking the chairman of the Welsh water authority to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Therapists

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the number of professionally qualified people in post in each health authority area in Wales, and the number of vacancies that exist within the same disciplines, as *(a)* speech therapists, *(b)* occupational therapists and *(c)* physiotherapists;

(2) what steps are being taken to improve training facilities for speech therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) on 21 October at columns *1015-16*, which gives the information requested in respect of physiotherapists and speech therapists. Information on the number of occupational therapists in post in each Welsh district health authority as at 30 September is given in the following table. As indicated in my earlier reply information on the number of vacancies is not currently collected by the Department on a regular basis, but information obtained in the course of the 1988 manpower resource planning exercise indicated that at the all-Wales level at 30 September 1988 there were about 75 (whole-time equivalent) vacancies for occupational therapists. This aggregate figure is approximate only; reliable information at individual district health authority level is not currently available.

Following the results of the 1988 manpower resource planning exercise, consideration is being given to how training provision for speech therapy and occupational therapy may be improved in Wales. The need for improved training capacity for physiotherapy will be assessed in the light of the 1989 round of manpower resource plans.

Occupational therapists
Staff in post (whole-time equivalents) as at 30 September 1988

	Whole-time equivalents
Clwyd	31·9
East Dyfed	12·8
Gwent	37·3
Gwynedd	15·2
Mid Glamorgan	35·5
Pembrokeshire	8·3
Powys	6·6
South Glamorgan	74·2
West Glamorgan	29·0
All Wales	250·8

Crime (Housing Estates)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the chief constables of Wales to discuss how crime on local authority housing estates might be eliminated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I keep under review the crime levels on housing estates and in the country generally. In addition my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State represents the Welsh Office on the ministerial group on crime prevention. My Department works closely with statutory agencies and the voluntary sector to reduce crime on housing estates—grants totalling over £600,000 have been given by the Welsh Office over the last two years for a variety of crime preventive schemes for this purpose. I remain informed of the views of chief constables on all local matters.

Lluesty Hospital

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Lluesty hospital, Holywell, to discuss with patients and staff the proposals of Clwyd health authority to close Lluesty hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I understand that no proposal to close Lluesty hospital has been put to Clwyd health authority. It would therefore not be appropriate for me to hold any discussions at this stage.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many *(a)* nursing staff, *(b)* ancillary staff, *(c)* paramedical staff, *(d)* patients and *(e)* beds there are at Lluesty hospital; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many geriatric patients are under treatment at Lluesty hospital.

Mr. Peter Walker: As at 28 February 1989, there were 48·3 nursing staff, 24·0 ancillary staff and 3·1 physiotherapists. These staff are recorded as whole-time equivalents.

In the period January to September 1988 inclusive, the numbers of in-patients and beds, both of which were recorded under the geriatric speciality, were as follows:

[1]	*Number*
In-patients	394
Average daily available beds	74·0

[1] Excludes day care.

NHS (Clwyd)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make additional cash allocations to Clwyd health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Plans to increase the cash allocations to Clwyd health authority were announced in January for the coming financial year. Other specific initiatives are to be announced shortly. The authority's initial revenue cash allocation for 1989-90 is £107·13 million, an increase of 6·5 per cent. over the 1988-89 allocation; in addition the authority is expected to achieve cost improvements and generate additional income next year equivalent to a further 1·3 per cent. of their revenue allocation. The authority's initial capital allocation for next year is £6·915 million, an increase of more than 40 per cent. over this year. I believe that these resources will be sufficient to allow the authority to meet inflationary pressures and provide for further service development.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Clwyd health authority at Preswefa, Mold, Clwyd, to hear the authority explain why it has rejected the White Paper "Working for Patients".

Mr. Peter Walker: I will be meeting a range of organisations in Wales to hear their views on the White Paper "Working For Patients", including the chairmen of district health authorities.

Hospital Journeys (Clwyd)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the distance by bus route from Shotton, Deeside to *(a)* Lluesty hospital and *(b)* Abergele hospital, Clwyd.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The distances by bus to Lluesty hospital and Abergele hospital are 9·5 miles and 30 miles respectively.

NHS Review

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will receive a deputation of the Clwyd local medical committee to hear their views on the National Health Service White Paper "Working for Patients";

(2) if he will address a general meeting of Clwyd general practitioners from 40 practices on the National Health Service review; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many general practitioners in Wales he has met to discuss his proposals concerning the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave today.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has received objections from general practitioners in Wales concerning his National Health Service review proposal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received comments on the White Paper from a number of general medical practitioners and I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave today.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what research or assessment his Department has undertaken into the impact on general practitioners in Wales of the Department of Health's proposals for general practitioners;

(2) what research projects his Department has undertaken on the practices of general practitioners in rural Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The document "A New Contract" setting out proposals for changes in the arrangement for the remuneration and terms of service for general medical practitioners was issued jointly by the Health Ministers for Wales and England. I will be having discussions with representatives of the GPs.

Broadleaved Woodland Grant Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions the Forestry Commission awarded grants under the broadleaved woodland grant scheme in Wales between its inception and closure; and on how many occasions the grant of £100 for obtaining professional advice in the preparation of a plan of operations under the BWGS was awarded.

Mr. Peter Walker: To date, the Forestry Commission has approved 671 applications for grant under the broadleaved woodland grant scheme in Wales. The grant of £100 has been paid on 142 of those applications.

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has received any response from the Welsh water authority following the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received the authority's initial response, which has been published today, and have placed a copy in the Library of the House.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission was asked to report on the efficiency and costs of, and the services provided by, Welsh Water. After a thorough investigation, for which I am grateful, the Commission made 24 recommendations, eight of which it considered should be a matter of priority for the authority. Overall the Commission considered that, although it had detailed comments to make, the authority now had the right policies in place.

The recommendation that the Commission considered should be a matter of priority for the authority related to the implementation of the new customer accounting system, the collection of arrears of debt, manpower efficiency, the proposed cost and saving investment strategy, the development of business information systems, a work planning system to introduce and monitor performance targets for small jobs, the efficiency of section 15 agencies, the relationship between costs and services and the need for the athority to undertake rigorous and critical examination of its own operations.

The authority has successfully implemented its new customer accounting system, ahead of schedule, and introduced a work planning system to bring in and monitor performance targets for small jobs. Effective action is in hand to implement the other recommendations. A number of the recommendations not in these priority categories have also been implemented.

I am pleased to note that the authority is taking a positive stance in its consideration of the report;

implementation of its detailed recommendations will further improve the authority's performance and add to the considerable strides it has made towards increased efficiency.

I have drawn the Commission's report and this first response by the Welsh water authority to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment so that he can bring both to the attention of the other regional water authorities.

THE ARTS

Scottish Arts Council

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Minister for the Arts what was the Scottish Arts Council grant in current prices in each year from 1978.

Mr. Luce: The information requested is as follows:

	£
1978-79	13,547,311
1979-80	14,390,861
1980-81	13,561,463
1981-82	13,970,323
1982-83	14,555,203
1983-84	[1]15,385,276
1984-85	14,765,495
1985-86	15,083,981
1986-87	15,228,263
1987-88	15,268,807
1988-89	15,258,000

[1] Included £917,851 at 1983-84 prices for Scottish Opera deficit.

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Arts if there have been any items accepted in lieu of tax or allocated since he last made an announcement on the subject to the House.

Mr. Luce: Since my announcement on 26 January at column 665, I am pleased to announce that a painting by Cézanne, "Allée à Chantilly" has been accepted in lieu of capital transfer tax. The amount of tax satisfied was £3,387,556 and was met by a call on the Reserve. A decision as to the allocation of this painting has not yet been taken.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Comic Relief

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to increase contributions to the developing world over the next three years in the light of the public response to comic relief.

Mr. Chris Patten: I pay tribute to the remarkable fund-raising achievement of comic relief and to the generosity of the British public. We are currently discussing with comic relief how we can fund projects with it so that the proceeds go much further. The aid programme is planned to grow in real terms over the next three years.

Namibia

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what special assistance he is planning for Namibia during its period of transition to independence.

Mr. Chris Patten: We shall maintain the existing programme of English language training and scholarships for Namibians living both within and outside the country, at a cost of about £1·5 million annually. I announced recently a contribution of £500,000 towards the programme for the repatriation of refugees being undertaken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We are ready to help also with the costs of relocating exiled Namibian institutions.

NATIONAL FINANCE

National Debt

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the amounts of the national debt owing on the day of the spring Budget for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Lilley: National debt is conventionally defined as the liabilities of the national loans fund, which is not the most useful or comprehensive measure of public sector indebtedness. It does not cover the whole of central government, it excludes entirely the debt of other parts of public sector, and it take no account of the public sector's short term assets.

A more useful measure of public sector indebtedness is the net public sector debt which includes debt held by local authorities and public corporations, as well as central Government. It also takes account of the public sector's short term assets. Net public sector debt is measured on 31 March each year, and the figures for the last 10 years are:

	£ billion	*Per cent. of GDP*
1978	87·9	54·2
1979	95·3	50·6
1980	102·1	45·6
1981	116·5	47·0
1982	127·2	46·7
1983	135·0	45·5
1984	147·3	46·2
1985	160·7	46·3
1986	166·8	44·8
1987	171·1	42·2
1988	171·3	38·2
1989[1]	157·0	32·0

[1] Forecast.

Exchange Equalisation Account

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what transfers were made to the exchange equalisation account from the national loans fund and vice versa in each month from April 1988 to February 1989.

Mr. Lilley: The net transfer between the National Loans Fund and the exchange equalisation account over the financial year is published in table 16.7 of the Central Statistical Office's annual "Abstract of Statistics".

Gilts

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what gilts have been brought in by the Bank of England in each month from April 1988 to February 1989.

Mr. Lilley: The most recent and comprehensive figures for official transaction in gilts are contained in table 8 of the February 1989 *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin*. (These figures are published on a quarterly rather than monthly basis).

It is not the practice to give information on the particular stocks involved in these transactions on grounds of market sensitivity.

Treasury Loan

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when 15½ per cent. Treasury loan 1998 was first issued; how much was issued; at what price; how much is now outstanding; and what is the highest coupon gilt issued.

Mr. Lilley: 15½ per cent. Treasury loan 1998 was first issued on 14 October 1976 and the original amount was £600 million nominal. The issue price was £96. There is currently £1,100 million nominal outstanding. The highest coupon gilt ever issued and the highest coupon currently outstanding are 15½ per cent.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what considerations caused him to revise the proposals on value added tax on non-residential construction from those originally published on 21 June 1988.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) on 6 February at columns *548-50*.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will specify the assumptions and forecasts he has made about non-residential construction in the private sector in each of the years 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92, and 1992-93, in calculating value added tax yield in future years on such construction.

Mr. Lilley: The assumptions and forecasts used to calculate the VAT yield from non-residential construction in 1989-90 and 1990-91 are consistent with the economic forecasts contained in the FSBR.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether he has undertaken any study into the effect of the output and activity of the construction industry of his proposals for applying value added tax to non-residential construction;

(2) whether he has undertaken any study into the likely effect on employment in the construction industry of his proposals for applying value added tax to non-residential construction;

(3) whether he has undertaken any study into the likely effect on urban development corporations of applying value added tax to non-residential construction;

(4) whether he has undertaken any study into the likely effect on inner city regeneration of his proposals for applying value added tax to non-residential construction.

Mr. Lilley: As I made clear in my statements on 21 June 1988 and 6 February 1989, the Government had no choice but to remove the zero-rating found unlawful by the European Court of Justice. After consulting the construction and property industries, the Government are satisfied that the best solution is to combine the taxations of certain new construction with the landlord's option to tax rents, so that the tax could "wash through" the system to the maximum possible extent.

Interest Rates

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are interest rates in *(a)* Britain and *(b)* Germany.

Mr. Lilley: Three-month interbank rates on 20 March were 13·1 per cent. in the United Kingdom and 6·6 per cent. in Germany.

Take-home Pay

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the percentage increase in the real take-home pay of a married man with two children on half average male earnings from 1978-79 to 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) on 22 March.

TRANSPORT

Trunk Roads

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has completed his review of the trunk road network; and if he is now in a position to improve the A11 trunk road through Elveden, Suffolk.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The review of the trunk road programme is still in progress. Possible improvements to the A11 are being considered along with many other candidates for inclusion. Each must compete on its merits for a share of the resources available.

We expect to make an announcement later in the spring. I could not say more about the prospects for particular proposals before then.

We shall look separately at the possibility of shorter term improvement of the junction of the A11 and the B1106 at Elveden when we receive the report from Suffolk county council to which I referred in my reply to my hon. Friend on 14 March 1989 at column *205*.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list information available to him on all the plans by *(a)* British Rail and *(b)* other undertakings to improve transport infrastructure in the Yorkshire region in the period before the opening of the Channel tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Plans for infrastructure investment in railways, roads, ports, airports and other passenger transport facilities in the Yorkshire and Humberside region are too numerous to list. Major schemes include the electrification of the east coast main line; resignalling in the York area and from Northallerton to Berwick; and 29 national trunk road schemes.

There are many other schemes which have not yet been finalised. British Rail is still working on the plan which it

is required to publish by the end of the year, in compliance with section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, setting out its proposals for Channel tunnel passenger and freight services and any associated infrastructure.

British Rail (Signalling and Safety)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what spending criteria have been laid down for British Rail in respect of signalling and safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: British Rail's duty is to ensure that its equipment and procedures meet high standards of safety. Following a review of the railway inspectorate in 1988 I have asked British Rail to ensure that safety is explicitly covered in all investment cases that come to Ministers for consideration. In deciding on the best way of meeting safety requirements, British Rail has to apply the normal investment tests to ensure that the preferred option represents the best possible value for money.

Car Telephones

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding hazards to road safety produced by drivers using car telephones while driving; what advice his Department gives on this subject to those responsible for ensuring road safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received a number of representations. Most expressed concern at the safety implications of using in-car telephones in moving vehicles.

The revised highway code, issued in March 1987, tells drivers not to use a hand held telephone while their vehicle is moving, except in an emergency.

Anyone who can afford a car telephone can afford, and should use, a hands-free microphone.

Railway Safety

Mr. Michael Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will be meeting the chairman of British Rail to discuss all aspects of safety relating to the railway system.

Mr. Portillo: The chief inspecting officer of railways has meetings with BR's director of safety to review safety every six months. He reports to Ministers and the HSC annually on major safety issues and from time to time on particular concerns and individual accidents. I have discussed safety a number of times with Sir Robert Reid over the last 12 months and shall want to do so again when the inspector's reports on the accidents at Clapham, Purley and Bellgrove are available.

Hazardous Cargoes

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department was informed of the cargo of the Perintis freighter before it was sunk.

Mr. Portillo: There is no requirement to report the carriage of packaged hazardous cargoes and the Department was not informed of what cargo the Perintis carried.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when his Department was informed of the danger posed to the environment by the cargo of the Perintis.

Mr. Portillo: The Department's marine pollution control unit obtained a copy of the cargo manifest and recognised the presence of substances likely to pose a threat to the environment within six hours of the sinking of the MV Perintis on 13 March.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what help was asked for and provided by his Department in ensuring the safe disposal of the cargo of the Perintis.

Mr. Portillo: The Department's marine pollution control unit alerted Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution on 14 March who in turn advised the MPCU and south coast local authorities on the safe disposal of any chemicals from MV Perintis which might be landed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what controls his Department has over cargoes of hazardous substances being transported through British waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: There is no control of hazardous cargoes being transported through territorial waters unless those cargoes have been loaded or are to be unloaded in a United Kingdom port. Ships are, however, required to report the loss or likely loss of any substances that might cause pollution, and powers of intervention are available to control pollution incidents.

M40 (Wendlebury to Waterstock)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he intends to take to try and ensure that the time between the completion of the Waterstock to Wendlebury or the Wendlebury to Waterstock sections of the M40 is kept as short as possible.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is intended to invite tenders for the Waterstock-Wendlebury section as soon as possible. Tenderers would be invited to suggest their own shorter periods for construction. The contract would include provision for payment of a bonus for early completion.

Nuclear Fuel Transporter (Doncaster)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a radioactive nuclear fuel transporter was left unguarded for several days at the beginning of March near the Mech Cast factory in the railway sidings at Carr hill, Doncaster.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The nuclear fuel transporter in Carr hill sidings from the 3-8 March was awaiting repair. It did not contain a nuclear fuel flask. The weatherproof cover was in place and this may have given the false impression that the wagon was loaded.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he received the report of his consultants

into the alternatives to the current suspension bridge designs for the east London river crossing; and when he expects to make an announcement and place a copy of the report in the Library.

Mr. Channon: The consultants are finalising their report and expect to submit it soon. An announcement will be made when the report has been considered. I have already undertaken to place a copy in the Library of the House.

Town Police Clauses Act 1847

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to amend the Traffic Act 1985 in order to repeal clause 57 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847, in relation to police powers in relation to taxi drivers.

Mr. Portillo: I have no such plans at present but I am reviewing taxi and hire car legislation and if my hon. Friend has a specific problem in mind I shall be pleased to hear from him.

A27 Arundel Bypass

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to make an announcement regarding the choice of route for the A27 Arundel bypass; and if, in the light of recent road accidents, he will take into account the need for urgent provision of safe crossing facilities for north and south traffic at the Avisford/Walberton/Slindon interchange.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We hope to announce the preferred route by about the middle of next year. The subsequent detailed design will include a new B2132 junction.

In view of the recent accidents near the junction the Department are investigating possible accident prevention measures, for the period before the bypass is built.

Microlight Aircraft

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the legislation and regulations which control and regulate the flying and safety of microlight aircraft.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I will write to the hon. Member with the information as soon as possible.

M1 Luton

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the maximum amount of traffic that can be handled in safety on the M1 south of Luton; and what are the present levels.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Accidents may be associated with any volume of traffic. As traffic increases on any particular section of road there is a steady lowering of the level of service and an increase in congestion. Particular local design features, together with driver behaviour, are much more significant in determining the risk of accident.

The average number of vehicles using the M1 south of Luton in 1988 was 122,000 per day.

Consulting Engineers

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the number of times that a second firm of consulting engineers have been employed to report on the performance of the consulting engineers employed on a road building scheme; if he will give details of the circumstances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 9 March 1989]:* The case where a second firm has been appointed to report, in part, on the performance of a consulting engineer commissioned for a road building project is the Chapel-en-le-Frith and Whaley bridge bypass which was the subject of the hon. Member's questions on 2 March. I cannot yet add to the answers that I gave then.

Second firms are frequently used to consider specialist matters which arise in and from the development of highway projects. An independent design check in relation to certain categories of structures is a standard quality assurance requirement in all cases.

Civil Servants (EC)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of civil servants in his Department whose main task is work related wholly or mainly to the European Economic Community; and what is the gross annual cost of travel and accommodation to and from Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg in connection with this work.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 15 March 1989]:* This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate expense.

British Rail (Disciplinary Procedure)

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Rail train drivers were disciplined for taking trains through red danger signals in each of the years 1980 to 1988; and what assessment he has made of the implications for safety.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 22 March 1989]:* The chief inspecting officer of railways drew attention in his annual report for 1986 to the growing problem of signals passed at danger and the studies being carried out by British Rail. As my right hon. Friend reported to the House at column 757, in his statement on the accident at Bellgrove, British Rail has now decided to carry out trials of an automatic train protection system as a possible way of dealing with this problem. Detailed figures for the years 1980-88 are not available since BR has not in the past been required to report these incidents to the railway inspectorate. Arrangements to do so in future are being discussed as part of the follow up to the review of the railway inspectorate which I announced on Tuesday 21 March in reply to a question by the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway).

Bridge Inspections (Divers)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, 15 March, *Offical Report*, column 118, on what bridges inspections are being carried out by divers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 22 March 1989]:* Inspection by divers of three bridges on the Inverness-Wick/Thurso railway line—Beauly viaduct,

Evanton and Alness viaduct—has been satisfactorily completed. The inspection at Conon viaduct is continuing, but is being hampered by high flows of water. Work already carried out there has indicated a need for remedial action and the Conon viaduct has therefore been temporarily closed. I understand that BR's target date for completion of repairs is May.

Plutonium (Air Transport)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his current estimate of the number of annual flights that will be necessary to transport plutonium reprocessed at Sellafield back to customers once the THORP facility is opened.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 22 March 1989]:* On present information it is estimated that around 30 flights per year will be needed.

Unadopted Streets

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport under which provisions public funds have been made available towards the costs of making up unadopted streets.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer 22 March 1989]:* Under section 236 of the Highways Act 1980 local authorities having responsibility for highways can, if they wish, meet some or all of the costs of making-up unadopted streets. Normally, however, the costs are apportioned between the owners of properties fronting the street involved.

Under section 13 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 central Government can give grants both to private sector developers and to local authorities towards providing road access for new industrial development in assisted areas including making up unadopted roads.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Statistics

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each quarter since the first quarter of 1979 *(a)* British manufacturing investment as a proportion of GDP expressed as a percentage of the G7 average; *(b)* British spending on civil research and development as a proportion of gross domestic product expressed as a percentage of the G7 average, *(c)* British manufacturing output per head as a percentage of the G7 average and *(d)* Britain's share of world trade as a percentage of the G7 share of world trade.

Mr. Atkins: Differences in definitions between countries and problems with different currencies make it inappropriate to express the United Kingdom data as a percentage of the G7 average. Much of the information is not available on a quarterly basis. The available annual information for each of the G7 countries is given in the following tables:

Manufacturing output per head

	United Kingdom £'000	France '000 FFr	FR Germany '000 DM	Italy mn lire	USA $'000	Japan mn yen	Canada Can $'000
1979	6·7	117	52·5	n.a.	14·1	4·7	31·2
1980	7·6	127	53·6	18·4	15·2	5·0	34·1
1981	8·8	142	55·7	21·7	16·9	5·2	38·0
1982	10·1	161	59·3	25·2	18·2	5·5	39·3
1983	11·2	180	64·4	28·9	19·5	5·6	37·6
1984	12·3	198	67·9	33·6	20·8	6·0	45·7
1985	13·5	222	71·7	37·5	21·7	6·3	—
1986	14·9	244	77·7	41·4	22·6	6·5	—
1987	16·6	—	—	—	—	—	—

n.a. = Not available.
Note: Based on current price data.
Sources: UK National Accounts, OECD National Accounts.

Gross expenditure on research and development as percentage of GDP

	United Kingdom	France	FR Germany	Italy	USA	[1]Japan	Canada
1979	[2]—	1·8	2·4	0·7	2·3	2·1	1·1
1980	n.a.	1·8	n.a.	0·9	2·5	2·2	1·1
1981	2·4	2·0	2·4	1·0	2·4	2·3	1·2
1982	n.a.	2·1	n.a.	0·9	2·5	2·4	1·4
1983	2·3	2·1	2·5	1·0	2·6	2·6	1·3
1984	n.a.	2·2	n.a.	1·0	2·7	2·6	1·4
1985	2·3	2·3	2·7	1·1	2·8	2·8	1·4
1986	2·4	2·3	n.a.	1·1	2·7	2·8	1·4

Source: OECD.
n.a. = Not available.
[1] Figures for Japan based on different definition of R and D—this may result in some overstatement.
[2] Not available—figure for 1978 is 2·2.

Manufacturing investment as a proportion of GDP—Percentage

	United Kingdom	France	FR Germany	Italy	USA	Japan	Canada
1979	3·6	3·7	3·8	3·1	2·7	3·4	2·6
1980	3·2	3·5	4·0	3·3	2·8	3·9	3·1
1981	2·5	3·3	3·9	3·0	2·7	4·0	3·5
1982	2·4	3·0	3·5	2·5	2·5	3·8	3·0
1983	2·3	2·9	3·5	2·1	1·9	3·6	2·1
1984	2·6	2·9	3·4	2·3	2·1	4·0	1·9
1985	2·9	3·0	3·8	n.a.	2·1	4·1	n.a.
1986	2·6	3·0	n.a.	n.a.	1·9	3·7	n.a.
1987	2·7	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

n.a. = Not available.
Note: Based on current price data.
Sources: OECD National Accounts, OECD Economic Survey of Japan.

Percentage shares of world trade in manufactures—value

	United Kingdom	France	FR Germany	Italy	USA	Japan	Canada
1979	9·1	10·5	20·9	8·4	16·0	13·7	4·2
1980	9·7	10·0	19·9	7·9	17·0	14·9	4·0
1981	8·5	9·2	18·4	7·7	18·6	17·9	4·6
1982	8·4	9·0	19·7	7·9	17·6	17·3	4·9
1983	7·9	8·9	19·0	8·1	16·9	18·5	5·5
1984	7·6	8·5	18·1	7·7	17·2	20·1	6·3
1985	7·9	8·5	18·7	7·8	16·7	19·7	6·3
1986	7·6	8·8	20·7	8·2	14·0	19·4	5·4
1987	8·1	9·0	21·5	8·4	13·7	18·1	4·9

Source: Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics.

Regional Development Grant

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide figures for spending on *(a)* regional selective assistance and *(b)* regional development grant for (i) Scotland, (ii) England, (iii) Wales and (iv) Northern Ireland for each year from 1978-79 to 1989-90 in cash and at 1987-88 prices.

Mr. Forth: For gross expenditure on regional development grants and regional selective assistance in England, Scotland and Wales in the financial years 1978-79 to 1987-88 I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 25 January at columns *566-68*.

The information requested in respect of 1988-89 and 1989-90 is as follows. Regional development grant and regional selective assistance schemes do not operate in Northern Ireland.

Expenditure (£ million)

	At current prices		At constant prices (1987-88 = 100)	
	Forecast outturn 1988-89	Supply estimates 1989-90	Forecast outturn 1988-89	Supply estimates 1989-90
(a) Regional selective assistance				
England	136	147	127	130
Scotland	44	58	41	51
Wales	43	53	40	47
(b) Regional development grants				
England	154	133	144	117
Scotland	76	64	71	56
Wales	58	64	54	57

Notes:
1. All figures are gross of domestic receipts and receipts from the European Regional Development Fund.
2. RSA includes expenditure on industrial and training grants, Business Improvement Services and the Exchange Risk Guarantee Scheme.

Arms Contracts

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the arms contracts for 1987 and 1988 in which the Export Credits Guarantee Department has had to fund losses; and if he will give the losses in each case.

Mr. Alan Clark: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to disclose information about individual cases.

Oftel

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the level of funding for Oftel in 1988 and 1989; what were the Oftel staffing levels in 1987, 1988 and 1989; how many staff have been seconded from his Department; and if he will make a statement about Oftel's budget for 1990.

Mr. Atkins: The funding and staffing of Oftel is a matter for the Director General of Telecommunications in

consultation with the Treasury. One hundred and twenty-one full-time posts and one part-time post at Oftel are currently filled by secondees from my Department.

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consultations he has had with his West German and Italian counterparts concerning the provision of credit support for the export of Tornado aircraft to Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

Mr. Alan Clark I have had no such consultations.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether any credit was extended to cover that part of the contract to sell Tornado aircraft to Jordan that related to the cost of negotiating the contract.

Mr. Alan Clark It has been the practice of successive Governments not to disclose information about individual cases.

Internal Market Council

Mr. Key: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the Internal Market Council held on 13 March.

Mr. Maude The Council, at which I represented the United Kingdom, reached broad agreement on an important directive to break down barriers to the free flow of television programmes across frontiers within the Community. The Council also adopted a directive on the permissible sound level and exhaust system of motor cycles.

Companies House Executive Agency

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what targets have been set for the Companies house executive agency.

Mr. Maude Companies house's creation as an executive agency on 3 October last year built on the very considerable progress that has been made in the organisation in recent years. The activities of Companies house in making available information about companies promote enterprise and contribute substantially to open and informed markets. Its first few months as an agency confirm that this new status will enable Companies house to provide a still better service to its many customers, and to increase its efficiency.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has today set the chief executive the following targets for improvements in the quality of service and financial performance over the next two years:

- 10 per cent. reduction in the proportion of companies which have not filed all the accounts and annual returns required by the Companies Act, so that by June 1991 the compliance rate will be increased to 83 per cent;
- 20 per cent. reduction in the time taken to process documents, so that by April 1991 documents are on average available to the public within 18 working days of being delivered to Companies House;
- 12 per cent. increase in output per member of staff;
- 7 per cent. decrease in unit costs in real terms.

In addition my right hon. and noble Friend has emphasised to the chief executive the need to provide a standard of service over the whole range of Companies house operations which meets the needs of his customers. As well as maintaining his efforts to improve the quality of existing services, we expect the chief executive shortly to announce new services in response to customer demands to enhance the accessibility of the information he holds.

My right hon. and noble Friend is also glad to announce that there will be no increase in the level of statutory fees for Companies house services in the 1989-90 financial year.

Bradford Task Force

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) from which subhead of his Department's vote the Bradford inner city task force will be funded; what annual budget has been allocated to the Bradford task force; what operating budget the task force will disburse; what are the immediate objectives of the task force; how the task force will assess applications made to it for funding; and by what criteria the task force will consider applications made to it for funding and other support;

(2) if he will consider urgently how he might assist through the inner city task force, those voluntary organisations in Bradford providing training for the unemployed and child care enabling women to undertake employment outside the home;

(3) how many officials he has appointed to the Bradford inner city task force announced on 9 March; what is the salary range of those officials; from which departments they have come; whether any of these officials have belonged to other inner-city task forces; what office accommodation the task force will occupy; and what is the estimated annual cost of renting that accommodation;

(4) if he will direct the Bradford inner-city task force to examine urgently possible funding for voluntary organisations which are now threatened with closure or severe cuts in their funding.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster announced on 9 March that he intended to establish an inner-city task force in Bradford. I expect it to be operational by the autumn. The expenditure of all inner-city task forces comes from the same vote subheads. Running costs are funded from class V vote 3 subhead B.01, and programme expenditure from class V vote 2, subheads G.01 and I.02. When the Bradford task force is established it will share in the £17 million provided for task force programme expenditure in 1989-90. It will also share the common objectives of task forces which can be summarised as enhancing the enterprise and employability of residents of their areas. No budget can be set, nor more detailed operational objectives established nor other matters determined until the task force has been set up.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Forestry (Yorkshire)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all woodlands in the three counties of Yorkshire either sold or proposed for sale by the Forestry Commission since the passage of the Forestry Act 1981; if he will state for each such woodland *(a)* the acreage, *(b)* the map reference and *(c)* the species composition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The information is given in the following tables:

Year	Name	Area (hectares)	Grid reference	Species
Woodlands sold in South Yorkshire				
1983	Huthwaite Wood	13·3	SE 282 002	C
1983	Land at Silkstone	1·0	SE 295 058	B
1984	Land at Silkstone	1·0	SK 295 058	B
1984	Swinston Hill Wood	29·0	SK 540 845	B
1984	Swinston Hill Package	59·0	SK 540 845	B
1984	Swinston Hill Package	16·0	SK 540 845	B
1985	Cannon Hall Estate	10·4	SE 270 094	B
1985	Lowe Wood Wentworth	17·8	SE 317 035	B
1987	Cantley Estate	10·5	SE 622 030	C
1988	Coumbes Vale Wood	15·2	SK 295 929	B
Woodlands sold in West Yorkshire				
1982	Stubbs Wood	4·1	SE 369 158	C
1983	Bournshaw Tower	98·1	SD 895 255	U
1984	Brownholme Blocks	47·0	SD 685 455	C
1987	Blakey Wood	4·9	SE 094 402	C
1987	Land held from Yorkshire Water Authority	434·5	SD 000 225	C
1988	Coburnhill Wood	23·7	SE 450 348	C
1989	Higher House and Land	6·2	SE 001 225	B
Woodlands sold in North Yorkshire				
1981	Crooked Hill North Bank and Spring Wood	49·0	SE 522 895	C
1982	Brafferton Spring	95·0	SE 455 715	C
1982	New Park Plantations	33·0	SE 550 633	C
1982	Scotton Banks	22·2	SE 332 579	C
1983	Big Ings Wood	8·5	SE 556 679	C
1983	Brosa Moor and Harwood Dale	65·0	SE 948 926	C
1983	Clark Wood	30·0	SE 447 745	C
1983	Grass Wood	65·4	SD 985 655	C
1983	Knotts Plantation	4·4	SE 122 702	C
1983	Land at Flask	1·0	NZ 930 000	B
1983	Riffa Wood	19·1	SE 255 470	C
1983	Westow and Storth Wood	14·8	SE 478 864	C
1984	Bishopwood Main Line Diversion	3·3	SE 549 328	B
1984	Burnt Yates Wood	9·2	SE 236 608	B
1984	Hawkshaw Gill and Clark's Carrwood	65·4	SE 182 634	C
1984	Jackal Wood	6·2	SE 253 490	C
1984	Juniper and Potgate Woods	13·0	SE 278 750	B
1984	Leppington Wood	8·6	SE 768 616	C
1984	Peep O Day Wood	4·9	SE 522 720	C
1984	Scardale Package	52·9	SE 895 740	B
1984	Sherburn and Butterwick Whins	17·0	SE 972 728	B
1984	Southwold	31·5	SE 875 711	B
1984	Swinton Estate	286·0	SE 190 810	C
1984	Swinton Estate	183·3	SE 190 810	C
1984	The Avenue	6·5	SE 453 726	C
1984	Warren Slack	17·0	SE 990 744	C
1984	West Moor Plantation	2·9	SE 450 733	C
1984	West Wood	8·5	SE 136 680	C
1984	Wragby Plantations	21·0	SE 930 000	C
1985	Hornby Leasehold	16·1	SE 223 935	C
1985	Ingleby Greenhow (Church Plantation)	1·6	NZ 580 065	B
1985	Levisham Block	68·5	SE 826 895	B
1985	Moor Covert Plantation	11·3	SE 780 657	C
1985	Newton Mulgrave	43·3	NZ 783 130	C
1985	Oxdale, Dargo and Laund	18·2	SE 884 837	C
1985	Raindale Head	2·5	SE 802 939	C
1985	Scardale Package	193·2	SE 895 735	B
1986	Brosa: Spring Wood East	17·5	NZ 952 919	C
1986	Crookrise and Gargrave (Lot 4)	3·0	SD 980 541	B
1986	Crookrise and Gargrave (Lots, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6)	243·9	SD 956 542	C
1986	Crookrise/Gargrave Part (Sawley)	7·1	SE 988 555	C
1986	Croomdale Plantation	33·0	SE 945 672	B
1986	Everley Banks Plantation	34·5	SD 984 899	C
1986	Fowler Gate Wood	11·6	SE 948 922	C
1986	Iron Moor (Whin Covert and Black Rigg)	39·0	SE 996 868	C
1986	Little Beck Wood	16·2	NZ 883 046	C
1986	Quarry Wood	2·7	SE 247 692	C
1986	Stapleton Park (Brockadale)	28·0	SE 504 175	B
1986	Staxton brow	38·0	TA 020 785	C
1986	Sunny Bank	9·3	SE 238 696	C
1986	Wilstrop Wood	24·7	SE 490 540	C
1987	East and West Belts and Ramshaw Quarry	27·0	SE 154 838	C

Year	Name	Area (hectares)	Grid reference	Species[1]
1987	Elslack	66·5	SD 939 480	C
1987	Harewood Whin	8·6	SE 541 522	C
1987	Longside Plantation	88·5	SE 118 724	C
1987	Witton Fell	107·0	SE 137 849	C
1988	Grinkle Park	35·8	SE 763 178	C
1988	Grinkle Park	134·5	SE 751 169	B
1988	Skipster Hagg Wood	10·0	SE 732 867	C

[1] The species composition is not available in any more detail than B for mainly broadleaves, C for mainly conifers and U for unplanted.

Woodlands proposed for sale

Name	Area (hectares)	Grid reference	Species[1]
South Yorkshire			
Cantley Estate	106·1	SE 676 047	C
Hollins Plantation	23·0	SE 097 399	C
Owston Wood and Duck Holt	65·7	SE 571 102	B
West Yorkshire			
Haw Park	7·3	SE 365 151	B
Home Styes Wood	136·7	SE 105 045	C
Kippax Estate	22·0	SE 453 335	B
Kippax Estate	22·0	SE 452 325	C
Kippax Estate	4·0	SE 453 344	B
North Yorkshire			
Stapleton Park	75·0	SE 504 180	B
Stapleton Park	27·0	SE 514 185	C
Stapleton Park	11·0	SE 504 181	B
Stapleton Park	12·0	SE 496 194	B
Stapleton Park	26·0	SE 498 185	C
Buck Plantation	12·6	SE 030 513	C
Bullen Wood	17·1	SE 457 383	B
Faceby and Sonny Cliff Wood	61·0	NZ505 018	C
Hollin Head and Piney Moor	29·9	SE 273 733	C
Micklefield Woods	48·0	SE 452 334	B
Cambleforth Estate	48·0	SE 625 272	B
Goathland Package	209·0	NZ820 020	C
Hornby Castle	56·1	SE 212 927	C
Gateforth Woods	29·0	SE 569 284	B

[1] The species composition is not available in any more detail than B for mainly broadleaves and C for mainly conifers.

Slaughtering

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food whether he is satisfied that the practice of paying slaughtermen by piece work is not causing animals to be stunned for less than the obligatory seven seconds.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Slaughterhouses Act 1974 requires that when animals are stunned they must be instantaneously rendered insensible to pain until death supervenes. Minimum periods for effective stunning by electricity are not prescribed by law and will vary according to the equipment employed and the size and species of the animal. At a time when only low frequency stunners were available, a minimum application period of seven seconds was recommended by the Ministry in guidance to local authorities. Some equipment now available is capable of achieving the required effect in two to four seconds.

Local authorities are responsible for enforcing the legislation which must be observed whatever practices are followed in the plant.

Toxic Pesticides

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research is taking place to ensure that toxic pesticides that bond with cereals can be detected; when he will publish all of his Department's pesticide residue tests, including those on fish; what percentage of the cereals stored in the United Kingdom are held by the Government; and if he will make a statement on the consequences in terms of possible toxicity or long-term chronic effects on the consumer, human or animal, and also for the food processing industry.

Mr. Ryder: I am able to reassure the hon. Member that "bound" residues in cereals can be detected and identified. The ADAS central science laboratory at Slough has already carried out some successful work and is continuing research in this area. The results of Government monitoring for pesticide residues are published. The latest report—Food Surveillance Paper No. 25 —was published on 13 March this year. It includes results of a survey of freshwater eels; results of studies of marine fish are published separately by MAFF's directorate of fisheries research.

At 31 October 1988 (the latest date for which information is available) about 12 per cent. of United Kingdom cereal stocks were held in intervention. The published results of monitoring for pesticide residues have been considered by the advisory committee on pesticides and the committee on toxicity of chemicals in food, consumer products and the environment who were satisfied that residues in cereals do not represent a hazard to consumers.

Abattoirs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by location all the abattoirs within the three counties of Yorkshire showing which have a licence to export meat to the European Economic Community, which have had their export licence revoked and which can still provide meat to be consumed by British nationals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 18 January at column *213* to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins). The list of all slaughterhouses in England and Wales placed in the Library of the House identifies those which are export approved.

Two non-export approved slaughterhouses in Yorkshire formerly were so approved but it would not be appropriate to list their names. There can be many reasons for the withdrawal of export approval, including changing business requirements. There is no reason to assume that hygiene standards in slaughterhouses which were once export approved are no longer satisfactory or are below those in other slaughterhouses whether or not they are export approved. The legislation governing the supply of meat for consumption in England and Wales is enforced

by local authorities who appoint environmental health officers for supervision. The professional status of environmental health officers is of the highest order.

Salmonella

Mr. Key: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further measures will be taken to prevent the introduction into Great Britain of salmonella in animal protein intended for use as animal feedingstuffs.

Mr. Ryder: Amended conditions for the importation of animal protein have been introduced over recent months and action will be completed by 1 May.

The new conditions include the position of veterinary certification of heat treatment to destroy salmonellae in consignments, originating from countries from which animal protein has, within the last two years, been found to be contaminated when sampled at the port and landing. Samples will be obtained from consignments on arrival and tested for salmonellae. Subsequent action will depend on the results obtained.

In the case of consignments of fishmeal not shipped direct from the country of origin, transhipment will be authorised only through a limited number of ports in the Federal Republic and Germany and the Netherlands, since transhipment will be supervised by the veterinary authorities in those countries.

Animal Mutations

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research is being *(a)* undertaken by his Department or *(b)* commissioned by him into animal mutations following the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The incidence of congenital defects in grazing animals is constantly kept under review, and no difference is observed between areas of high and low deposition of Chernobyl fallout. No specific research into animal mutations caused by fallout from the Chernobyl accident is therefore being undertaken by my Department, nor has any been commissioned.

Radioactive Monitoring

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the locations of the slaughterhouses where he is carrying out a trial of the feasability of radioactive monitoring of sheep; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The feasibility trial is being carried out at three slaughterhouses in Cumbria and three in Lancashire, which in normal circumstances will be processing animals from the Cumbrian restricted area.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is considering monitoring other animals for radioactivity prior to slaughter in abattoirs.

Mr. Ryder: I currently have no plans to do so.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who carries out on his behalf monitoring of sheep for radioactivity in slaughterhouses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Monitoring of sheep for radioactivity in slaughterhouses is carried out by Ministry staff based in the area.

Sheep

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to lift the post-Chernobyl restrictions on the movement of sheep; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: We shall remove restrictions as soon as it is possible to do so without compromising food safety. The broad trend in radioactivity within the Cumbria restricted area in 1988 compared with 1987 was downwards and this is encouraging. However all the while there are sheep above the 1,000 bq/kg limit, restrictions will have to remain in place.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the incinerators by name and district which may be used for the disposal of sheep from restricted areas.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Casualty sheep from the post-Chernobyl restricted area in Cumbria may be buried or cremated by farmers on their own land or, where this is not possible, farmers may make arrangements for disposal of the carcases at a county council refuse tip or incinerator. The location and availability of incinerators is a matter for the local authorities.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the incinerators by name and district used for the disposal of bovine spongiform encephalopathy infected cattle or parts of the same;

(2) if he will list the incinerators by name and county which may be used for both the disposal of bovine spongiform encephalopathy infected cattle and sheep from restricted areas.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Cattle suspected of having BSE are disposed of at the following incineration facilities:

Ministry Veterinary Investigation Centres at Carmarthen; Itchen Abbas, Winchester; Langford, Bristol; Longbenton, Newcastle upon Tyne; Merrythought, Penrith; Riseholme, Lincoln; and Sutton Bonnington, Loughborough;

Scottish Agricultural Colleges' Veterinary Investigation Centres at Auchincruive, Ayr; Buckburn, Aberdeen; Edinburgh; Perth; and St. Boswells, Galashiels;

Shetland Islands Council incinerator at Rova Head, Lerwick; and at private incinerators at Royston, Herts; and Wrexham.

As regards the disposal of sheep from infected areas, I refer the hon. Member to my earlier reply.

Radioactivity (Cumbria)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of the restricted area of Cumbria was covered by the aerial survey for radioactivity in 1988.

Mr. Ryder: Although the aerial survey was set up to cover all of the restricted area in Cumbria, due to unseasonably bad weather, only 80 per cent. of the area was surveyed.

Sheep Dip

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of his staff are currently working on the problems of the link between sheep dip and human health.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A precise number cannot be readily estimated but all my staff whose work relates to licensing or use of sheep dips ensure that the precautions needed to avoid hazards to human health are identified and understood.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what research he is conducting into the run-off of sheep dip into the Rivers North Tyne and South Tyne and its tributaries;

(2) what research he is conducting into the run-off of sheep dip into water courses.

Mr. Ryder: None. However, because sheep dip is potentially a serious pollutant my Department issued a press notice on 20 September 1988 to reinforce the guidance in ADAS booklet 2198 and to remind farmers and others of the need to take the greatest care in disposal. I am placing a copy of the press notice and booklet in the Library of the House.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he gives to farmers about the siting of sheep dip facilities on the edge of water courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Department's code on good agricultural practice, the free guide to the code, ADAS pamphlets p 593 and p 2332 and ADAS booklet 2198 all give advice on safe dipping and recommend farmers to seek guidance from local water authorities on the siting and construction of dip baths and soakaways.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research he is conducting into the effects on human health of organochlorine compounds in sheep dip; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: None. No currently licensed sheep dips contain organochlorine compounds.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research he is conducting into the effects of organophosphorous compounds in sheep dip on human health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department, with the Department of Health and the Health and Safety Executive, assesses all available data on the risks to human health from organophosphorus compounds which are the subject of applications for veterinary medicinal product licences. In addition, the HSE will be undertaking a study during the compulsory sheep scab dipping period this autumn. My Department also records and investigates all suspected adverse reactions to veterinary medicinal products, including sheep dips.

ADAS (Staff)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many staff are currently employed in the agricultural development advisory service and how many he expects to be in post on 1 January 1990.

Mr. Ryder: There are 3,823 professional, scientific, technical and industrial staff (excluding temporary staff) currently in post in ADAS. Future staffing levels will need to reflect the proposals and other matters dealt with in the Minister's reply of 21 March to the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on agricultural and food research and development, as well as future demands for ADAS chargeable and other services.

Central Veterinary Laboratory

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many staff at the Central Veterinary Laboratory are qualified veterinarians; and how many such qualified veterinarians he expects to be in post on 1 January 1990;

(2) how many staff are currently employed at the Central Veterinary Laboratory; and how many he expects to be in post on 1 January 1990.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The number of permanent staff in the professional, scientific, technical, industrial and administrative grades currently employed at the Central Veterinary Laboratory is 573½. Of these, 46 are qualified veterinarians. Some additional posts are being created to deal with work on salmonellosis, but future staffing levels will need to reflect the proposals and other matters dealt with in my reply of 21 March to the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on agricultural and food research and development, as well as future demand for ADAS chargeable services.

Experimental Husbandry Farms

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many experimental husbandry farms there are in his Department; and how many he intends to close.

Mr. Ryder: There are at present 11 experimental husbandry farms in my Department. I refer the hon. Member to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on 21 March in which the Minister outlined a proposal to close one of these farms.

Laboratories

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many laboratories there are within his Department; and how many he plans to close.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary on 16 March at columns 349-50 and to the reply that the Minister gave on 21 March at column *515* to the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell).

Horticultural Stations

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many experimental horticultural stations are in his Department; and how many he intends to close.

Mr. Ryder: There are at present seven experimental horticulture stations in my Department. The closure of one of these (Lee Valley) has already been announced and will take place on 31 March 1989. I refer the hon. Member to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on 21 March 1989 in which the Minister outlined a proposal to close a further three stations.

Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions the Forestry Commission awarded grants under the broadleaved woodland grant scheme in England between its inception and closure; and on how many occasions the grant of £100 for obtaining professional advice in the preparation of a plan of operations under the BWGS was awarded.

Mr. Ryder: To date, the Forestry Commission has approved 5,156 applications for grant under the broadleaved woodland grant scheme in England. The grant of £100 has been paid on 819 of these applications.

Butter

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether additions to the list of free EEC butter distributors are being made; what is the criteria for an organisation to be eligible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) announced to the House that 127 organisations had been designated to distribute produce to the most needy. These organisations were designated to participate for the two years 1988 and 1989. The conditions with which they had to comply were outlined in my reply to the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) on 19 October 1988. We are currently consulting designated organisations about their allocation of produce for 1989 but only in exceptional circumstances could we consider making any additions to the list of those organisations.

Veterinary Products Committee

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many of his officials attend meetings of the Veterinary Products Committee; and when he last received a report on the committee's activities.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The level of attendance at meetings of the Veterinary Products Committee by the Departments concerned depends on the subject matter and the needs of the committee. The committee periodically draws matters to my attention as well as providing me with an annual report of its work, which is published.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place copies of the minutes of all meetings since June 1987 of the Veterinary Products Committee in the Library.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No. Much of the information provided to the Veterinary Products Committee and the committee's consideration of it are confidential.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he sees minutes of meetings of the Veterinary Products Committee.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Veterinary Products Committee provides me with specific advice rather than with the minutes of its meetings.

Pesticides

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ban the use of pesticides manufactured before 1965 until after the completion of his review on safety.

Mr. Ryder: At the present time no risk to health is suggested which would warrant an immediate ban on pesticides which were approved before 1965. The routine review programme announced on 16 March will enable the independent advisory committee on pesticides (ACP) to re-evaluate the available data and if necessary require additional or updated data from companies. The ACP will then be in a position to make any recommendations it considers necessary.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects his review of the safety of pesticides manufactured before 1965 to be completed.

Mr. Ryder: The completion date for the review of pesticides approved prior to 1965 cannot be estimated until all relevant data sheets have been prepared and ranked in priority order for consideration by the advisory committee on pesticides. In addition, the time taken for each review of an active ingredient will vary.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what are his estimates for the number of staff he will employ in evaluating old and new pesticides in each of the next five years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many staff he has employed to evaluate old and new pesticides since 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: Staff at the Ministry's pesticides data evaluation unit are involved in the evaluation of pesticides for agricultural use. The number of scientific posts are as follows:

	Number
1985	22·5
1986	32·5
1987	32·5
1988	43·0
1989	52·0
1989-94	[1]

[1] Staffing levels are under review.

Of these, there is a core of staff engaged full-time on new active ingredients and the review programme and these will be supplemented by other technical experts in the unit, those in other Government Departments and by the independent experts on the advisory committee on pesticides and its scientific sub-committee.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring he carries out of pesticide incidence in wildlife; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* My Department operates two schemes in England and Wales. The ADAS wildlife incident investigation scheme responds to reports of the deaths or illness of companion animals (chiefly cats and dogs), wildlife (mammals and birds) and honeybees, and to the discovery of possible poisoned baits.

Information resulting from these investigations is made available to the advisory committee on pesticides, to be used in the course of making recommendations concerning pesticide registration. If there is evidence that incidents have involved misuse of pesticides, in contravention of the Control of Pesticides Regulations or other legislation, further investigations may be conducted to obtain evidence for use in enforcement action.

Surveys of pesticide residues in wildlife are undertaken periodically by the working party on pesticide residues.

In addition, my Department has recently completed a seven year field study at Boxworth experimental husbandry farm into the environmental impact of different pesticide strategies on winter wheat. Annual reports have been prepared, summarising the results of this in-depth ecological study and the full account of our findings are now being prepared for publication.

Lindane

Mr. Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take immediate steps to ban the manufacture and import of the pesticide Lindane.

Mr. Ryder: No. Lindane is currently under review by the independent advisory committee on pesticides. Any necessary action will be taken on the basis of the Committee's recommendations to Ministers.

Levies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is the levy paid per litre by farmers who pasteurise their own milk and then sell it retail;

(2) what assessment he has made of whether the producer processor levy, the retail processor levy and the farm pasteurising levy are compatible with the payment of FEOGA refunds.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Producer retailers currently pay a contribution of 3·369 pence per litre to the Milk Marketing Board. I do not regard these arrangements (or the similar producer processor arrangements) as having any bearing on the payment of FEOGA refunds.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what basis he instructed the Milk Marketing Board to withdraw the farmhouse cheese makers levy in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the Milk Marketing Board's decision to end the farmhouse cheesemakers' scheme (FCS) on 28 February 1987. The board's decision reflected my concern that the FCS milk pricing and allocation system risked distortion of competition between cheesemakers, and might therefore be regarded as contrary to the Community rules governing our milk marketing arrangements.

Bovine Somatotropin

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list all appeals against the Veterinary Products Committee's rejection of a product licence for BST to be heard in the next three months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I shall in due course receive the Veterinary Products Committee's recommendations on applications for product licences for BST. Decisions on licences are a matter for the licensing authority.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chemical Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has of plans by Egypt to construct a chemicals plant capable of producing chemical warfare agents, at Abu Zaabal, near Cairo; and if he has consulted with his counterpart in the United States Government over this matter.

Mr. Eggar: We have no information to indicate that the plant at Abu Zaabal is intended to produce chemical warfare agents. We are in regular contact with the United States and other allies to discuss CW proliferation worldwide.

Israel

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to have discussions with the Israeli Foreign Minister; and on what subjects.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to visit Israel this summer, and looks forward to discussing bilateral and regional issues with Professor Arens then.

Tibet

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the subject of human rights abuses in Tibet.

Mr. Eggar: Expressions of concern about events in Tibet have been received from hon. Members, Members of the House of Lords and from members of the public.

El Salvador

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet representatives of the new El Salvadorean Government.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to meet representatives of the new Government of El Salvador.

Council of Ministers

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what issues he intends to raise at the next meeting of the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. At present six meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for April.

The Social Affairs Council, meeting on 5 April, is expected to hear a Commission report on a draft charter of social rights; consider with a view to agreeing common positions health and safety directives on the workplace, work equipment and personal protective equipment; and consider a draft resolution on continuing vocational training, a regulation on measures to help redundant shipbuilding workers and an amendment to the regulation on family allowances for migrant workers.

The internal market council on 13-14 April will discuss a number of measures relevant to the completion of the single market.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 17, 18 and possibly 19 April to discuss 1989 price-fixing proposals, the forestry action programme and possibly conversion schemes.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 17 April to consider the Commission's proposals for harmonising the taxation of savings and discuss direct taxation of companies. It will consider a progress report by the Presidency on tax approximation and discuss the 18th VAT Directive concerning the ending of various derogations available to the member states under the terms of the 6th VAT Directive. The Council is also due to complete the process of conciliation with the European Parliament on two regulations associated with the establishment and making available of own resources by member states to the Commission.

The Foreign Affairs Council on 24-25 April may discuss a Commission proposal for a financing facility to enable developing countries to import food products from the European Community on concessionary terms, and a linked proposal to harmonise export credits available for exports of agricultural products from member states. Other possible subjects for discussion are food aid, and the Uruguay Round, on which the Commission may report on the outcome of the meeting of the GATT trade negotiations committee in Geneva. An EC-Morocco Co-operation Council will be held in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council.

The Telecommunications Council on 27 April will consist of a general discussion on Open Network Provision with the likelihood that ISDN and standardisation in telecoms will be adopted. There will also be detailed consideration on the draft proposed Council decision on HDTV. There may also be a discussion on the second phase directive on mutual recognition of type approval.

Immigration

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the speed at which entry clearance cases are now being dealt with when referred to his Department.

Mr. Eggar: Cases referred by entry clearance officers in Commonwealth countries, the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia are sent by posts direct to the immigration and nationality department of the Home Office. All other referrals are channelled via the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The time taken to deal with referred applications varies from case to case and average times cannot be given.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he is going to take decisions on the applications made at the post in Islamabad, by Abdul Sattar, date of birth 30 June 1978, Abdul Ghaffar, 11 January 1972, Safeena Kausar, 7 March 1982, and Fareeda Kausar, 28 August 1980, to enter the United Kingdom; when their applications were made; what inquiries have been made into their applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: All four applications were lodged on 2 July 1987 and are still under consideration. In view of the compassionate circumstances the applicants were given a priority interview on 28 August 1988.

Following that interview the entry clearance officer at Islamabad was not satisfied as to the claimed family relationship of the applicants and deferred a decision for local inquiries to be made. These inquiries have however proved inconclusive and on 22 March 1989 the entry clearance officer referred the applications to the Home Office for further consideration.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why Mr. Nadeem Mumtaz, date of birth 9 December 1965, was refused a visa to visit the United Kingdom by the post in Karachi; and if he will reconsider this case in the light of Mr. Mumtaz's four previous visits.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Nadeem Mumtaz was refused entry clearance on 16 February 1989 as the entry clearance officer at Karachi was not satisfied, as he is required to be under paragraph 17 of HC 169, that Mr. Mumtaz was a genuine visitor who would leave the United Kingdom at the end of his permitted stay. Mr. Mumtaz sought a two months stay to visit a relative in this country. The entry clearance officer was aware that Mr. Mumtaz had made previous visits to the United Kingdom, but his application for a visa had to be considered afresh and in the light of Mr. Mumtaz's present circumstances.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why Mr. Nazar Hussein, reference No. V/3428/89, was refused a visa by the post in Islamabad to visit the United Kingdom; and if he will reconsider this case.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Nazar Hussein was refused entry clearance on 23 February 1989 as the entry clearance officer at Islamabad was not satisfied, as he is required to be under paragraph 17 of HC 169, that Mr. Hussein was a genuine visitor who would leave the United Kingdom at the end of his permitted stay. Mr. Hussein sought a two to three months stay to visit his brother who lives in this country. Mr. Hussein has a statutory right of appeal to an independent appellate authority within three months of the date of refusal. No such appeal had been lodged up to 22 March 1989.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will describe the procedure adopted by the relevant immigration authorities when an appeal against entry clearance refusal has been upheld by an adjudicator; and if it is the practice to grant entry clearance when an appeal is so upheld;

(2) in what circumstances entry clearance will not be issued by the relevant immigration authorities once an appeal against refusal has been upheld on adjudication.

Mr. Eggar: Entry clearance officers (ECOs) have a statutory duty to comply with any written or oral

directions given by the appellate authorities in giving effect to a determination; where directed they will issue entry clearance immediately unless, in the case of an adjudicator's direction, it is subject to further appeal. Where, however, an adjudicator allows an appeal but gives no directions, the ECO will reconsider the application within the spirit of the adjudicator's determination and will issue entry clearance if the appellant meets the requirements of the immigration rules. If, because of changed circumstances, the appellant does not meet the requirements of the immigration rules, his application will be refused with a further right of appeal to the appellate authorities.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what circumstances an appellant whose appeal against entry had been upheld would be required by the immigration authorities to produce further documentary evidence; and in how many cases in 1987 and 1988 this was required.

Mr. Eggar: Where an adjudicator allows an appeal but gives no directions, an entry clearance officer (ECO) may call for further documentary evidence to satisfy himself, within the spirit of the adjudicator's determination, that, notwithstanding changed circumstances, the appellant meets the requirements of the immigration rules. Details are not available of the number of cases in which this proved necessary.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average time which elapses between an appeal against entry clearance being upheld by an adjudicator and entry clearance being issued by the relevant immigration authorities; and if he has taken steps to ensure that minimal delay occurs in successful appeal cases.

Mr. Eggar: Appeal determinations not subject to further appeal are normally sent by the Home Office to overseas posts within a maximum of two weeks of receipt from the appellate authorities. On receiving a determination the entry clearance officer (ECO) informs the appellant and, where directions are given by an adjudicator, entry clearance is issued as soon as the appellant presents his passport. I am satisfied that existing procedures ensure minimal delay.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criticisms have been made by the immigration appeals tribunal over delays in appeals against entry clearance being upheld in the United Kingdom and the actual granting of entry clearance to successful appellants; and what steps have been taken to rectify such delays.

Mr. Eggar: None. Where directed by an adjudicator an entry clearance officer (ECO) will issue entry clearance immediately. Where no directions are given an ECO will issue entry clearance as soon as he has satisfied himself, if necessary after further inquiries, that the appellant meets the requirements of the immigration rules.

Ethiopia

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will call in the Ethiopian ambassador to seek the considered response urged by the head of the United Kingdom delegation at the 45th session of the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva on 7 March.

Mr. Eggar: We have urged the Ethiopian Government to give a considered response. We now await this. We have raised our human rights concerns with them on numerous occasions and will continue to do so on all appropriate occasions.

Chemical Products (Regulation)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his decision to agree to the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 February adopting a regulation on the control of certain chemical products prior to completion of parliamentary scrutiny.

Mrs. Chalker: The proposal for a regulation requiring national controls on the export of eight key chemical weapons precursors arose at very short notice, and discussion at the European political co-operation ministerial meeting in Madrid on 14 February revealed a strong concensus for urgent Community action. Given our firm stand against proliferation of chemical weapons and our wish to see existing export controls in Community countries applied more effectively, we took the view that an immediate decision on the regulation would be appropriate. That is why we did not oppose the adoption of the regulation at the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 February, on which I reported in the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on 22 February, even though it was clearly not possible in the very short time available to complete parliamentary scrutiny. The Chairman of the European Legislation Committee was, of course, kept fully informed throughout.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Attendance Allowance

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what guidance his Department issues on the definition of the term terminally ill with regard to the determination of eligibility for attendance allowance.

Mr. Needham: No guidance is issued as the term does not occur in the legislation governing entitlement to attendance allowance.

Special Diets

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps his Department has taken to assess the cost of special diets in Northern Ireland for people receiving state benefits; and what is his estimate of the number of such people who require special diets for (i) epilepsy and (ii) diabetes.

Mr. Needham: As the benefits system does not make specific provision for special dietary needs, the cost has not been assessed nor is an estimate of the numbers mentioned available.

Comber (Bypass)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the proposal for a bypass at Comber.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has a scheme to extend the existing Comber bypass from Killinchy street to Newtownards road.

This scheme is included in the current major works programme 1989-90 to 1993-94 and detailed design work is under way. It is not possible to indicate a start date since this will depend on the completion of the statutory processes and the availability of finances at the time.

Urban Development Grants

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for which urban areas in Northern Ireland urban development grants are presently available.

Mr. Needham: Urban development grant, funded by the Government, is available in Belfast and Londonderry. Similar grants under the first urban development programme funded by the international fund for Ireland and administered by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland were available in 22 district towns, and in the urban areas of Castlereagh and Newtownabbey. Under the second urban development programme announced in November 1988 grants in addition may be offered to exceptional projects in other urban areas.

Social Security Payments

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many families in Northern Ireland are in receipt of family credit.

Mr. Needham: A total of 14,176 at 15 March 1989.

Married Teachers

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will seek to introduce appropriate legislation to ensure that the widows and widowers of married teachers will receive equal benefits and pensions in cases where equal contributions from salary have been made by teachers for pension and benefit purposes.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have no such plans.

Woodlands

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the estimated area of broadleaved woodland in Northern Ireland in 1968, 1978, 1983 and 1988.

Mr. Viggers: Although figures are not available for the years in question estimates carried out in 1986-87 indicated that there were 8,100 hectares of pure broadleaved woodland and 6,500 hectares of mixed broadleaf conifer woodland in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the Northern Ireland forestry service will carry out a review of the broadleaved woodland grant scheme in parallel with that being done by the Forestry Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: The broadleaved woodland grant scheme was closed for applications in March 1988. Accordingly, no review of the scheme is contemplated.

Felling

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the provision made for felling licensing in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: There is no provision for felling licences in Northern Ireland.

Objective 1 (EC)

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made in making arrangements for Northern Ireland to benefit as an objective 1 region within the European Community.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Under the new arrangements governing the Community"s structural funds, objective 1 regions such as Northern Ireland are required to forward to the European Commission a "regional development plan" from which will be derived future claims for assistance. The preparation of the Northern Ireland plan has now been completed and the document will be submitted to the Commission before the end of the month as required. The document, which reflects Government policy in the main development areas, has been prepared in consultation with the Commission and with relevant local interests, as required by the EC regulations. I am confident, therefore, that the Northern Ireland development plan will provide a sound basis for the European Community to continue to contribute to development in the Province, in particular through its financial support from the structural funds for projects to be included in earning measures.

Rates

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for each district council in Northern Ireland, the local district rate in actual and percentage terms for each of the years from 1986-87 to 1989-90.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* The table showing for each district council in Northern Ireland the local district rate in actual and percentage terms from each of the years 1986-87 to 1989-90 is as follows:

District	*1986-87 district rate*	*Percentage increase*	*1987-88 district rate*	*Percentage increase*	*1988-89 district rate*	*Percentage increase*	*1989-90 district rate*	*Percentage increase*
1 Antrim	45·75p	8·93	48·50p	6·01	51·00p	5·15	53·00p	3·92
2 Ards	53·00p	6·00	53·00p	nil	54·00p	1·89	57·50p	6·48
3 Armagh	38·00p	10·14	38·00p	nil	41·00p	7·89	44·00p	7·32
4 Ballymena	38·00p	4·54	39·85p	4·87	42·85p	7·53	44·00p	2·68
5 Ballymoney	42·25p	7·10	46·00p	1·66	47·00p	2·17	50·25p	6·91

District	1986-87 district rate	Percentage increase	1987-88 district rate	Percentage increase	1988-89 district rate	Percentage increase	1989-90 district rate	Percentage increase
6 Banbridge	47·97p	6·77	50·98p	6·27	50·98p	nil	50·90p	nil
7 Belfast	76·36p	10·60	80·03p	4·81	83·96p	4·91	83·96p	nil
8 Carrickfergus	57·50p	4·55	59·41p	3·32	62·50p	5·20	65·75p	5·20
9 Castlereagh	39·08p	18·42	41·00p	4·91	39·90p	−2·68	37·90p	−5·01
10 Coleraine	49·00p	8·89	50·00p	2·04	53·00p	6·00	55·00p	3·77
11 Cookstown	39·75p	10·88	43·00p	8·18	42·75p	−0·58	47·75p	11·70
12 Craigavon	60·21p	9·61	63·35p	5·22	63·35p	nil	67·47p	6·50
13 Derry	67·00p	12·62	69·50p	3·73	72·55p	4·39	76·80p	5·86
14 Down	53·00p	17·78	60·00p	13·21	65·00p	8·33	68·00p	4·62
15 Dungannon	41·50p	9·21	44·00p	6·02	44·00p	nil	44·00p	nil
16 Fermanagh	48·75p	14·04	50·75p	4·10	53·50p	5·42	55·50p	3·74
17 Larne	49·25p	9·44	52·55p	6·70	55·75p	6·09	56·75p	1·79
18 Limavady	39·00p	11·43	40·95p	5·00	43·50p	6·23	47·00p	8·05
19 Lisburn	48·80p	5·54	49·75p	1·95	53·57p	7·68	53·57p	nil
20 Magherafelt	36·56p	10·65	41·05p	12·28	43·50p	5·97	46·34p	6·53
21 Moyle	66·75p	10·04	65·75p	nil	65·50p	−0·38	68·40p	4·43
22 Newry and Mourne	54·30p	10·82	59·70p	9·94	59·70p	nil	58·00p	−2·85
23 Newtownabbey	55·11p	4·77	57·24p	3·86	60·06p	4·93	64·10p	6·73
24 North Down	56·90p	10·49	60·90p	7·03	63·70p	4·60	65·85p	3·38
25 Omagh	47·00p	9·30	51·65p	9·89	55·00p	6·49	58·50p	6·36
26 Strabane	50·50p	16·09	54·00p	6·93	57·00p	5·56	60·75p	6·58

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will indicate in actual and percentage terms both the Northern Ireland regional rate and the total Northern Ireland rate for each year from 1986-87 to 1989-90.

Mr. Ian Stewart *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* The information is as follows:

	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Regional rate	110·38p	113·53p	122·59p	138·07p
Percentage change from previous year	+9·4	+2·9	+7·98	+12·63
Total rate (i.e. regional rate plus average district rate)	167·6p	173·6p	185·21p	202·18p
Percentage change from previous year	+9·54	+3·58	+6·69	+9·16

Housing Executive Properties

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of housing applications received by each Housing Executive district office in *(a)* the past eight months and *(b)* between 1 April 1987 and 31 March 1988 from home owners experiencing financial hardship with mortgage repayments; how many such applicants were deemed to be in financial hardship; and what priority such applications were awarded.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 March 1989]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I am advised by the chief executive that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Loans and Grants

The Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what percentage of budgeting loans were awarded to each of the 15 client groups defined by his Department since the introduction of the social fund in Northern Ireland;

(2) what percentage of community care grants were awarded to each of the 15 client groups defined by his Department.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* The information requested is as follows:

Percentage of budgeting loans and community care grants awarded by client group for the period 11 April 1988 to 28 February 1989

Client group	Budgeting loans per cent.	Community care grants per cent.
Over 80—with higher pensioner premium	0·23	5·77
Aged 69 to 70—disabled, higher pensioner premium	0·47	4·27
Aged 60 to 79—with ordinary pensioner premium or over 60 without pensioner premium	3·26	19·60
One parent—with disability premium	0·41	0·90
Family with disability premium	5·69	4·41
Other—with disability premium	2·03	8·07
Lone parent—without disability premium	29·95	23·12
Quarterly signer—with family premium	0·79	0·90
Quarterly signer—without family premium	1·93	1·25
Signing unemployed or with training allowance—with family premium	20·98	11·53
Signing unemployed or with training allowance—without family premium	26·29	11·68
Others—with family premium	1·53	2·24
Others—without family premium	7·13	5·16
Involved in a Trade Dispute	0·01	—
Applicant not in receipt of Income Support	[1]	0·72

[1] Not applicable.

Loans and Grants

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what percentage of the total number of applications made for budgeting loans were (i) full awards, (ii) partial awards and (iii) nil awards;

(2) what percentage of the total number of applications made for community care grants in Northern Ireland were *(a)* full awards, *(b)* partial awards and *(c)* nil awards.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* The information is not available in the form requested. However, during the period 11 April 1988 to 28 February 1989, applications were decided as follows:

	Percentage allowed in full or in part	*Percentage refused*
Budgeting loans	67·14	32·86
Community care grants	67·21	32·79

Social Fund

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what statistical information he has as to the different reasons given by social fund officers for negative decisions to claimants on *(a)* budgeting loans and *(b)* partial awards;

(2) what statistical information he has as to the different reasons given by social fund officers to claimants for nil award decisions for *(a)* community care grants and *(b)* partial awards.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 March 1989]:* The reasons for refusing social fund applications during the period 1-28 February 1989 (the latest month for which information is available) are as follows:

Reasons for refusal as percentage of total applications processed	*Budgeting loans (per cent.)*	*Community care grants (per cent.)*
Savings over £500 sufficient to meet cost	0·01	0·22
Not in receipt of income support	2·68	n/a
Not in receipt of income support for 26 weeks	10·23	n/a
Not in receipt of income support at present and unlikely to qualify	n/a	2·97
Excluded items	1·10	0·97
Excluded persons	0·14	3·30
Amount less than £30, not travelling expenses	0·41	0·20
Adjusted amount less than £30, not travelling expenses	0·22	0·05
Total debt of £1,000	0·01	n/a
Previous application and social fund officer decision for this item	2·01	2·03
Inability to repay	2·02	n/a
Help available from another source	0·22	0·22
Insufficient priority	4·69	2·58
Suitable alternative available	0·04	0·18
Loan refused—community care grant awarded	2·12	n/a
Others	2·14	16·30

n/a = Not appropriate.

Housing Executive Properties

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of Housing Executive properties sold to tenants in each year since the introduction of the policy, by district.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 March 1989]:* This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I am advised by the chief executive that the number of properties sold each year in each Housing Executive district since the introduction of its voluntary house sales scheme in October 1979 are as follows:

Northern Ireland housing executive—Voluntary sales scheme
Properties sold for housing executive district since October 1979

District	*[1]October 1979 to March 1981*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*April 1988 to December 1988*	*Total*
Belfast region										
Belfast 1	114	209	128	128	186	218	100	113	95	1,291
2	118	121	23	76	93	73	68	67	34	673
3	17	55	92	43	57	47	44	60	54	469
4	121	144	59	26	69	32	57	75	42	625
5	52	82	53	61	78	105	60	51	17	559
6	47	94	40	52	86	48	51	32	22	472
7	51	94	40	50	95	43	77	65	53	568
REGIONAL TOTAL	520	799	435	436	664	566	457	463	317	4,657
North-East region										
Antrim	37	267	188	228	285	195	188	116	108	1,612
Ballymena	51	243	173	158	171	178	113	54	113	1,254
Carrickfergus	64	343	170	192	193	132	161	104	65	1,424
Larne	112	203	160	172	147	87	91	81	110	1,163
Newtownabbey 1	34	248	149	139	166	125	97	82	77	1,117
Newtownabbey 2	20	178	165	236	222	152	121	87	85	1,266
Ballymoney	47	129	100	75	54	77	60	39	59	640
Ballycastle	12	61	58	29	49	29	34	28	22	322
REGIONAL TOTAL	377	1,672	1,163	1,229	1,287	975	865	591	639	8,798
North-West region										
Londonderry 1	14	40	37	50	49	64	32	37	25	348
Londonderry 2	24	175	157	130	108	47	35	44	43	763
Londonderry 3	25	52	32	60	69	46	27	29	21	361
Limavady	71	147	65	104	74	104	52	60	31	708
Strabane	22	80	111	110	86	69	60	78	70	686
Coleraine	30	141	70	101	55	93	43	40	55	628

District	[1] October 1979 to March 1981	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	April 1988 to December 1988	Total
Magherafelt	59	57	69	93	85	93	52	49	60	617
REGIONAL TOTAL	245	692	541	648	526	516	301	337	305	4,111
South region										
Armagh	69	248	314	186	174	125	104	85	49	1,354
Banbridge	28	147	110	103	88	56	51	56	41	680
Craigavon	29	146	63	132	310	56	28	20	42	826
Kilkeel	32	91	77	63	54	55	47	29	15	463
Lurgan	92	449	294	324	301	129	87	50	25	1,751
Newry 1	29	96	148	214	153	138	102	135	100	1,115
Newry 2	70	203	244	180	153	149	131	108	71	1,309
Portadown	34	239	190	194	149	88	50	29	26	999
REGIONAL TOTAL	383	1,619	1,440	1,396	1,382	796	600	512	369	8,497
South-East region										
Lisburn 3	Nil	10	30	51	25	19	16	18	6	175
Lisburn 1	15	190	181	170	176	155	81	70	49	1,087
Lisburn 2	1	194	179	140	127	97	52	48	54	892
Bangor	9	196	183	174	123	108	83	92	58	1,026
Castlereagh 1	27	273	164	190	148	94	73	56	33	1,058
Castlereagh 2	41	334	195	168	188	105	94	63	64	1,252
Downpatrick	34	234	236	195	215	136	117	110	77	1,354
Newtownards 1	56	248	174	153	155	131	119	104	53	1,193
Newtownards 2	52	87	109	99	85	80	73	71	50	706
REGIONAL TOTAL	235	1,766	1,451	1,340	1,242	925	708	632	444	8,743
West region										
Omagh	35	194	135	102	65	82	53	52	66	784
Dungannon	8	228	166	89	71	116	75	96	103	952
Enniskillen	15	157	156	120	93	94	81	78	110	904
Cookstown	12	79	67	80	63	62	44	46	50	503
REGIONAL TOTAL	70	658	524	391	292	354	253	272	329	3,143

[1] Annual breakdown not available.

These figures include some vacant properties to non-tenants in areas where housing need has been met.

Social Security Payments

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide figures for *(a)* the total social fund allocation for 1989-90 and the total for each office, *(b)* the total community care grant allocation for 1989-90 and the total for each office, *(c)* the total budget loan allocation for 1989-90 and the total for each office, *(d)* the total crisis loan allocation for 1989-90 and the total for each office, *(e)* the current number of claimants registered at each office and in total, *(f)* the social fund allocation for 1989-90 to each office as a sum per head for claimants of each office, *(g)* the social fund grant allocation for 1989-90 to each office as a sum per head of claimants registered with each office, *(h)* the expenditure for each individual office on single payments for 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 and *(i)* the expenditure by each office to date for 1988-89 on (i) grants, (ii) crisis loans, (iii) budget loans and (iv) the total.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 15 March 1989]:* Details of social fund expenditure for 1988-89 are available in the Library. Social fund allocations for 1989-90 are as follows:

Table 1
Social Fund Budget 1989-90

Social Security Office	Loans	Grants	Total	Income support caseload at 28 February 1989	Per Capita (Loans and Grants)	Per Capita (Grants)
	£	£	£		£	£
Andersonstown	906,010	442,394	1,348,404	7,219	187	61
Antrim	436,917	225,670	662,587	5,268	126	43
Armagh	318,737	169,258	487,995	4,730	103	36
Ballymena	385,109	197,790	582,899	5,841	100	34
Ballymoney	268,617	138,228	406,845	4,418	92	31
Ballynahinch	44,710	25,029	69,739	1,490	47	17
Banbridge	160,814	86,686	247,500	3,152	79	28
Bangor	187,166	104,295	291,461	4,408	66	24
Carrickfergus	171,258	92,526	263,784	2,887	91	32
Coleraine	427,065	223,561	650,626	5,989	109	37
Cookstown	257,932	145,324	403,256	3,517	115	41
Corporation Street	1,065,039	554,510	1,619,549	11,966	135	46
Downpatrick	168,476	87,131	255,607	2,281	112	38
Dungannon	406,060	215,442	621,502	5,964	104	36

Social Security Office	Loans	Grants	Total	Income support caseload at 28 February 1989	Per Capita (Loans and Grants)	Per Capita (Grants)
	£	£	£		£	£
Enniskillen	311,496	177,326	488,822	8,185	60	22
Falls Road	770,139	377,447	1,147,586	8,679	132	43
Holywood Road	504,299	274,270	778,569	8,051	97	34
Kilkeel	59,062	32,365	91,427	1,391	66	23
Knockbreda	266,805	148,627	415,432	6,201	67	24
Larne	170,264	86,575	256,839	2,716	95	32
Limavady	152,072	83,371	235,443	3,147	75	26
Lisburn	698,751	363,379	1,062,130	5,901	180	62
Londonderry	1,160,923	619,379	1,780,302	15,396	116	40
Lurgan	794,217	416,837	1,211,054	5,300	229	79
Magherafelt	413,409	241,428	654,837	5,204	126	46
Newcastle	78,413	41,673	120,086	1,854	65	22
Newry	679,813	365,701	1,045,514	8,764	119	42
Newtownabbey	287,105	143,676	430,781	5,188	83	28
Newtownards	153,776	86,183	239,959	4,074	59	21
Omagh	394,289	206,030	600,319	5,553	108	37
Portadown	214,415	117,649	332,064	3,751	89	31
Shaftesbury Square	584,744	297,163	881,907	6,113	144	49
Shankill	397,224	204,608	601,832	5,206	116	39
Strabane	405,014	208,561	613,575	5,902	104	35
Totals	13,700,140	7,200,092	20,900,232	185,706		

Separate amounts are not allocated for budgeting and crisis loans. A paper containing details of the basis of the allocations is being placed in the Library. The available information about expenditure on single payments is as follows:

Table 2

Social Security Office	Single payments 11 April 1984 to 9 April 1985	10 April 1985 to 8 April 1986	9 April 1986 to 7 April 1987
Andersonstown[1]	736,226·60	2,083,322·73	2,026,087·04
Antrim	1,113,871·38	1,377,790·29	1,109,842·60
Armagh	529,527·20	779,983·89	869,392·31
Ballymena	449,758·71	538,339·15	650,163·58
Ballymoney	384,891·76	566,299·81	704,997·40
Ballynahinch	48,486·67	101,011·30	102,232·08
Banbridge	211,318·58	319,642·20	411,106·84
Bangor	259,130·32	349,428·56	392,299·28
Carrickfergus	424,221·14	401,983·58	457,043·84
Coleraine	743,091·50	781,873·07	953,407·46
Cookstown	793,773·32	871,614·16	827,789·36
Corporation Street	1,703,687·50	2,616,027·96	2,932,467·67
Downpatrick	231,632·74	512,341·21	474,675·40
Dungannon	1,240,385·98	1,452,232·35	1,234,932·09
Enniskillen	613,539·23	718,960·34	829,761·87
Falls Road	1,797,840·01	2,119,113·19	2,097,269·87
Holywood Road	839,125·84	1,408,628·92	1,360,904·07
Kilkeel	92,032·11	112,376·32	118,439·31
Knockbreda	357,149·04	594,729·98	579,023·77
Larne	291,008·87	354,012·55	483,425·68
Limavady	321,746·14	531,214·46	496,338·88
Lisburn	1,598,466·31	1,724,662·57	1,964,410·64
Londonderry	2,106,931·93	2,847,444·30	3,421,316·13
Lurgan	1,123,598·17	1,643,531·75	1,717,287·45
Magherafelt	569,388·79	846,385·66	1,760,944·38
Newcastle	157,751·84	223,439·33	280,498·79
Newry	1,317,709·57	1,759,619·51	1,722,121·04
Newtownabbey	994,825·05	890,028·04	938,195·76
Newtownards	317,451·06	315,620·57	316,442·37
Omagh	746,152·32	1,086,299·53	1,217,556·30
Portadown	389,125·75	689,985·33	714,763·75
Shaftesbury Square	689,953·00	1,138,359·98	1,517,422·73
Shankill	610,972·41	710,471·61	951,914·71
Strabane	1,639,291·94	1,786,133·88	1,366,861·44
TOTALS	25,444,062·78	34,252,828·08	37,001,335·89

[1] Andersonstown Social Security Office opened on 26 September 1984.

SCOTLAND

Queens University

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students attending Queens university, Belfast, are involved in courses of study of less than 21 hours per week.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested.

Scottish Assembly

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last made an assessment of the running costs of a Scottish assembly.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government believe that the present constitutional arrangements provide for Scotland's interests to be fully respected and recognised and we therefore have no plans to introduce legislation to create a Scottish Assembly. Accordingly, I have made no assessment of the running costs of an Assembly. The 1978 scheme of devolution, however, was estimated to cost £13 million at November 1977 prices. Any new scheme would clearly cost very considerably more than that.

Disabled People

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland from which sources he derives information about the number and proportion of disabled people of working age who are unemployed; and what is the latest information provided by those sources in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The only count made of unemployed people with disabilities is of those who choose to register for work at jobcentres and careers offices. The latest figures available for Scotland show that on 6 January 1989 there were 7,257 unemployed people with disabilities registered for work at jobcentres and careers offices. There is no count made of the total number of people of working age with disabilities.

Bathing Waters

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will issue the Scottish results of the 1988 survey of the quality of the United Kingdom bathing waters.

Mr. Rifkind: I expect to announce the results early in April.

Sentencing

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider reforms to confer upon the Crown a right of appeal against sentence; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to introduce reforms of this nature.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review the law of sentencing with regard to the sentencing of sexual offenders in the light of the admonition of the accused in the case PF *v.* Gordon, Glasgow Sheriff Court, 30 August 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to conduct a review of the law of sentencing.

Dampness

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dwellings in Scotland were affected by damp in 1978, 1979, 1987 and 1988, respectively; and how many people lived in them.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Housing (Amenities)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many dwellings lacking one or more basic sanitary amenity there were in Scotland in 1978, 1979, 1987 and 1988; and how many people occupied them;

(2) how many people in Scotland lived in dwellings unfit for human occupancy in 1978, 1979, 1987 and 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information is set out in the following table. Comparable figures were not collected for 1978.

Dwellings below tolerable standard at 31 March, Scotland[1]

	Thousands		
	1979	*1987*	*1988*
Dwellings below tolerable standard	121	56	[2]57
Lacking one or more standard amenity (sink, hot water and inside WC)[3][4]	71	31	27
Lacking a fixed bath or shower[3][4]	73	29	24

No information is available on how many people occupied these dwellings.

[1] Including most recent year's figure for those authorities whose returns are outstanding.

[2] Increase in 1988 figure due to change in the basis of compilation of Glasgow district council's return.

[3] Some local authorities were unable to provide information on dwellings in this category.

[4] A dwelling may be recorded in both these categories and there is therefore an element of double-counting.

NHS (Repairs)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the capital repairs backlog in the Scottish National Health Service in current prices in each year from 1978-79 to 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available centrally in the form requested.

Schools (Capital Spending)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total capital spending in Scottish schools in current prices in each year from 1978-79 to 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 16 January at column *69* which gave details of capital expenditure from 1979-80 to 1987-88. In 1978-79 the capital expenditure on local authority primary and secondary schools was £49·72 million (at outturn prices) and £102·021 million (at 1987-88 prices).

House Repossessions

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total number of house repossessions in Scotland in 1979, 1987 and 1988, respectively.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Building Societies Association publishes statistics on the number of repossessions by building societies in the United Kingdom as a whole, but no corresponding information is available for Scotland only. No information is held centrally on other mortgage lenders.

Crime Statistics

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the annual crime detection rates for all crimes and for violent crimes for each year since 1978.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

Year	Clear-up rate (percentage) Total crimes	Violent crimes[1]
1978	29·7	53·2
1979	30·0	55·3
1980	32·6	61·6
1981	31·2	62·3
1982	29·8	61·7
1983	30·9	63·2
1984	30·8	61·6
1985	33·6	65·4
1986	34·2	67·5
1987	34·9	66·4
[2]1988	34·0	66·7

[1] Comprises group 1 (non-sexual crimes of violence) and the sexual assault category from group 2 (crimes of indecency) of the Scottish Home and Health Department classification of crimes and offences.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were *(a)* the total number of crimes and *(b)* the number of violent crimes committed in Scotland annually from 1978.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

Year	Number recorded Total crimes	Violent crimes[1]
1978	334,957	11,222
1979	346,680	11,279
1980	364,587	12,347
1981	408,204	13,418
1982	435,081	13,221
1983	448,260	14,285
1984	474,913	15,178
1985	461,970	16,487
1986	463,837	17,008
1987	481,230	19,733
[2]1988	469,986	19,193

[1] Comprises group 1 (non-sexual crimes of violence) and the sexual assault category from group 2 (crimes of indecency) of the Scottish Home and Health Department classification of crimes and offences.
[2] Provisional.

Housing Repairs

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many dwellings in *(a)* the public sector and *(b)* the private rented sector were in need of repair in (i) 1978-79 and (ii) 1987-88.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Overcrowding

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many households lived in overcrowded conditions in 1978, 1979, 1987 and 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Manufacturing

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of people in employment in manufacturing in Scotland in the first quarter of 1979, and the last quarter of 1988.

Mr. Lang: The seasonally adjusted number of employees in employment in Scottish manufacturing in the first quarter of 1979 was some 606,000. Figures for the last quarter of 1988 are not yet available. The number in the third quarter is provisionally estimated at around 399,000. The latter estimate may be revised when the results of the 1987 census of employment become available.

Capital Formation

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the Scottish gross domestic fixed capital formation in current prices in *(a)* education, *(b)* health and social services, *(c)* housing and *(d)* community development in 1978-79 and 1987-88.

Mr. Ian Lang: Estimates of gross domestic fixed capital formation in Scotland by function of government are prepared annually by the Central Statistical Office. The estimates relate to calendar years and do not separate housing from community development. The latest available estimates are:

Gross domestic fixed capital formation in Scotland by certain functions of Government

	£ million 1978	1986
Education	64	72
Health and social services	62	119
Housing and community development	270	411

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total gross domestic capital formation in current prices in total and per head in Scotland for 1978-79 and 1987-88.

Mr. Lang: Estimates of gross domestic fixed capital formation (GDFCF) for Scotland are available only for certain sectors: agriculture, forestry and fishing; energy and water supply; manufacturing; transport and communication (excluding shipping and air transport); and dwellings. In 1986 these sectors accounted for 57 per cent. of United Kingdom GDFCF (excluding the continental shelf region).

The estimates are prepared by the Central Statistical Office and relate to calendar years, the latest available being 1986. The figure for 1978 is on a slightly different basis, but the changes are likely to have affected the estimates by under 1 per cent.

Gross domestic fixed capital formation in certain industries and dwellings: Scotland

	1978	1986
£ million, current prices	2,071	3,094
£ per head of population	400	600

Children

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of Scottish children living in families where the head of the household was unemployed annually from 1978.

Mr. Lang: The estimated number of dependent children aged 18 years or under in households in Scotland where the head was unemployed is 120,000 in 1988, according to preliminary results from the spring 1988 labour force survey. The equivalent estimate for spring 1981 was 136,000. These estimates are subject to sampling errors.

Estimates are not available from the 1979 survey and could be obtained for the remaining years for which there were surveys only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Construction

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of housing starts and completions in the public and private sector in Scotland in 1979, 1987 and 1988.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested on housing starts and completions for 1979 and 1987 was published in tables 4 and 3 respectively of Scottish Development Department Statistical Bulletin HSU No. 5, Housing Trends in Scotland quarter ended 30 June 1988, which was issued on 15 March 1989. Returns for 1988 are not yet complete.

School Leavers

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many school leavers in Scotland in total and in percentage terms entered *(a)* further and *(b)* higher education in 1979, 1987 and 1988;

(2) how many school leavers in Scotland have entered full-time employment annually in total and percentage terms for each year from 1978.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information for each year since 1978 is not readily available. The most recent information from the biennial Scottish young people's survey relating to the destination of school leavers was published by the Scottish Education Department in its statistical bulletin school leavers' destinations (No. 12/E1/1988) published in December 1988 which is available in the Library.

School Books

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the spending on books *(a)* per primary pupil and *(b)* per secondary pupil in Scotland in current prices for 1978-79 and 1987-88.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 16 January at columns *67-70* and the corrected tables accompanying my letter to him of 9 March.

Annex A

Table 1
Expenditure per pupil on text and library books and on educational tools, equipment and materials at outturn prices

(£)

	Books		Educational tools, equipment and materials	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
1978-79	4·54	8·31	n/a	n/a
1979-80	5·49	9·61	n/a	n/a
1980-81	5·84	9·29	n/a	n/a
1981-82	6·54	9·77	n/a	n/a
1982-83	7·03	10·03	8·18	27·33
1983-84	8·99	13·35	7·28	25·36
1984-85	9·55	13·83	8·91	30·09
1985-86	8·91	13·47	8·33	30·26
1986-87	10·93	16·67	8·92	33·85
1987-88	9·25	12·93	11·71	44·42

Table 2
Expenditure per pupil on text and library books and on educational tools, equipment and materials adjusted to 1987-88 prices using the GDP deflator

(£)

	Books		Educational tools, equipment and materials	
	Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
1978-79	9·32	17·05	n/a	n/a
1979-80	9·64	16·87	n/a	n/a
1980-81	8·66	13·77	n/a	n/a
1981-82	8·83	13·20	n/a	n/a
1982-83	8·85	12·63	10·30	34·42
1983-84	10·83	16·08	8·77	30·55
1984-85	10·95	15·86	10·22	34·50
1985-86	9·69	14·65	9·06	32·92
1986-87	11·51	17·55	9·39	35·64
1987-88	9·25	12·93	11·71	44·42

Table 3: Expenditure per pupil on text and library books at outturn prices expressed as an index with 1978-79 = 100

Year	Primary	Secondary
1978-79	100·0	100·0
1979-80	120·9	115·6
1980-81	128·6	111·8
1981-82	144·1	117·6
1982-83	154·8	120·7
1983-84	198·0	160·6
1984-85	210·4	166·4
1985-86	196·3	162·1
1986-87	240·7	200·6
1987-88	203·7	155·6

Table 4: Expenditure per pupil on text and library books adjusted to 1987-88 prices using the GDP deflator, expressed as an index with 1978-79 = 100

Year	Primary	Secondary
1978-79	100·0	100·0
1979-80	103·4	98·9
1980-81	92·9	80·8
1981-82	94·7	77·4
1982-83	95·0	79·9
1983-84	116·2	94·3
1984-85	117·5	93·0
1985-86	104·0	85·9
1986-87	123·5	102·9
1987-88	99·2	75·8

Annex B

Expenditure on text and library books

Year	Primary at outturn prices	Secondary at outturn prices	Primary at 1987-88 prices	Secondary at 1987-88 prices
1978-79	2·584	3·411	5·302	6·999
1979-80	2·994	3·944	5·257	6·925
1980-81	3·026	3·790	4·486	5·618
1981-82	3·222	3·953	4·348	5·334
1982-83	3·290	4·004	4·444	5·043
1983-84	4·027	5·214	4·851	6·281
1984-85	4·178	5·173	4·791	5·931
1985-86	3·882	4·857	4·223	5·284
1986-87	4·734	5·740	4·984	6·043
1987-88	3·986	4·230	3·986	4·230

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total area of applications for forestry grants and the area of that relating to new afforestation since 1 July 1988; and what is the total area of forestry grant applications for which environmental assessment has been requested since that date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: From 21 June 1988, when the scheme opened to applications, to 28 February 1989, the Forestry Commission received applications for entry to the woodland grant scheme covering 49,297 hectares, of which 29,271 hectares were for new planting.

The environmental assessment provisions came into force on 15 July 1988. Since then, the Forestry Commission has requested environmental assessments on about 3,100 hectares of applications for new planting.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the area of land approved for grant aid for afforestation in each Forestry Commission conservancy under *(a)* the forestry grant scheme, *(b)* the broadleaved woodland grant scheme and *(c)* the woodland grant scheme in the year beginning 1 April 1987 and the period 1 April to 31 December 1988; and if he will instruct the Forestry Commission henceforth to publish such figures in its annual reports.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is given in the following tables. I have asked the Forestry Commissioners to consider whether more detailed information on private planting might reasonably be provided in their annual reports.

Period 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1988

Conservancy	Area approved for new planting (hectares) Forestry grant scheme	Broadleaved woodland grant scheme
North England	2,588	297
East England	174	512
West England	6	676
Wales	557	333
North Scotland	13,638	298
Mid Scotland	5,898	397
South Scotland	12,660	465
Total	35,521	2,978

Period 1 April 1988 to 31 December 1988

Conservancy	Area approved for new planting (hectares) Forestry grant scheme	Broadleaved woodland grant scheme	Woodland grant scheme
North England	15	15	550
East England	23	34	829
West England	74	103	577
Wales	18	24	505
North Scotland	2,406	51	2,828
Mid Scotland	437	84	1,489
South Scotland	2,412	77	1,561
Total	5,385	388	8,339

Crofters (Tree Growing)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he will take to enable crofters to grow trees on common grazings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 7 March at column *486* to a question tabled by the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie).

Road Bridge (Dornoch Firth)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the anticipated start date for construction of the road crossing of the Dornoch Firth; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Owing to unforeseen difficulties with soil condition, work is not now expected to start on the actual bridge construction until mid-summer, although preparatory works are continuing.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the nature of the technical difficulties delaying determination of the final design of the foundations of the road bridge over the Dornoch Firth.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Soil investigation by the contractor indicated that further verification of the load carrying capacity of soils is required. This may result in some refinement and development of the foundation design.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of children who received compensation from the Scottish Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for physical or psychological injuries suffered in cases of physical or sexual abuse in each of the past seven years; what was the range of the sums of compensation; and what was the average amount awarded to children following such cases;

(2) what consultations he proposes to undertake to ensure that any regulations made in terms of rule 14 of schedule 7 to the Criminal Justice Act 1988 go as far as possible to facilitate the success of applications on behalf of children who have suffered physical or sexual abuse and whose parents are either unwilling or unable to act on their behalf; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he has drafted regulations using his power under rule 14 of schedule 7 to the Criminal Justice Act 1988 to prescribe the circumstances and method by which one person may act for another in relation to a claim for

compensation to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to manage the payment and investments of awards to persons below the age of 18 years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since the criminal injuries compensation scheme operates on a Great Britain basis, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Boundary Commission (Members)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who are the present members of the Boundary Commission for Scotland; and for what terms they have been appointed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The members of the Boundary Commission for Scotland are:

Mr. Speaker, ex-officio, Chairman

The honourable Lord Davidson—appointed by the Lord President of the Court of Session on 25 September 1985 and subsequently re-appointed.

Professor Urlan A. Wannop—appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland on 6 June 1983 and subsequently re-appointed.

Mr. Adam R. Napier—appointed by the Secretary of State on 2 May 1985 and subsequently re-appointed.

The appointed members' terms of office expire on 31 December 1993.

Electricity Boards

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has agreed a financial target for 1989-90 for the Scottish electricity boards.

Mr. Rifkind: I have agreed with the Scottish electricity boards that the financial target for 1989-90 is for the boards jointly to achieve a return of 2·7 per cent. on net assets valued on a current cost basis. This compares with a target of 2·8 per cent. for 1988-89. The target has been set for the boards jointly to reflect their shared responsibility for nuclear generation.

Health Boards

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial allocations he has made to health boards for 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has allocated £1,875 million to health boards to meet their gross recurrent expenditure commitments on hospital and community health services in 1989-90. This figure includes £38 million allocated for specific commitments, including cardiac surgery and AIDS. After expected income is taken into account, the net cash limited allocations to individual health boards are as follows:

1989-90 recurrent expenditure (net)

Health board	*£ million*
Argyll and Clyde	132·025
Ayrshire and Arran	102·420
Borders	29·605
Dumfries and Galloway	48·956
Fife	94·488
Forth Valley	89·024
Grampian	170·364
Greater Glasgow	473·907
Highland	71·779
Lanarkshire	151·699
Lothian	294·977
Orkney	5·466
Shetland	6·464
Tayside	170·703
Western Isles	9·774
Total	1,851·651

Hospital and Community Health Services Capital

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the proposed distribution of the hospital and community health services capital for 1989-90.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has allocated £148·8 million to health boards to meet their gross capital expenditure commitments on hospital and community health services in 1989-90. This includes £35·7 million specifically for the improvement and upgrading of the NHS estate.

The allocations to individual health boards are as follows:

Capital allocation

Health boards	*£ million*
Argyll and Clyde	8·600
Ayrshire and Arran	18·300
Borders	2·000
Dumfries and Galloway	2·250
Fife	3·300
Forth Valley	7·800
Grampian	12·900
Greater Glasgow	28·350
Highland	3·600
Lanarkshire	9·000
Lothian	32·800
Orkney	0·975
Shetland	1·575
Tayside	12·000
Western Isles	5·350
Total	148·800

This is an increase of 35 per cent. over comparable figures for the current financial year and confirms the Government's commitment to maintaining the biggest ever hospital building programme in the NHS.

Parole

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the report of the committee on parole and related issues in Scotland, chaired by Lord Kincraig, is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The report of Lord Kincraig's committee was published this morning and copies have been placed in the Library of the House. We are all indebted to Lord Kincraig and the other members of his committee for producing such a clear and balanced report within a year of their first meeting.

The Kincraig committee recommend the retention of a parole system, because parole recognises the possibility of change in an individual or his circumstances over time, and enables long-term prisoners to be released selectively on this basis. They recommend, however, that the scope of parole should be restricted to those serving over five years,

and that prisoners should be eligible for consideration only after serving one half of their sentences, instead of one third, as at present. All long-term prisoners would be liable to supervision on release. Prisoners serving five years or less would no longer be eligible for parole, but instead a system of conditional early release would apply to them. Under this system they would be released after serving half of their overall sentence, but would be automatically recalled to prison to serve the outstanding balance of their sentence if they were reconvicted.

The committee has also recommended changes in parole procedures, which are intended to make the process less cumbersome and more open. Parole applicants would have the chance to put their case to a panel of three parole board members, and would be entitled to be given reasons for a refusal of parole.

The committee was also asked to look at a number of related issues. The committee recommended no change in the formal role of the Secretary of State in the parole system; no alteration in the present arrangements for supervision for released prisoners by local authority social workers; and funding of the supervision of released prisoners by central Government on an agency basis. Their recommendations on life sentence prisoners will fall to be considered in the light of the report of the House of Lords Select Committee on Murder and the Release of Life Sentence Prisoners, now in session. They recommend against the introduction of suspended or part-suspended sentences into Scots law but (by majority) recommend that all custodial sentences should be backdated to the date when the offender was first remanded in custody, unless there are special reasons for not doing so.

The report raises issues of considerable public importance, and before deciding on what action might be taken to implement it, I would be glad to receive views on the report which interested parties may wish to put to me. These should be submitted to me by 30 June.

Schools (Self-Government)

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the organisations and individuals who have responded to the consultative paper on self-governing schools; and how many of these have indicated support for the proposals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Seventy-five organisations and individuals have commented on our explanatory paper as at 15 March.

Education Authorities
- Borders
- Dumfries and Galloway
- Fife
- Grampian
- Highland
- Lothian

National Bodies
- Association of Directors of Education in Scotland
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
- Commission for Racial Equality
- Educational Institute of Scotland
- General Teaching Council for Scotland
- Moray House College
- Professional Association of Teachers
- Scottish Association of Children's Panels
- Scottish Consumer Council
- Scottish Examination Board
- Scottish Parent Teacher Council
- Scottish Secondary Teachers Association
- Scottish Spina Bifida Association
- Scottish Trades Union Congress
- Society of Information Technology Managers

Local Organisations
- Auchenblae School PTA (Laurencekirk)
- Avoch School Association (Fortrose)
- Bearsden Primary School PTA
- Borders Federation of Parents and Teachers
- Boroughmuir School Council
- Central Mainland School Council (Shetland)
- Charleston Academy School Council
- Coldstream Primary PTA
- Corstorphine Primary PTA
- Crombie School PTA (Aberdeen)
- Currie High School Council
- Deans Community High School Council (Livingston)
- Dunbar School Council
- Ferryhill School PTA (Aberdeen)
- Fort Augustus Secondary School Council
- Glenrothes School Council
- Glen Urquhart High School Council
- Grampian Community Relations Council
- Hamilton Schools Council
- Hillhead PTA (Glasgow)
- Hyndland Secondary School EIS (Glasgow)
- Inveralmond Community High School (Livingston)
- Inverness Royal Academy School Council
- Islay and Jura School Council
- Kincardine and Deeside Social and Liberal Democrats
- Kingussie High School Council
- Lerwick, Bressay and Quarff School Council
- Linlithgow Academy School Council
- Lorn Coll and Colonsay Schools Council
- Mid Argyll Schools Council
- Peebles School Council
- Plockton High School College Council
- Royal High School Council
- St. Andrews School Council
- St. Patricks Primary PTA (Dumbarton)
- South Morningside Primary PTA
- Tomnacross PTA (Inverness-shire)
- Torphins PTA
- Wester Hailes Education Centre Council
- Westhill Academy PTA (Aberdeen)
- Westhill Primary PTA (Aberdeen)

The paper sought comment on the mechanics of implementation rather than the principle of self-governing status, which will be for individual schools to determine.

Birds (Shetland)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has of the level of breeding success for the red-throated diver, Arctic skua, great skua, puffin and kittiwake in Shetland in 1988; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the total population size of Arctic terns in Shetland in 1980; and what proportion this represents of the British and EEC populations, respectively;

(3) what information he has on research conducted or commissioned to identify the key factors that have influenced the breeding success of Arctic terns in Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will list the estimated number of young that the Shetland Arctic tern population has successfully reared in each of the last five years; and what the breeding success of this bird has been in other areas in the United Kingdom over the same period.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 February 1989]:* The Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) commissioned Durham university to conduct a short preliminary study on arctic terns in Shetland in 1985. This found some evidence of breeding failure. In 1986, NCC and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds jointly

commissioned Glasgow university to carry out further studies on arctic terns in Shetland, and specifically to examine the role of food supply in breeding performance. This project is still in progress, but results indicate that there has been a shortage of a specific size class of sandeel in surface waters of Shetland during a crucial phase of the Arctic tern breeding cycle.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland are collaborating with other interested parties on co-ordinated research to investigate sandeel mortality and factors affecting the availability of sandeels for food. They are to increase substantially their effort on sandeel research in 1989-90 including, exceptionally, three research ship cruises.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total population size of Arctic terns in Shetland in 1980; and what proportion this represents of the British and EEC populations, respectively.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 February 1989]:* According to the Nature Conservancy Council the population was about 32,000 pairs. This represented some 43 per cent. of the British population and some 37 per cent. of the EEC population.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what information he has of the level of breeding success for the red-throated diver, Arctic skua, great skua, puffin and kittiwake in Shetland in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 February 1989]:* The Nature Conservancy Council has supplied the following information:

Red-throated diver—poor breeding success
Arctic skua—poor breeding success
Great skua—poor breeding success
Puffin—mixed breeding success
Kittiwake—very poor breeding success

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will list the estimated number of young that the Shetland Arctic tern population hs successfully reared in each of the last five years; and what the breeding success of this bird has been in other areas in the United Kingdom over the same period.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 February 1989]:* The Nature Conservancy Council has advised me that, on the basis of sample monitoring of Shetland Arctic tern colonies between 1984 and 1988, a low breeding success has been achieved. The species' breeding success in other areas in the United Kingdom over the same period was mixed.

DEFENCE

"World in Action" Programme

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek from the producers of Granada Television's "World In Action" programme on Aldermaston, broadcast on 20 February 1989, a copy for his Department's library of a videotape and transcript of the programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Chemical Weapon Agents

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West, 9 February, *Official Report*, column *765*, he will set out the reasons for the policy of the non-disclosure of locations of chemical weapon agents held in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: MOD does not disclose such information for security reasons.

Nuclear Plant (Clean-up)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West, (Mr. Jones) 9 February, *Official Report*, column *764*, on the financial costs of environmental clean-up at Springfields, Capenhurst, Sellafield, Aldermaston, Burghfield and Caerwent, if he will state the annual cost of clean-up for each of the plants operated for his Department, and the proportion of the contractual finances paid to British Nuclear Fuels for nuclear materials processing comprised by the component for environmental clean-up;

(2) if he will give consideration to the publication of a report on all Ministry of Defence, Atomic Weapons Establishment or British Nuclear Fuels contracted establishments involved in the production and processing of military nuclear materials in regard to the costs of environmental clean-up similar to that produced by the United States Department of Energy and Senator Glenn for the United States military nuclear facilities in 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. For reasons of national security, it has not been our custom to disclose costs of the procurement and processing of defence nuclear materials, either in part or in aggregate.

Plutonium and Tritium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any *(a)* plutonium or *(b)* tritium was exported on 21 February under agreement or order of his Department from Barrow on the PNTL ship Pacific Sandpiper destined for Hampton Rhodes, in Virginia, and thereafter Baltimore in the United States of America.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has been the practice of successive Governments neither to confirm nor deny the presence of defence special nuclear materials at any particular place or time, nor to reveal details of the kind requested.

Bird Strikes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of bird strikes suffered by military aircraft in 1988, updating the figures provided in his answer to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire on 18 July 1988, *Official Report*, columns *501-02*.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested is as follows:

	1988
Royal Air Force	746
Army	41
Royal Navy	39
Procurement Executive	10
Total	836

Skyguard

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the locations and dates of deployments of the Skyguard radar system in the Roxburgh and Berwickshire constituency since 1987.

Mr. Neubert: The Skyguard radar system has not been deployed in the Roxburgh and Berwickshire constituency.

Low Flying

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the reasons for the increases in the proportion of United Kingdom low flying which took place over southern Scotland, listed in his replies to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire on 13 July 1988, *Official Report*, columns *238-39*, and 6 February 1989 *Official Report*, column *512*; and if these trends are planned to continue.

Mr. Neubert: The amount of flying activity in particular areas is influenced by several factors, some of which are unpredictable. These include the weather, the location of major exercises and the availability of range and other facilities. The aim is to spread low flying training as widely and evenly as possible throughout the entire country to ensure that, as far as is practicable, no area receives an undue share of the training.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire on 6 February 1988, *Official Report*, column *512*, if he will now publish figures for low flying movements in, and complaints from southern Scotland, including those within low flying area 13, for each calendar year from 1979 to 1988.

Mr. Neubert: No, the major part of low flying area 13 falls within northern England.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level flights were conducted over the United Kingdom by aircraft of the Federal German armed forces not normally based in the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* 1988.

Mr. Neubert: The information requested cannot be provided without disproportionate effort. However, over 98 per cent. of low flying training in the United Kingdom is carried out by British military or United Kingdom based USAF aircraft, with under 2 per cent. being carried out by other NATO allies.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made with the Federal German authorities since September 1988 for the transfer of low flying by Federal German military aircraft to Britain.

Mr. Neubert: None.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he had during 1988 with his Belgian counterpart, Monsieur Guy Coëme, on the subject of low flying.

Mr. Neubert: My right hon. Friend has had no such discussions.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what agreements were reached on the reduction of low flying over West Germany during his discussions with his West German counterpart, Dr. Rupert Scholz, on 30 January.

Mr. Neubert: None. Discussions did, however, take place on ways in which it might be possible to ease the impact of low flying training on the population.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many low-flying sorties took place in 1988 and 1989 to date which originated or terminated at RAF Finningley;

(2) how many low-flying sorties took place over the county of Yorkshire in 1988; how many have taken place in 1989 to date; and how many of these sorties originated or terminated their sorties from airfields in Yorkshire.

Mr. Neubert: Central records are not held in a form which would enable the information requested to be provided.

Armoured Personnel Carriers (Vauxhall)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the reasons for two armoured personnel carriers or similar vehicles being at Vauxhall at 5.15 pm on Sunday 19 March.

Mr. Neubert: The vehicles referred to are from a TA unit based in London. The two APC's were returning to their unit lines in Westminster on return from weekend training.

Tornado Sales

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) to what extent the cost of purchasing Saudi Arabian oil under Ministry of Defence sponsored arrangements are used in payment for Tornado aircraft by the Saudi Arabian Government;

(2) to what extent costs to the Jordanian Government of Tornado aircraft in excess of that price being paid by the United Kingdom Government for Tornado are supported by official credit support facilities from the ECGD;

(3) what arrangements are or will be maintained by the Ministry of Defence for programming payments to British Aerospace for the purchase of Tornado aircraft and other defence equipment by the Jordanian and or the Saudi Arabian Government.

Mr. Sainsbury: It has never been the practice of this or previous governments to publish details of individual defence exports for reasons of commercial and customer confidentiality.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, following upon or during discussions representatives of Her Majesty's Government or Ministers have had on the sale of Tornado aircraft to Jordan or Saudi Arabia, he has received information as to the level of commission payments being paid in the supply of Tornado aircraft to those countries.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has been informed by the West German Government as to what extent commission payments to citizens of Saudi Arabia or Jordan have

influenced the decision by the West German Government not to provide more than 23 per cent. of official credit support towards the construction of Tornado and other defence equipment for supply to the Jordanian or Saudi Government.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what work was undertaken by the Defence Export Services Organisation in support of the negotiations for the sale of Tornado and other aircraft to *(a)* Saudi Arabia and *(b)* Jordan.

Mr. Sainsbury: The negotiation of Government-to-Government agreements in connection with the sale of defence equipment are undertaken by staff of the Defence Export Services Organisation. This practice was followed for the sale of Tornado and other aircraft to Saudi Arabia and the prospective sale of Tornado to Jordan.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations he had with his West German and Italian counterparts relating to the sale of Tornado and other aircraft to *(a)* Saudi Arabia and *(b)* Jordan.

Mr. Sainsbury: As with any collaborative project my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has naturally had occasion to have discussions with collaborative partners; in the case of Tornado with the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy in connection with prospective sales to third parties.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what payments were made to cover the cost of negotiating the sale of Tornado and other aircraft to Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

Mr. Sainsbury: The only costs incurred by the Ministry of Defence in the negotiation of the sale of Tornado and other aircraft to Saudi Arabia and the prospective sale to Jordan were the salaries, travel and related costs of the MOD staff involved in the Government-to-Government negotiations.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total amount of expenditure incurred by the Defence Export Services Organisation in promoting the sale of Tornado aircraft and other defence equipment to middle eastern countries in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986, *(c)* 1987 and *(d)* 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury: DESO costs are not apportioned to individual sales prospects. However, the annual costs of the regional marketing division responsible within DESO for the middle east are approximately £400,000.

US Forces (Deployment)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what representations his Department has received from his United States counterpart, or any service or agency responsible thereto, regarding possible deployment of *(a)* European distribution system warehousing facilities or *(b)* aircraft from the United States Air Force 10th Military Airlift Squadron or similar unit at RAF Greenham Common;

(2) what representations his Department has received from his United States counterpart, or any service or agency responsible thereto, regarding possible redeployment of warehousing or maintenance facilities from RAF Kemble to RAF Greenham Common.

Mr. Neubert: RAF Greenham Common has been designated as a NATO stand-by operating base for many years and we envisage that this role will continue after the cruise missiles have been withdrawn. No decisions have yet been taken on additional roles thereafter, though we anticipate that the base will remain available to the United States authorities for military use. It is not our practice to speculate on alternative future uses for military installations.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations his Department has received from his United States counterpart, or any service or agency responsible thereto, regarding possible deployment of United States Air Force C-130 aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: United States Air Force C-130 aircraft are stationed at RAF Mildenhall. These and other C-130 aircraft deploy to and from the United Kingdom routinely. The hon. Member may be referring to the forthcoming Air National Guard exercise Volant Golpher, which has recently been approved by the Ministry of Defence. This will take place between 4-17 June, when 9 C-130 aircraft of the 109th tactical airlift squadron will deploy to RAF Abingdon.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations his Department has received from his United States counterpart, or any service or agency responsible thereto, regarding possible deployment of United States Air Force RF-4Cs at RAF Alconbury.

Mr. Neubert: The Ministry of Defence has recently approved the planned deployment of 12 United States Air Force (USAF) RF-4C aircraft to RAF Alconbury during the period 8-11 April for exercise Coronet Hoop. This exercise is part of the annual programme of short term deployments designed to provide experience to USAF reservist aircrew of locations in which they might operate in time of war.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about whether the maintenance facilities for RF-4Cs at RAF Alconbury were dismantled when the 10th tactical reconnaisance wing of the United States Air Force at RAF Alconbury ceased using these aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: I understand that the maintenance facilities at RAF Alconbury used to support the RAF-4Cs of the 10th tactical reconaissance wing were removed after the wing left the base in 1987.

Military Lands

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will specify the dates that *(a)* the Lydd Camp and Lydd Range Byelaws 1988, *(b)* the RAF Edzell Byelaws 1988, *(c)* the RAF Welford Byelaws 1988 and *(d)* the RNAS Yeovilton and Merryfield Airfield Byelaws 1988 were (i) made and (ii) came into operation; and when the signs were placed around the affected areas stating that the byelaws were in force;

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of each of the byelaws listed in the answers of 18 May 1988, *Official*

Report, column 509, 29 July 1988, *Official Report*, column 577-8 and 3 March 1989, *Official Report*, column 358, together with any other byelaws not listed in these answers in force on 1 March 1989.

Mr. Neubert: I shall write to the hon. Member.

RAF Sculthorpe (Air Traffic Zone)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the military air traffic zone around RAF Sculthorpe is to be activated later in the current year.

Mr. Neubert: I shall write to the hon. Member.

USAF Vehicles (Salisbury Plain)

Mr. Cohen : To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why United States air force vehicles, based at RAF Greenham Common, in transit to Salisbury plain in the early hours of the morning of 14 March in the current year were carrying neither a registration number nor a distinctive nationality mark, as required by article V of the NATO status of forces agreement 1951.

Mr. Neubert: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Visiting Forces (Markings)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he proposes to take to ensure that all vehicles belonging to visiting forces and civilian components thereof that are stationed in the United Kingdom, including those of the United States, are carrying *(a)* a registration number and *(b)* a distinctive nationality mark, as required by article V of the NATO status of forces agreement 1951.

Mr. Neubert: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Peace Symbols

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each of the last five years any recorded incidents in which symbols of peace displayed by members of the public have caused harassment, alarm or distress to members of the armed forces, including members of visiting forces.

Mr. Neubert: There have been numerous incidents over the last five years in which symbols of peace have been displayed by members of the public. I am not aware of any records as to whether they caused harassment, alarm or distress to members of the United Kingdom armed forces or members of visiting forces. If the hon. Member has any particular incident in mind, I should be happy to investigate.

Rating Reform

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek powers to exempt RAF personnel who are posted, without families, to Scotland for less than six months from paying the community charge.

Mr. Neubert: I do not anticipate that married service personnel serving unaccompanied in Scotland for periods of less than six months, while retaining a family home elsewhere, will be regarded as having their sole or main residence in Scotland. They will therefore not be liable to pay the personal community charge there.

Small Arms (Price)

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the current purchase costs of the following *(a)* one infantry pistol automatic L9A1 with one 13-round magazine, *(b)* one 7·65 mm pistol automatic Walther type PP Z447E1 and one 8-round magazine, *(c)* one 5·56 mm M16 rifle and 30-round magazine, and *(d)* one 7·62 mm L3 0A1 rifle and 10-round magazine.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is no longer our practice to publish unit production costs.

Aldermaston and Burghfield (Audit)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, pursuant to his reply of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *335*, any information on the status at that time of the four major projects under review was provided by the BNFL team carrying out the programme audit at Aldermaston and Burghfield *(a)* in the course of the eight meetings between the team and his officials and *(b)* at any time in the month of January 1986.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Barracks (Security)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many times in the last 10 years security has been tested and evaluated at *(a)* Tern Hill barracks, *(b)* Aldershot barracks, *(c)* Colerne barracks, *(d)* Driffield barracks and *(e)* Leconfield barracks.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Perimeter Fencing

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the annual capital expenditure on perimeter fencing at all Ministry of Defence establishments in England, Wales and Scotland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Neubert: I have nothing to add to the answer that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces gave the hon. Member on 23 February at column *760*.

Private Security Guards

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number of private security guards employed at Ministry of Defence establishments, in each year between 1979-80 and 1985-86, inclusive.

Mr. Sainsbury: No figures are available for the years 1979 to 1985-86. I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on 1 March at column *222* for the figures for later years.

MOD Police

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the strength of the Ministry of Defence police in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sainsbury: Over the last 10 years the strength of the Ministry of Defence police was as follows:

	Numbers
October 1979	4,121
October 1980	4,221
October 1981	4,080
October 1982	3,958
October 1983	3,836
October 1984	4,003
October 1985	4,255
October 1986	4,681
December 1987[1]	4,841
December 1988	4,706

[1] Strengths are taken from the chief constable's annual reports, which from 1987 relate to calendar years.

The figures shown include manpower provided to repayment users but exclude civilians employed in support of the Ministry of Defence police.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the annual expenditure on pay and pensions for the Ministry of Defence police for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sainsbury: Details are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the annual expenditure on training for the Ministry of Defence police for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sainsbury: Details are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mines (Price)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the current purchase costs of the following *(a)* one M18A1 (Claymor) anti-personnel mine, *(b)* one padmine (containing 650 steel projectiles) and *(c)* one C3A1 non-metallic anti-personnel mine (Elsie).

Mr. Sainsbury: It is no longer our practice to publish unit production costs.

ELF Transmitter (Glengarry Forest)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 17 March, *Official Report*, columns 376-37, if he will undertake to place a copy of the notice of proposed development relating to the proposed trial ELF transmitter at Glengarry forest, in the Library as soon as possible after its submission to the Highland regional council.

Mr. Neubert: Yes.

ENERGY

Wave Power

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what support for research and development on wave power is currently under way; and if he has any further proposals under consideration.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A major element of the Department of Energy's present programme of research and development into small scale wave energy is the development of the shoreline rock gully device invented by Queen's university, Belfast. Over the last two years the Department has funded research and the construction of an experimental prototype on the island of Islay, off the west coast of Scotland. Early test results of the power performance of the device have been encouraging and the next phase of the project will now proceed, subject to contract, on the basis of the data acquired so far.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the annual cost *(a)* in cash and *(b)* 1989 pounds sterling of radioactive waste management and disposal for each of the magnox, advanced gas cooled reactor, fast reactor, steam generating heavy water reactor programmes, respectively; and how these costs have been factored into nuclear electricity prices.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The fast reactor at Dounreay and the SGHWR at Winfrith are experimental reactors operated by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. The prices paid by the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board and the Central Electricity Generating Board for electricity produced by these reactors are the result of commercial negotiations and reflect the cost to the boards of other supplies rather than the costs of generation. I have asked the chairman of the CEGB to reply to the hon. Member in respect of the board's Magnox and AGR stations.

Nuclear Materials (Export)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if export licences were issued under article 2(i) of the Nuclear Installations Act in relation to the export of nuclear materials to Baltimore via Hampton Rhodes, United States of America, from Barrow on the PNTL ship Pacific Sandpiper on 21 February;

(2) if the nuclear materials exported from Barrow on 21 February on the PNTL ship Pacific Sandpiper destined for Hampton Rhodes in Virginia, United States of America, were covered by bilateral or international safeguards.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The nuclear material exported from Barrow on 21 February 1989 on the PNTL vessel Pacific Sandpiper consisted entirely of irradiated fuel elements. These were all subject to international safeguards. An export licence was issued, but the material fell outside the categories for which approval for disposal is required under section 2(i) of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965.

Civil Plutonium

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to permit publication in the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority journal, Atom, the specific quantities of civil plutonium exported for commercial use under international safeguards, listing utility, date of contract and date of export for all future such exports.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Civil plutonium export data is already published in the Department's annual civil plutonium figures press release.

Fissile Materials (Export)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list for each year since 1979 the number of requests

for approval that his Department has received for the export of fissile materials; and if he will further list the consignor and consignee in each case, along with the amount of material permitted in each case.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It has been the standard practice of successive Governments not to make public the details of export licence applications for the various categories of goods controlled.

Coal Industry (Productivity)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what figures he has for the growth in productivity in the coal industry for each of the last three years; and if he will publish the figures for other European coal producing nations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Productivity, in terms of kilograms per manhour in the coal-producing nations of the European Community over the latest three calendar years for which figures are available, was as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
United Kingdom	408	512	577
Germany	593	602	616
France	392	427	503
Spain	249	286	284
Belgium	314	321	316

Nuclear Installations

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last considered the timing and content of the nuclear installations inspectorate's plans to publish regulations on off-site emergency planning for the civil nuclear power industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am awaiting proposals from the Health and Safety Commission on this matter.

British Coal

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters he expects to discuss.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Ofgas

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the level of funding for Ofgas in 1988 and 1989; what are the staffing levels in 1988 and 1989; how many staff have been seconded from his Department; whether Ofgas intend to move to new premises; and if he will make a statement about Ofgas's budget for 1990.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There are at present 12 staff on secondment from the Department of Energy to Ofgas.

Ofgas' expenditure, budget, staffing and premises are matters for the Director General of Gas Supply.

Nuclear Power

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the proportion of electricity which will be generated by nuclear power in Britain in the year 2000.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 11 May 1988 at column *112*.

Coal (Subsidy)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the average level of Government subsidy per tonne of deep-mined coal each year since 1985 in each European Economic Community country and in the United States of America.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The information requested is as follows. It has been obtained from European Commission publications. The United States of America does not provide financial support to its coal industry.

£/tonne[1,2]

	1985	*1986*	*1987*[5]
Belgium	22·0	35·6	58·1
France	37·6	46·4	49·6
FR Germany	6·0	24·2	58·1
Portugal[4]	—	—	6·9
Spain[4]	—	—	12·0
United Kingdom[3]	5·0	8·1	6·6

The Belgium and French coal industries are much smaller than those of FR Germany and the United Kingdom and are currently undergoing substantial contraction which distorts the aid figures. The figures for FR Germany in 1986 and 1987 also include Government aid for supplying coal and coke to its steel industry at world market prices.

[1] It is not possible to make absolute comparisons between the figures from different Member State as the statistical basis may vary.

[2] Figures for all countries represent aid for current production and inherited liabilities only. They do not include social security payments such as pension schemes and insurance contributions since these are not readily comparable.

[3] United Kingdom figures are on a financial year basis for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88. The others are in calendar years.

[4] Portuguese and Spanish data are not available prior to 1987.

[5] 1987 data are the latest published. 1988 figures are not yet available.

HEALTH

Social Workers (Training)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the Central Council for Education and Training of Social Workers has provided additional curriculum advice on mental health matters to courses for social workers.

Mr. Mellor: In January 1987, the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) published its regulations and guidance for the training of social workers to be considered for approval in England and Wales under the Mental Health Act 1983. In December 1987, it produced a report which referred to training issues. Since then, the Council has had a programme of approving training courses for approved social workers in local authorities. To date, some 90 per cent. of local authorities have, in many instances and in

conjunction with other local authorities, produced a programme of CCETSW approved training for approved social workers. CCETSW is itself shortly to produce an evaluative report on the training provided by these courses, which will include guidance on training matters.

General Practitioners

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners earn more than £55,000 per annum in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The remuneration arrangements for general medical practitioners are conducted on a GB basis and are designed to deliver fees and allowances on an average basis together with some expenses which are reimbursed directly to doctors incurring them. We do not have information centrally in the form requested.

Coronary Heart Disease

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the most recent figures for the cost to the National Health Service of coronary heart disease including *(a)* the cost of general practitioner prescriptions, *(b)* the cost of surgery and *(c)* the cost of hospital beds.

Mr. Freeman: Cost estimates are not available in the exact form requested. However, the following may be of interest:

(a) The net ingredient cost of pharmaceutical products having an effect on the cardiovascular system, and diuretics, dispensed by retail pharmacists in the Family Practitioner Service in England in 1987 was £360 million.

(b) Information on the cost of hospital beds is not collected separately from treatment costs. It is estimated that the total cost of hospital in-patient treatment related to coronary heart disease in England a year is £175·5 milion. (1987-88 prices).

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward legislation to end restrictive practices imposed by family practitioner committees in respect of the use by patients of pharmacies of dispensing doctors.

Mr. Mellor: Dispensing by doctors is permitted only as an exception to the general rule that doctors prescribe and pharmacists dispense. This is a sensible rule which ensures that the skills and qualifications of both professions are used to the best effect. I have no plans to change it.

Drugs

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state the net ingredient cost of drugs per head for each family practitioner committee area and health region for 1986-87 and 1987-88; and if he will give the 1986-87 cost in terms of 1987-88 prices for each area and region.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will state the national average net ingredient cost of drugs per head for 1986-87 and 1987-88, what is the 1986-87 cost in 1987-88 prices; and what is the percentage variance cost per head of each family practitioner committee area and health service region for the national average.

Mr. Mellor: The average net ingredient cost per person for 1986-87 is £31·68 for 1986-87 at 1987-88 prices is £33·36 and for 1987-88 is £35·79. A table showing the percentage variation from the England average has been placed in the Library.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in waiting list lengths in *(a)* the North West regional health authority and *(b)* the Mersey regional health authority since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The information is given in the table.

In-patient waiting lists, Mersey and North Western regional health authorities, 1979 and 1988

	Mersey	*North Western*
Waiting list 31 March 1979	41,103	77,368
Waiting list[1] 30 September 1988	32,121	63,839
Change	−8,982	−13,529
Percentage change	−22	−17

[1] Excludes self deferred cases.

Hospital Building Schemes

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital building schemes in *(a)* the North West regional health authority and *(b)* the Mersey regional health authority have (i) been completed since 1979 and (ii) are under construction or at the planning and design stage; and what are the comparable figures for the other health regions.

Mr. Freeman: The information held centrally on schemes each costing over £1 million is as follows:

Schemes	*Regional Health Authorities*													
	North Western	*Mersey*	*Trent*	*Yorkshire*	*Northern*	*East Anglian*	*North-West Thames*	*North-East Thames*	*South-East Thames*	*South-West Thames*	*Wessex*	*Oxford*	*South Western*	*West Midlands*
Completed since 1979	42	21	37	19	18	22	30	17	25	24	17	16	23	38
Under construction	14	2	11	11	11	2	15	11	6	10	12	15	12	10
At planning and design stage	46	2	51	28	17	24	10	27	15	23	12	9	18	30

Drinking Water

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give within the Trent regional health authority the total number of qualified members of *(a)* the medical and *(b)* the scientific staff of his Department dealing with matters related to contamination of drinking water by (i) micro-organisms, (ii) chemicals and (iii) radiation; and where these staff are located within the Trent regional health authority.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has primary responsibility for the

public water supply. The Department of Health does not employ any staff to deal specifically with contamination of drinking water.

Vaccinations

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children under the age of one year were vaccinated in 1988; and what percentage this was of the age group.

Mr. Mellor: The available information is not precisely in the form requested. The one year uptake rate of each vaccination is calculated as the number of children who were vaccinated by the end of the year following birth. The latest figures are shown in the table and relate to children born in 1986. Because of the change to collecting data on a financial year basis, the one year uptake rate for this particular cohort of children is calculated as the number of children born in 1986 and vaccinated in either 1986, 1987 or the first quarter of 1988, expressed as a percentage of live births in 1986.

Vaccination and immunisation: completed primary courses

	Live births 1986	*Vaccinated in 1986 or 1987-88 (numbers)*	*Percentage vaccinated by 31 March 1988*
	623,609	—	—
Diphtheria	—	487,372	78
Tetanus	—	487,493	78
Polio	—	484,771	78
Whooping Cough	—	419,523	67
Measles	—	401,414	64

Environmental Health Officers

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many environmental health officers are employed by his Department; and what are their duties.

Mr. Freeman: The Department employs three environmental health officers. They advise on and deal with a range of functions related to the work of environmental health officers. Their work is concerned with food hygiene and certain aspects of environmental health.

Sex Change Operations

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the district health authorities in England and Wales *(a)* which fund sex change operations and *(b)* which do not fund such operations;

(2) how many sex change operations were carried out in each district health authority in 1988.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not available centrally. The number of such operations carried out is so small that no reliable estimates can be made from normal statistical returns. It is, however, unlikely that the number of operations performed in England exceeds 100 a year.

PACT Information

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for how long PACT information has been available to all general practitioners.

Mr. Mellor: The new prescribing information system known as "PACT" was introduced in stages beginning in August 1988 and is now generally available to GPs.

General Practitioners

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the capitation payments to general practitioners in rural areas will continue for temporary residents.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have no plans to make alterations to arrangements for the payment of temporary residents fees to any GPs, except where such alterations are consequent upon the proposals I am putting to the profession's representatives and which are set out in "General Practice in the NHS—A New Contract". For example, I am proposing to extend the period during which a night visit fee may be claimed in respect of permanent patients and consequently in respect of temporary residents.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will be in a position to provide a figure for the substantial extra resources to be devoted to the family practitioner service in relation to any new general practitioner contract.

Mr. Mellor: General practitioners' remuneration is determined by the Government acting on advice from the doctors and dentists review body. As part of their evidence to the review body later this year, the Government will consider what additional resources they believe appropriate.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest average income of a general practitioner principal net of all practice expenses.

Mr. Mellor: The current intended average net income for general medical practitioners is £28,800 per annum. The Government have accepted the recommendation in the nineteenth report of the doctors and dentists review body that this should be increased to £31,105 per annum from 1 April 1989.

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether general practitioners who hold practice budgets will be able to create a surplus by sending patients to hospital accident and emergency services.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I expect health authorities to satisfy themselves that referral to A and E Departments is not being used as a substitute for out-patient referral and they will continue to do so in future in the case of all GPs whether practice budget holders or not. I do not expect that GP's would use such a device because of their professional integrity and because such a procedure would cause annoyance to their hospital colleagues and inconvenience and bewilderment to their patients.

Teenage Pregnancies

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many babies were born to mothers aged 16 and 17 years for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: The latest year for which information is available is 1987. The number of births in England and Wales were:

Age of mother	Live births	Stillbirths
16	4,398	31
17	10,484	50

Stroke Victims

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the number of stroke victims in the United Kingdom as a ratio of the population; how many such victims suffer serious or severe disability; and what assistance is available to them.

Mr. Freeman: Centrally collected statistics do not include total numbers of those suffering from "strokes" (acute cerebrovascular disease). However, it is believed that the total number in England and Wales is about 100,000 pa, about 1 in 500 of the population. In broad terms, one third of those who have strokes will suffer disability. After treatment for the acute condition, a range of hospital services is available to stroke victims, including rehabilitation, speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy.

Newchurch Hospital, Culcheth

Mr Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the future of Newchurch hospital, Culcheth, Warrington; and if there are any plans to close it.

Mr. Freeman: Newchurch hospital is in the process of retraction as patients are gradually transferred to care in the community schemes. As the numbers of patients reduces consideration will have to be given to the best way of caring for those remaining. We are not, however, aware of any plans to close Newchurch hospital.

Self-Governing Hospitals

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what impact he estimates his White Paper proposals will make on the quality of medical education in self-governing hospitals.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are still considering the detailed arrangements for providing and funding medical education in self-governing hospitals but we shall ensure that hospitals which become self-governing continue to play their part in maintaining the high quality of this education.

Hospital Computer Systems

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the cost of setting up hospital computer systems will be funded.

Mr. Freeman: In general, the responsibility for deciding how much to spend on hospital computer systems rests with NHS managers. However, hospitals receiving computer based information systems as part of the hospital information and support systems and resource management programmes in 1989-90 will have a substantial part of the cost of those systems met centrally.

Family Practitioner Committees

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will announce the names of chairmen appointed to family practitioner committees from 1 April.

Mr. Mellor: I am placing in the Library a list of the appointments made with effect from 1 April 1989. All appointments are for a period of two years.

Advisory Committees

135. **Mr. Gordon Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the advisory committees coming under his Department and concerned in some way with public health which are covered by the Official Secrets Act whose members are required to sign the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Freeman *[pursuant to his reply, 14 March 1989, columns 159-60]:* I regret that in the list of the Department's advisory committees whose members are subject to the provisions of the Official Secrets Act, an advisory committee on ethics of gene modification therapy in humans was included in error; the Department is still considering whether to establish such a committee.

Food Safety

Mr. Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the membership of the committee on the microbiological safety of food.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: As I announced in the House on 21 February the chairman of the committee is Professor Sir Mark Richmond, vice chancellor of Manchester university. The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I have decided to invite the following to be members:

Dr. Spence Galbraith, former director of the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre.
Professor John Arbuthnott, professor of microbiology, Nottingham University.
Dr. Tony Baird-Parker, microbiologist, Unilever Research Laboratories.
Mr. "Mac" Johnson, senior lecturer, Royal Veterinary College.
Mr. John Moffitt, farmer.
Dr. Roy Spencer, director scientific services, Sainsbury plc.
Professor George Glew, professor of catering studies, Huddersfield Polytechnic.
Professor John Norris, director of research, Cadbury-Schweppes, plc.
Mr. Brian Denyer, chief environmental health officer, City of Westminster.
Mrs. Rachel Waterhouse CBE, chairman, Consumers Association.
Mr. David Clark, food technology manager, Trusthouse Forte plc.

The Committee will be holding its first meeting shortly.

Vaccine Damage

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to announce a decision on the request made by the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South for a judical inquiry into whooping cough vaccination and brain damage.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I regret that I am not yet in a position to consider this request because of other current litigation on this matter. I have written to the right hon. Member explaining the reason in more detail.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what analysis there has been of the vaccine damage payment cases which would indicate the incidence per hundred thousand vaccinations of damage such as to cause a payment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to repy. During the five years 1983 to 1988, the number of vaccine damage awards made averaged 17 per year, and many of these related to vaccinations performed in earlier years. Almost all of the awards were on account of vaccinations performed under the childhood vaccination programme.

I understand from the Department of Health that over the same period, an average of around 500,000 children per year have completed the primary courses of vaccination against each of diptheria, tetanus and polio, and 420,000 againts whooping cough; 440,000 have been vaccinated against measles and 300,000 against rubella. Since the primary course for diptheria, tetanus, polio and whooping cough is three doses, this means that around 7 million doses of vaccine are administered to children each year in the primary vaccination programme. A further 2·5 million reinforcing doses are also administered.

The incidence of vaccine damage such as to cause an award to be made is therefore less than 2 per million doses of vaccine administered.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many vaccine damage payments were made in 1988; and if he will categorise these according to the age of the child, when the vaccination took place, the year of the vaccination and the nature of the vaccination.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

Four payments were awarded in 1988 under the provision of the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979. Details are in the table.

Vaccine damage payments scheme
Awards made in 1988 by age of child at date of vaccination Year of vaccination and type of vaccination

Age at date of vaccination (months)	*Year vaccination was given*	*Type of vaccination cited on claim form*
1. 3-6	1959	Triple/polio
2. 3-6	1986	Polio
3. 6-9	1972	Pertussis
4. 6-9	1980	Pertussis

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the application form for a vaccine damage payment asks for *(a)* the date of vaccination alleged to have caused the damage, *(b)* the type of vaccination and *(c)* the age of the person when the vaccination took place.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The vaccine damage payment claim form asks for the date of vaccination, the type of vaccination received and the date of birth of the vaccinated person. From this information, the age of the vaccinated person when the vaccination took place can be determined.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many claims for vaccine damage payments have been made in each year since the scheme began; and what proportion in each year resulted in a payment.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is not available. The information which is available is in the table.

Vaccine damage payments scheme
Claims received and awards made in each year since the scheme began

Year	*Claims received*	*Awards made*[1]
1978[2]	1,988	—
1979	551	349
1980	131	255
1981	72	74
1982	89	43
1983	93	42
1984	156	29
[illegible]	76	26
[illegible]	78	15
1987	66	10
1988	39	4
1989[3]	9	—

[1] Awards recorded for a particular year may be the outcome of claims made in earlier years. To analyse for each year's claims the number that were eventually successful would be disproportionately costly.

[2] Although the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 took effect from 22 March 1979, claims were invited when the scheme was announced in 1978.

[3] To 28 February 1989.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if there has been any change in his departmental policy regarding the payment of vaccine damage payments following the case of Loveday *v.* Renton.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

There has been no change in our policy of making a vaccine damage payment in every case where the qualifying criteria are satisfied. Whether these criteria are satisfied where pertussis vaccine is involved remains a matter for decision in each individual case.

ENVIRONMENT

Rural Villages (Sewerage System)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the rural villages within the Don Valley constituency that are not connected to a main sewerage supply system; what proposals he has made to ensure that these villages are connected to such a system before the water industry is privatised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that the following villages in the hon. Member's constituency are not connected to the public sewerage system: Hooton Pagnell (part), Hampoles, Skelbrooke, Brodsworth, Pickburn, Moorhouses, Marr (part), Stainton (part) and Tickhill.

Responsibility for sewerage services rests with the Yorkshire and Severn-Trent water authorities. It would be for them to provide main sewerage for the villages if they considered this necessary for effectually draining their areas.

The Water Bill provides for the general duty of sewerage undertakers to be spelt out in more detail and for the re-enactment with improvements of the provisions under which local authorities and others can requisition public sewers. Grants under the Rural Water Supplies and Sewerage Acts will continue to be available.

Fluoridation

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what other countries in the European Community fluoridate their public drinking water.

Mr. Moynihan: Fluoridation of public water supplies is permissible in a number of European Community countries and is mandatory in Ireland. It is carried out in the United Kingdom, Spain and Ireland.

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who will monitor the safety of fluoride levels in the public drinking water after privatisation.

Mr. Moynihan: Water undertakers will continue to monitor fluoride levels in drinking water. The drinking water inspectorate to be established under the Water Bill will ensure that water undertakers are monitoring water quality consistently and satisfactorily and are complying with the standards set down in regulations made under the Bill. Where fluoride is added to the supply at the request of health authorities, the health authorities will continue to liaise with water undertakers to ensure compliance with the terms of the agreement between them.

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities which have indicated to water authorities opposition to the proposals to fluoridate the public drinking water in their area.

Mr. Moynihan: This information is not held by the Department.

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which water authorities have reduced the fluoridation of their water supplies since the Water Fluoridation Act 1985.

Mr. Moynihan: Severn Trent water authority has stopped fluoridating water supplies in the South Derbyshire area because of technical difficulties in the operation of its plants.

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which water authorities have firm proposals to fluoridate their water; and what proportion of the total population will be served as a result.

Mr. Moynihan: I am not aware of any water authorities which currently have firm proposals to fluoridate their water.

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which water authorities are currently fluoridating their drinking water supplies; and what proportion of the population now drinks fluoridated water.

Mr. Moynihan: The water authorities that are currently fluoridating one or more of their drinking water supplies are: Northumbrian, North West, Yorkshire, Severn Trent, Anglian, Thames and Welsh. Approximately 10 per cent. of the population of England and Wales receives fluoridated water. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has supplied information in respect of the Welsh Water Authority.

Mr. Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the results of the Water Fluoridation Act 1985.

Mr. Moynihan: The Water Fluoridation Act 1985 is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. My Department has made no assessment of the results of the Act.

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the result of his Department's review of policy on housing co-operatives; when part IV of the Housing Act 1988 will come fully into force; and when section 124 of the Housing Act 1988 will come into force.

Mr. Trippier: I expect to receive the report of the housing co-operative review committee shortly. Part IV of the Housing Act 1988 will come fully into force on 5 April 1989. Section 124 of the Housing Act 1988 came into force on 10 March 1989, and I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) on 10 March at column *699*.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the benefits to the United Kingdom of the import of hazardous and toxic wastes for processing or disposal.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The import of difficult wastes for specialist treatment and safe disposal provides employment and helps our balance of payments. Such imports often also result in a global environmental advantage, for example if there is no suitable treatment facility in the country where the waste originates.

Departmental Estates (VAT)

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the additional cost to be borne by each Department of state in respect of unrecovered value added tax on rents paid by its commercial or industrial estate *(a)* from 1 August 1989 to 4 April 1990 and *(b)* for the fiscal year 1991-92.

Mr. Chope: Landlords have not yet decided whether or not to exercise their option to tax rents, so it is therefore impossible to offer meaningful estimates of any additional costs which might be borne by Departments.

Water Charges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what communications he has had with the chairman of the Yorkshire water authority about the increase in its charges to consumers which come into effect from the 1 April and about the derogations of legislation regarding sewage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: None.

Common Land

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislation to safeguard common land on the basis of the proposal of the common land forum.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 8 March, at column *523*.

Drinking Water

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the water supplies in England and Wales that are in breach of the EEC directive on water quality in respect of safety limits on lead in drinking water; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: No water leaving water mains in England breaches the EC directives standard for lead. However, certain types of water can dissolve lead from lead service pipes and plumbing in properties. In areas where such water is supplied water undertakers investigate whether additional water treatment would reduce lead levels significantly. In most of these areas action has already been successfully taken, but in the following areas action is still being investigated:

Water Authority	*Area*
Anglian Water Authority	Eriswell
Yorkshire Water Authority	Haisthorpe East Hull
North West Water Authority	Swinden Crosby Parts of Greater Manchester and Lancashire (served by Lake District supplies) Longridge and Ribchester (served by Dilworth source) Preston (served by White Bull Treatment Works) Parts of Blackpool and Wyre (Barnacre source) Blackburn, parts of Blackpool and Flyde (fed from Hodder Treatment Works) Rainhill (Vyrnwy source)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number and location of breaches in the precautionary standard for pesticides in drinking water in 1988 for each division in supplies provided by the Severn-Trent water authority; and if he will list by location how much these breaches exceeded the standard laid down.

Mr. Moynihan: I am informed that during the period December 1987 to November 1988 there were breaches of standard of 0·1 microgram per litre for pesticides, specified in the EC drinking water directive, in water supplies leaving the following treatment works of the Severn Trent water authority: Barbourne, Mitcheldean, Mythe, Witcombe, Campion, Strensham, Rugby, Melbourne, Hallgates, Nanpanton, Wing, Church Wilne, Whitacre, Trimpley, Costford, Bomere, Ford, Meolfre, Astley, Norton, Elkesley, Far Baulker, Farnsfield and Fishpool. I understand that Witcombe is now not used for public supply and that breaches of the standard at Bomere, Ford, Moelfre, Astley, Norton, Elkesley, Far Baulker, Farnsfield and Fishpool were transient and that most samples from these works complied with the directive.

The levels of pesticides in these supplies were below those which would be considered a risk to health.

Seal Skins

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will investigate the illegal import of blueback or whitecoat skins which have been illegally imported into the United Kingdom in contravention of EEC directive 85/444.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on 6 March 1989 at column *426*.

Air Pollution

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure maintenance of standards after the change to a system of self regulation of air pollution in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no plans to change to a system of self-regulation of air pollution in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure conformity to EEC guidelines on air pollution, within the proposed restructuring of the air inspectorate.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Regulations have been laid which come into force on 31 March and will give formal effect to the air quality standards set in three EC directives.

The present restructuring proposals for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will have no adverse effect upon the ability of the United Kingdom to conform with these or any other EC requirements concerning air pollution.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether any agreement has been reached within Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to guarantee employment conditions during restructuring of the air pollution inspectorate;

(2) if he will give a breakdown of the geographical and industrial remits proposed for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution air inspectorate.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Proposals are being developed for the reorganisation of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in order to integrate its responsibilities for air pollution control, radioactive substances, water pollution and other wastes on a regionalised basis related to industry groupings. Three regions are proposed to cover the north, south west and south east and it is proposed to retain the existing air district offices as outstations. Consultations are continuing with staff representatives on the management implications of the proposals.

Repossessions

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of private dwelling repossessions for the second half of 1988; what was the comparable figure for 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The information asked for is given in the table. I draw the attention of the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) on 10 March at column *698*.

Number of properties taken into possession by building societies

	Number
Second half 1988	6,380
Second half 1987	11,230

Number of propeties taken into possession by local authorities

	Number
1987-88	330
1986-87	490

Global Environmental Declaration

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the global environmental declaration made by 24 Governments at the Hague conference on 11 March.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are considering the declaration of 11 March.

Radon

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, 9 February, column 769, on the former Medical Research Council radon source radioactive wastes at Barton-le-Clay, Bedfordshire, he has yet received confirmation sought of the Medical Research Council that no radioactive residues remain at the Barton-le-Clay caves.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes.

Barium Sulphate Waste

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, 8 March, column 524, on radioactive barium sulphate waste at Amersham, when he expects the site effluent treatment plant to be decommissioned.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Amersham International plc intend to start decommissioning the existing site effluent treatment plant at Amersham in 1992.

Hinkley C (Inquiry)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has made any evaluation of the evidence presented to the Hinkley C nuclear inquiry by the Irish Sea Project and Ms. Penelope Boyce on radioactive liquid waste discharges from United Kingdom nuclear plants.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has considered those parts of the evidence submitted to the inquiry by the Irish sea project and Ms. Penelope Boyle that are relevant to the Department's interests.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of applications for home improvement grants and the number accepted for each year since 1979 by metropolitan districts in the north-west of England at constant prices.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Fee Competition

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department now uses fee competition in seeking tenders for professional services from the private sector.

Mr. Ridley: The Property Services Agency, which is part of my Department, has operated fee competition arrangements for professional services on major works projects since July 1984. Fee bids are now sought for all projects of £1 million value and over. The introduction of these arrangements has resulted in substantial initial fee savings.

Consumers (Consultation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements there are for consulting consumers on the work and decisions of his Department.

Mr. Ridley: My Department consults widely on its work and decisions including the issue of over 40 consultation papers in 1988.

Wildlife Poisoning

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each of the last five years the number of cases of wildlife poisoning in England caused by the illegal use of pesticides or poisons; and if he will identify the species involved; and if possible the poison or pesticide involved.

Mr. Ryder: I have been asked to reply.

Incidents involving the poisoning of wild birds and mammals by pesticides are investigated through my Department's Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme. The number of incidents (and the chemicals involved) in England, during the period 1984-88, in which the deaths of wild birds and mammals were attributed to the deliberate abuse of agricultural pesticides are listed in Table one. However, it should be noted that it is not always possible to determine whether incidents were due to accidental misuse of deliberate abuse.

The species involved in these incidents were:

Mallard, Red Kite, Marsh Harrier, Buzzard, Peregrine Falcon, Kestrel, Pheasant, Red-legged Partridge, Grey Partridge, Moorhen, Wood Pigeon, Stock Dove, Feral Pigeon, Turtle Dove, Barn Owl, Tawny Owl, Little Owl, Raven, Carrion Crow, Rook, Jackdaw, Magpie, Jay, Blackbird, Robin, Starling, House Sparrow, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Yellow Bunting.

Fox, Badger, Hedgehog.

Table one

Pesticide	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*[1]
Mevinphos	12	12	20	10	10
Alphachloralose	18	11	18	12	13
Strychnine	4	4	3	3	4
Endrin	4	2	0	1	0
Rodenticides	2	0	4	2	7
Aldrin	1	0	0	0	0
Demeton-S-methyl	0	1	0	0	0

Pesticide	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*[1]
Triazophos	0	0	1	0	0
Total	41	30	43	27	33

[1] Data provisional as some incidents still being investigated.

Housing Transfers

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many approvals he has given to date for the transfer of local authority housing stock to another landlord under the tenants' choice provisions of the Housing Act 1988; and if he will list the local authority areas where such approvals have been given.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) on 22 March 1989.

Housing Action Trusts

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column 280, which of the consultants' reports on the proposed housing action trust areas he has received to date; and when he intends to publish them and announce his conclusions.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) on 16 March 1989 at column *322*.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column 280, what is the total aggregate cost of the consultants' reports commissioned by his Department on the six areas proposed for housing action trusts.

Mr. Trippier: The final costs of the reports will not be known until all the contractors' claims have been submitted to the Department. We expect the total cost to be about £900,000 including VAT. This covers the cost of producing copies of reports for local councils, tenants associations and local libraries.

No. 1, Poultry

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to preserve No. 1, Poultry, City of London, in its present form.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. 1 Poultry and associated buildings are currently the subject of listed buildings and planning appeals, which are before my right hon. Friend for decision.

In the circumstances, it would be inappropriate for any comment to be made at this stage.

Local Labour Clauses

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will now reconsider his rejection of the use of local labour clauses in the light of the European Court of Justice's ruling in the case 31/87 Beentyes *v.* State of Netherlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Discussions are currently taking place in Brussels on the issues raised by the European Court of Justice's judgment in the Beentyes case. The European Commission has expressed the preliminary view that contract clauses requiring a contractor to employ a given number or percentage of persons resident in the area in question appear to be discriminatory and contrary to the treaty of Rome. At this stage, the Government do not see any reason to alter their policy on the use of local labour clauses.

Cabinet War Rooms

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future of the Cabinet war rooms.

Mr. Chope: Since 1948 the Department has maintained the more important of the Cabinet war rooms as they were used during the war, in accordance with an undertaking given at that time by the then Minister for Works. In 1984 the rooms were opened to the public generally and the trustees of the Imperial War museum agreed to manage them as a museum under a short term agreement on behalf of the Department.

The initial five year term of this management agreement is now approaching its end and officials of the Department and others concerned were asked to review, in consultation with the Imperial War museum, the future arrangements for managing the Cabinet war rooms.

On the basis of their report, the Government have concluded that it would be inconsistent with the future commercial development of the Property Services Agency which I announced last May at column 333 for it to retain a direct responsibility for managing the rooms. Furthermore, we feel that my predecessor's commitment as to the preservation of this important historic site will be best discharged by giving full responsibility to those professionally concerned with museum management.

The Government are therefore pleased to accept an offer from the trustees of the Imperial War museum to take on direct responsibility for the Cabinet war rooms and for honouring the commitment given in 1948. A number of the artefacts currently displayed in the rooms are from the museum's collection or are on loan from the Churchill family. We are now transferring ownership of all the rooms' other contents, including all documents, photographs equipment and furniture as well as all fixtures and fittings, to the trustees of the Imperial War museum. The rooms themselves form part of a Government office building and will be leased to the trustees of the Imperial War museum on an agreed basis from 1 April 1989.

Rating Reform

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will make constituency or local authority assessments of the number of losers and gainers under the poll tax.

Mr. Gummer: No.

As I said in my answer to the hon. Member on 16 March, the Government have no plans to introduce a poll tax. We cannot estimate the numbers of gainers and losers in each local authority or constituency as a result of the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the

deductions to be made under a community charge attachment of earnings order for *(a)* weekly earnings, *(b)* monthly earnings and *(c)* daily earnings.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 13 March 1989]:* Tables showing the deductions to be made under attachment of earnings orders are contained in schedule 4 to the Community Charges (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1989 (SI 1989 No. 438) which were laid before the House on 17 March.

Private Landlords

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the percentage of the housing stock let by private landlords for each year since 1979;

(2) what is his estimate of the percentage of the housing stock which is likely to be let by private landlords during 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Director General of Water Services

Mr. Bevan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment where the office of the Director General of Water Services will be located.

Mr. Howard: After considering the nature of the work and the number of posts involved, it has been decided that, subject to parliamentary approval of the Water Bill, the headquarters of the Water Services Offices should be located in Birmingham.

This location reflects the Government's policy of locating civil service work in areas offering advantages in terms of accommodation costs and labour supply conditions, including where appropriate areas which are the focus of regional and urban policies.

This new, non-ministerial Government Department is expected to employ some 80 civil servants, including the secretariats of the ten regionally based customer services committees proposed in the Water Bill.

County Hall, London

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, how much money either through his Department or through the London residuary body has been or is expected to be spent on *(a)* the High Court hearing in relation to the previous planning application for development of the former Greater London council headquarters and *(b)* the taking of the same case to the court of appeal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 22 March 1989]:* The information is not available.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a table showing local authority current expenditure for each year since 1975-76 to 1990-91 on *(a)* housing, *(b)* personal social services and *(c)* education and science; and what proportion each makes up of (i) central Government current expenditure on the same areas of expenditure and (ii) total local authority current expenditure.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 22 March 1989]:* The information requested for the years 1983-84 to 1990-91 is given in the table. Corresponding information for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Local authority current expenditure[1] on housing, personal social services and education and science.

	1983-84 outturn	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 outturn*	*1987-88 outturn*	*1988-89 outturn*	*1989-90 plans*	*1990-91 plans*
Local authority current expenditure (£ million) on:								
Housing	787	737	728	697	758	684	657	680
Personal social services	2,535	2,694	2,817	3,112	3,502	3,828	3,969	4,100
Education and Science	13,113	13,618	14,044	15,388	16,842	18,087	18,122	18,720
Local authority spending on each service as a percentage of total local authority current expenditure								
Housing	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
Personal social services	8	8	8	8	9	9	9	9
Education and science	40	39	40	41	41	42	41	41
Local authority spending on each service as a percentage of general Government expenditure[2] on each service								
Housing	66	61	57	51	55	50	50	50
Personal social services	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96
Education and science[3]	84	84	84	85	85	84	80	80

[1] The figures given are consistent with those published in "The Government's Expenditure Plans, 1989-90 to 1991-92" (Cm 601-621). They exclude central Government and local authority finance for public corporations.

[2] ie Central Government plus local authority expenditure.

[3] The fall in this percentage between 1988-89 and 1989-90 reflects the transfer of responsibility for funding polytechnics and colleges from local authorities to central Government.

Water Quality

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 13 March, he will provide technical details of the more stringent basis upon which designated British bathing waters were evaluated in 1988 in relation to that upon which they were evaluated in 1987.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 22 March 1989]:* The results of the 1988 survey have been reported on the basis of the strict requirements for 95 per cent. compliance specified by the directive. On this basis, a water is assessed as complying with the directive providing that no more than one sample in 20 exceeds the mandatory coliform standards. Previously, with our relatively short bathing season and the minimum sampling frequency specified in the directive, authorities generally took about 12 samples and we allowed one failure before a water was assessed as failing. The European Commission indicated that the strict interpretation of 95 per cent. compliance should be adopted. To this end, the Department asked that authorities increase their sampling frequency to ensure that a water did not fail merely because of a single high sample.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Low-income Families

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to paragraphs 2·23 and 3·17 of Cmnd. 9756, if he will publish in the *Official Report* details showing how the undertaking to give substantial and well targeted extra help for low income families in work has been implemented; and at what cost to the Exchequer.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Family credit was introduced in April 1988 as part of the reform of social security. In 1988/89 it will provide about double previous expenditure on family income supplement and free school meals and free milk. Estimated expenditure for 1988/89 is £422 million and the estimated caseload is 285,000. Average awards are at present around £25 per week. About 60 per cent of present recipients get £20 a week or more and over 35 per cent. get £30 or more. A major advertising campaign will begin in April to encourage claims from those who may not realise that they are eligible. Over and above the prices uprating, the income support and housing benefit applicable amounts for children and the family credit child credit rates have been increased by an additional 50 pence from this April. In the case of family credit, the extra provision is over and above what is required to compensate for the standstill in child benefit. The reformed structure of benefits helps alleviate the unemployment trap by aligning the assessment rules for income-related benefits. Generally, people on the same income levels are now treated equally whether they are fully employed or out or work. Furthermore, under this new system, net income increases when gross earnings increase. This eliminates the possibility that less income-related benefit can mean a lower net income when gross earnings rise.

Local Offices

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the live load figures of supplementary benefit for *(a)* unemployed claimants, *(b)* claimants not required to register for work and *(c)* pensioners, for each of the two local offices in Doncaster and the local office in Wath-on-Dearne that covers Mexborough, for each of the years April 1980 to April 1988.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information is as follows:

Supplementary Benefit Live Load	[1]*E.A.P.*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Doncaster East	E	2,410	3,782	4,640	4,814	5,204	5,285	5,261	4,854
	A	1,471	1,713	2,024	2,598	3,000	3,296	3,552	3,726
	P	2,724	2,789	2,882	2,857	2,877	2,917	2,993	3,132
Doncaster West	E	2,895	4,874	5,808	5,945	6,671	6,711	6,969	6,257
	A	1,965	2,268	2,821	3,073	3,922	4,019	4,511	4,731
	P	3,511	3,588	3,757	3,615	3,600	3,458	3,651	3,571
Wath-On-Dearne	E	1,807	2,806	3,020	3,174	3,479	3,747	3,666	3,194
	A	1,232	1,358	1,613	1,957	2,398	2,368	2,554	2,639
	P	1,892	1,924	2,005	2,041	2,014	1,958	2,011	2,046

[1] E = unemployed claimants.
A = Claimants not required to register for work.
P = pensioners.
Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action, which include a number of cases where benefit payment has ceased but other action is continuing.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each of the years 1980 to 1988 the number of claimants and the number of dependants and the percentage take-up of family income support for each of the two local offices in Doncaster and the local office in Wath-on-Dearne that covers Mexborough.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that this information is not available on a local basis for either family income supplement (family credit since April 1988) or income support (supplementary benefit prior to April 1988).

Benefit Take-up

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give an estimate of the number of people who would qualify for invalid care allowance or severe disablement allowance but who have not claimed those benefits in *(a)* Great Britain, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Lothian region.

Mr. Scott: I regret that it is not possible to provide this information. The OPCS surveys of disabled people have collected data about the incidence of different types and degrees of disability and also about receipt of benefits. They do not, however, provide enough information about

the circumstances of carers to identify with sufficient certainty the total number who would qualify for invalid care allowance if they made a claim. It should also be remembered that there has been a tenfold increase in the number of recipients of the allowance since the survey data were collected in 1985.

The main difficulty with severe disablement allowance is in identifying clearly the number who would satisfy the primary qualifying condition of being incapable of work.

Housing Benefit

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people were in receipt of housing benefit in 1978-79, 1979-80 and 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is in the table. Figures are not held for 1978-79.

Estimated numbers receiving assistance with housing costs

	(000)
1979-80	3,065
1987-88	6,875

Notes:

1. Assistance with housing costs in 1979-80 was through the supplementary benefit scheme administered by the Department and the rent and rate rebate and rent allowance scheme run by the Department of Environment. The figure of 3·065 million represents the estimated number of people receiving assistance through the Department of Environment scheme only. Information about the numbers also receiving help through supplementary benefit is not available.
2. The information for 1987-88 represents the estimated number of people receiving assistance with housing costs through the unified housing benefit scheme introduced in November 1982.
3. *Source:* 1979-80 Local authority returns to Department of Environment.
   1987-88 Housing benefit subsidy claims from local authorities

Children

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of Scottish children *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage dependent on supplementary benefit and income support in each year from 1978-79.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest information is in the table.

Children in Scotland

Date	Total[1]	Dependent on Supplementary Benefit[2]	Percentage
November 1978	1,285,600	120,000	9·30
November 1979	1,254,400	109,000	8·71
December 1980	1,222,200	119,000	9·76
December 1981	1,188,400	154,000	12·97
December 1982	1,151,400	183,000	15·75
December 1983	1,132,700	177,000	15·52
December 1984	1,106,100	195,000	17·66
February 1986	1,062,200	212,000	20·00
May 1987	1,042,900	216,000	20·71

[1]Total number of children in Scotland supplied by OPCS from mid-year population estimates.

[2]Number of children in Scotland dependent on supplementary benefit, from annual statistical inquiries.

Social Fund

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average time taken by social fund officers to reach a decision on crisis or budgeting loans or community care grants *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the northern region, *(c)* in south Tyneside, *(d)* in Gateshead, *(e)* in Newcastle, *(f)* in Sunderland and *(g)* in north Tyneside, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information available is shown in the table.

Average clearance time (in whole working days)

	Crisis Loans	Budgeting Loans	Community Care Grants
National	1	7	7
North Eastern Region	1	6	7
North Tyneside			
Gateshead	1	5	3
Newcastle St. James	1	2	3
Newcastle East	1	2	5
Newcastle West	1	2	3
Wallsend	1	5	5
South Tyneside			
Houghton le Spring	1	2	3
Jarrow	1	6	7
North Shields	1	13	2
South Shields	1	11	11
Sunderland North	1	8	10
Sunderland South	2	11	10

All figures are provisional and subject to amendment.

Teenage Pregnancies

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will include in his Department's leaflet FB23, "Young People's Guide to Social Security", information about eligibility for income support in the last 11 weeks of pregnancy among 16 to 17-year-olds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Arrangements will be made to include this information in the leaflet.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pregnant 16 to 17-year-olds are in receipt of income support.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects his Department to conclude its consideration of the application for attendance allowance submitted on 25 October 1988 by Mr. Andrew Purves of 21 Park road, Ormiston, East Lothian.

Mr. Scott: The application for attendance allowance made in October 1988 was disallowed on 10 November 1988 and Mr. Purves notified accordingly. An application for a review of that decision was received on 23 November 1988. The attendance allowance board has now completed its review and its decision will be sent within the next few days. I am writing to the hon. Member.

Pensions, Benefits and Allowances

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will state the value in real terms, both in

absolute figures and as a percentage, of retirement and other state pensions and all other welfare and national insurance benefits and allowances paid in November 1979 in relation to those to be paid from April 1989; and if he will indicate the actual figure for each benefit in each year.

Mr. Scott: I regret that it will only be possible to carry out the comparisons requested once the April 1989 retail prices index figure is available.

Income Support

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what income support is provided for a single dependent young person, the only child of a one-parent family, in full-time study for forthcoming A-level examinations who becomes 19 during his final months at school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Income support is provided for a dependent young person in full-time non-advanced education until he or she reaches age 19. As a full-time student the young person is not eligible for income support but local education authorities have discretionary powers to award educational maintenance allowances to help such young people complete their education.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total cost to his Department of income support for maintaining persons aged 65 years and over in private residential homes in the latest year for which statistics are available; and what was the average cost per person.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available in the precise form requested.

However, in August 1988, the annual income support expenditure on people in independent residential care and nursing homes as a whole in Great Britain was estimated to be £890 million, based on an average payment of £115 per week.

Lone Parents (Benefit)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what conclusion was arrived at by the lone parents receiving benefit pilot study carried out at Leicester and Sittingbourne benefit offices which ended on 24 February; if he will list the location of the 44 benefit offices that will be involved in the national study due to commence in April 1989; and when this will be completed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The pilot study carried out at Leicester and Sittingbourne was intended to test the effectiveness of the sampling method and questionnaire proposed for the main study. As a result of the experience of the pilot the researchers are considering some minor alterations to the questionnaire. The social security offices participating in the main study are listed as follows. The final report is due in May 1990.

North West Region
Bury ILO
Chester ILO
Liverpool (Huyton) ILO
Manchester (Failsworth) ILO
Sale ILO
Warrington ILO

Scotland
Bellshill ILO
Clydebank ILO
Edinburgh East ILO
Galashiels ILO
Glasgow (Anniesland) ILO
Greenock ILO

Midlands
Birmingham (South Yardley) ILO
Boston ILO
Derby (London Road) ILO
Nottingham (Station Street) ILO
Nuneaton ILO
Worcester ILO

London North
High Wycombe ILO
London (Hackney)ILO
(Leytonstone) ILO
(Wood Green) ILO
Norwich (Mountergate) ILO
Oxford AO

Wales and South West
Bath ILO
Barnstaple ILO
Cwmbran ILO
Llanelli ILO
Torbay ILO
Wrexham

London South
Basingstoke ILO
Brighton ILO
Canterbury AO
Crawley ILO
London (Bloomsbury) ILO
(Camberwell) ILO
(Wandsworth) ILO

North East
Eston ILO
Northallerton ILO
Leeds North West ILO
Peterlee ILO
Rotherham South ILO
Scarborough ILO
Sheffield South East ILO

Supplementary Benefit and Income Support

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children under 16 *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of all children were living in households dependent on supplementary benefit and income support for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available figures are:

Number of children under 16 in Great Britain

	Total	*Dependent on supplementary benefit*	*Percentage*
November 1977	13,059,400	1,122,000	8·59
November 1978	12,798,000	1,048,000	8·19
November 1979	12,575,100	923,000	7·34
December 1980	12,343,700	1,088,000	8·82
December 1981	12,098,600	1,493,000	12·34
December 1982	11,856,700	1,721,000	14·52
December 1983	11,637,400	1,790,000	15·38
December 1984	11,462,300	1,949,000	17·00
1985	No figures available		
February 1986	11,250,700	2,123,000	18·87
May 1987	11,148,800	2,111,000	18·94

Funeral Expenses

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many relations have claimed funeral expenses for the latest available period; and what studies he has commissioned in the use of these funds.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A social fund funeral payment may be claimed by anyone responsible for the costs of a funeral. No statistics therefore exist to indicate the number of claims made by relatives. In the period April to November 1988, 28,950 payments were made. We have commissioned no studies into the use made of these payments which are made to cover the cost of simple funerals.

Cold Weather Payment

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the total cost of a week's cold weather payment to all those who were eligible if the capital limit was *(a)* raised to £6,000 and *(b)* abolished.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: If the capital limit were to be increased to £6,000 or abolished and all those eligible received a payment, the cost of one week's cold weather payments would be £13 million. No one with capital of more than £6,000 can qualify for income support and since this benefit acts as a passport to cold weather payments, to abolish the capital limit would admit no more people to the scheme than would raising the limit to £6,000.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will take steps to ensure that information relating to applications for housing benefit transitional protection will be made available, broken down by local authority area.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Yes. The computer system at the transitional payments unit has been designed to produce information in the form requested. However, it is currently working at maximum capacity to handle the payments that are being made and to deal with the process of renewing awards of transitional payments. We expect computer time to become available to produce the information requested later this year.

Sick Pay

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the number of people in receipt of statutory sick pay since 1983.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. However, the number of recorded payments of SSP in each year since its introduction is as follows:

Tax year	*Number of SSP payments (million)*
1983-84	5
1984-85	5·7
1985-86	5·9
1986-87	5·7
1987-88	5·8

Note: These figures relate to employments not people. Where a person has had spells of SSP with more than one employer in a tax year, the spells with each employer will be recorded in the table. Thus the number of people receiving SSP will be less than the figures shown above.

Benefit Changes

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the occasions on which benefits have been increased in any year since 1979 by more than the rise in prices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 22 March 1989]:* In November 1979, November 1980 and November 1982, when the forecast method of uprating was used, benefits were increased by more than the actual rise in the retail prices index.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table listing each change in social security benefits in 1988-89 and those planned for 1989-90 and the expenditure and savings resulting from each change.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 22 March 1989]:* I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 17 March at columns *394-96*. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced to the House on 14 March at columns 307-08 that we propose to abolish the pensioners' earnings rule with effect from 1 October 1989. This will give more choice and flexibility for older people who want to carry on working. The estimated benefit cost will be about £190 million in 1989-90 and about £375 million in 1990-91. Additional revenue from income tax and national insurance contributions will reduce the net Exchequer cost which will be met from the reserve.

Benefits

Mr. John Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, following his answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, West on 22 February, *Official Report*, column *679*, he will break down the real increases or decreases in expenditure for each benefit showing what amount and proportion is attributable to *(a)* a rise or fall in the real level of benefit, *(b)* a rise or fall in the numbers claiming benefit and *(c)* other factors.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 16 March 1989]:* An analysis of family support distinguishing between the effects of changes in the average amount of benefit paid and changes in numbers of beneficiaries between 1978-79 and 1988-89 is set out in the table.

Family Support 1978-79 to 1988-89

(£ million)

	Changes in average amounts paid	*Changes in expenditure caused by numbers of beneficiaries*	*Total change*
Child Benefit	1,067	−417	650
One Parent Benefit	62	64	126
FIS/Family Credit	256	114	370
Maternity Grant/Maternity Allowance	−42	−195	−237
Supplementary Allowance/Income Support and Housing Benefit[1]	83	1,525	1,608
Social Fund	—	—	49
Child tax allowances	—	—	−1,000
Additional personal tax allowance (lone parent)	—	50	50
Statutory Maternity Pay	—	—	240
Total	—	—	1,856

[1] Supplementary Allowance, Income Support and Housing Benefit (includes rate rebates) paid to one parent families and to people looking after elderly persons.

Pensioners

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) of 26 January, *Official Report*, columns *709-10*, if he will re-calculate the figures to show the effects of increased rents and rates on the growth of real disposable incomes defined as net incomes less housing costs between 1979 and 1986, distinguishing between *(a)* all pensioners and *(b)* pensioners mainly dependent on state benefits.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 2 March 1989]:* The increases are *(a)* 22 per cent. and *(b)* 14 per cent. respectively.

Note: "Mainly dependent on state benefits" are those pensioners dependent on state benefits for three-quarters or more of gross income.

Household Incomes

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish a table showing the rise in real household income between 1979 and 1985 for all decile groups broken down by family status in the manner of his answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South, 29 July 1988, *Official Report*, columns *819-20*;

(2) what was the percentage rise in real household income for the average, broken down by family type, between 1979 and 1985, shown in the manner of his answer to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South, 29 July 1988, *Official Report*, columns *819-20*.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A table providing this information has been put in the Library. It should, however, be noted that the principal objective of the "Households Below Average Income" statistics is to measure improvements in living standards in different parts of the income-distribution for the population as a whole. The tables are not designed to measure the living standards of individual family types within each decile of the population. Although compositional figures by family type are included in the main "Households Below Average Income" statistics, the hon. Member is advised that the information on real income increases for individual family types within each decile provided in reply to this question does not provide a meaningful guide to improved living standards.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people would gain and what would be the average gain as a result of raising the level of savings under which housing benefit is payable to £10,000 on the assumption that *(a)* the rules for other benefits are unaltered, *(b)* the interest actually received on savings and not an arbitrarily assumed return is used in assessing benefit and *(c)* no change is made to the rule that those with savings of under £3,000 receive benefit in full;

(2) what would be the cost of raising the level of savings under which housing benefit is payable to £10,000 *(a)* in 1989-90 and *(b)* in a full year on the assumption that (i) the rules for other benefits are unaltered, (ii) the interest actually received on savings and not an arbitrarily assumed return is used in assessing benefit and (iii) no change is made to the rule that those with savings of under £3,000 receive benefit in full.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to his reply, 28 February 1989]:* We estimate that increasing the housing benefit capital limit from £8,000 to £10,000 would cost roughly £25 million. Generally speaking, current recipients with capital holdings between £3,000 and £6,000 would lose more as a result; those with savings between about £6,000 and £10,000 would gain. An additional, 45,000 people who do not currently qualify would become entitled to benefit of, on average, £10 a week.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many and what percentage of officers in each grade and overall in his Department are *(a)* women and *(b)* from ethnic minorities, respectively.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[pursuant to the reply 1 March 1989, columns 243-244]:* I regret that the reply given has been found to contain an error. The amended figures are as follows:

Information in the form required is not available because records are held on a combined basis with the Department of Health.

Information for both Departments is given in the following table:

	Total staff	Female staff		[1]Ethnic minorities staff	
		Numbers	Per cent.	Numbers	Per cent.
Grades 1 to 7	1,773	320	18·0	62	3·5
SEO and HEO	6,885	2,195	31·8	63	0·9
EO	23,245	13,543	58·2	534	2·3
AO and below	61,749	46,221	74·8	2,752	4·4
Others	2,752	676	24·6	75	2·7
Total	96,404	62,955	65·3	3,486	3·6

[1]Ethnic minorities figures are based on questionnaires voluntarily completed by staff. (75 per cent. response rate to date).

EMPLOYMENT

Holidays (ABTA)

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to what percentage of 1988 holidays booked in the United Kingdom were booked through official ABTA travel agents.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available.

Inflation

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each quarter since the first quarter of 1979 Britain's inflation rate as a percentage of the G7 average.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the inflation rate for the United Kingdom and the G7 average since the first quarter of 1979:

Annual Rate of Inflation

Percentage

	United Kingdom	OECD G7
1979		
Q1	9·6	7·9
Q2	10·6	8·7
Q3	16·0	9·7
Q4	17·3	10·8
1980		
Q1	19·1	12·5
Q2	21·5	12·9
Q3	16·4	12·0
Q4	15·3	11·7
1981		
Q1	12·7	10·6
Q2	11·7	9·7
Q3	11·2	10·2
Q4	11·9	9·7
1982		
Q1	11·1	8·4
Q2	9·4	7·5
Q3	8·0	6·7
Q4	6·2	5·6
1983		
Q1	4·9	4·9
Q2	3·8	4·6
Q3	4·6	4·0
Q4	5·0	4·3
1984		
Q1	5·2	4·9
Q2	5·2	4·6
Q3	4·7	4·3
Q4	4·8	4·2
1985		
Q1	5·5	3·9
Q2	7·0	4·2
Q3	6·3	3·8
Q4	5·5	3·6
1986		
Q1	4·9	3·0
Q2	2·8	1·7
Q3	2·6	1·6
Q4	3·4	1·3
1987		
Q1	3·9	1·8
Q2	4·2	2·9
Q3	4·3	3·1
Q4	4·1	3·4
1988		
Q1	3·4	3·0
Q2	4·2	3·0
Q3	5·5	3·2
Q4	6·6	3·5

Training

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what Government spending has been per head of the labour force on training in the north-west in each of the last three years; and what was the national average in each of those years.

Mr. Cope: The information is shown in the Training Commission (formerly Manpower Services Commission) annual report in the House of Commons Library.

The figures are available only for the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88. The figures for 1986-87 include expenditure by the employment and enterprise group, most of which was transferred to the Department of Employment on 26 October 1988 and now forms part of the employment service.

The expenditure per head of the labour force was as follows:

	North-West	National
	£	£
1986-87	131	107
1987-88	126	102·5

Labour Statistics

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the change in the level of youth unemployment in the north-west in each of the last three years.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the number of unemployed claimants aged 16 to 24 years in the north-west for each January from 1987 to 1989 together with the percentage

change in each year. The figures are affected by the change in the compilation of the count in March 1986 to reduce over recording and by the change in coverage from September 1988 due to the introduction of new benefit regulations affecting those aged under 18.

Unemployed claimants aged 16-24—North West

	Total	*Percentage change over 12 months*
January 1987	157,837	−10·0
January 1988	128,998	−18·3
January 1989	92,951	−27·9

Dock Workers

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many registered dock workers have been recruited in the last 12 months by each of the dock labour scheme ports in Britain.

Mr. Nicholls: A total of 76 registered dock workers were directly recruited by scheme ports during the whole of 1988, the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many dockers were employed by each of the dock labour scheme ports in 1979; and how many are currently employed in these ports.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of registered dock workers employed by each of the dock labour scheme ports in December 1979 and March 1989 according to National Dock Labour Board lists are as follows:

1979 Port/Area	*December 1979*
Newcastle	62
Dunston	—
North Shields	73
South Shields	66
Blyth	41
Sunderland	56
Seaham	16
Middlesbrough	737
Hartlepool	102
Hull	1,515
Goole	275
Grimsby and Immingham	777
Boston	124
Wisbech	21
King's Lynn	83
Yarmouth	82
Lowestoft	26
Ipswich	131
London	5,197
Medway and Swale	631
Southampton	1,719
Poole	83
Weymouth	38
Plymouth	59
Cornwall	138
Bristol	1,059
Sharpness	91
Gloucester	9
Newport	265
Cardiff	296
Barry	128
Port Talbot	60
Swansea	202
Liverpool and Birkenhead	4,385
Bromborough	26
Garston	149
Salford	510
Partington	13
Ellesmere Port	118
Runcorn	118
Western Point	71
Preston	127
Fleetwood	87
Cumbria	45
Ayrshire	62
Greenock	144
Glasgow	350
Aberdeen	116
Dundee	107
Fife	51
Grangemouth	312
Leith	191
TOTAL	21,144

1989 Port/Area	*March 1989*
Newcastle	10
North Shields	53
South Shields	53
Blyth	52
Sunderland	31
Seaham	16
Middlesbrough	488
Hartlepool	73
Hull	680
Goole	165
Immingham/Grimsby	720
Boston	87
Wisbech	12
King's Lynn	53
Yarmouth	100
Lowestoft	30
Ipswich	120
London:	
Surrey	75
Tilbury and Northfleet	1,429
Royal	88
India and Millwall	11
Lighterage	142
Rochester	184
Sittingbourne	29
Sheerness	372
Southampton	679
Poole	97
Weymouth	11
Plymouth	30
Fowey	44
Par	28
Charlestown	2
Falmouth	7
Penzance	8
Bristol	484
Sharpness	47
Newport	204
Cardiff	167
Barry	65
Port Talbot	44
Swansea	98
Liverpool and Birkenhead	1,297
Garston	110
Salford	21
Ellesmere Port	91
Runcorn	33
Weston Point	17
Fleetwood	44
Whitehaven	16
Workington	16
Silloth	3
Barrow	8
Ayr	16
Ardrossan	15
Hunterston	18
Greenock	49
Glasgow	60
Aberdeen	175

1989 Port/Area	March 1989
Dundee	96
Methil and Kirkcaldy	23
Burntisland	9
Grangemouth	131
Leith	102
Total	9,438

Note: National Dock Labour Board lists for 1979 and 1989 use different grouping of dock areas.

Pesticides

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspectors have been employed in the Health and Safety Executive for monitoring pesticide usage on farms in each of the last eight years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive's agricultural inspectors monitor pesticide usage on farms concurrently with their other inspection duties. Since 1981, the number of inspectors employed in Her Majesty's agricultural inspectorate's field force based in area offices is as follows:

1 April	Numbers
1981	166
1982	156
1983	149
1984	144
1985	150
1986	150
1987	151
1988	139
1989[1]	142

[1] At 1 March.

In addition, at 1 March 1989 there were 13 inspectors employed in the agricultural inspectorate headquarters. The executive's objective is to increase numbers in the agricultural inspectorate to 165 inspectors as soon as possible.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many farms have been visited in each of the last eight years by the Health and Safety Executive to monitor pesticide usage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not separately recorded. However, during the course of their visits to farms, Health and Safety Executive inspectors examine all aspects of health and safety including, where appropriate, pesticide usage.

Wages Councils

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all *(a)* employer organisations and *(b)* other organisations which in response to the Government's consultative document issued on 5 December 1988 have indicated (i) that they oppose the abolition of the wages councils, and (ii) that they favour this action.

Mr. Cope: It is not this Department's practice to reveal the content of submissions made by individual organisations. With that exception the information requested is as follows:

ORGANISATIONS RESPONDING TO CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ON WAGES COUNCILS

(a) Employer Organisations

Association of British Chambers of Commerce
The Association of British Laundry, Cleaning and Rental Services Ltd.
Association of Conservative Clubs Ltd.
Association of Independent Businesses
The Booksellers Association
The Brewers Society
The British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions
British Association of Professional Hairdressing Employers
British Clothing Industries Association
British Hat Guild
British Headwear Industries Federation
The British Hotels Restaurants and Caterers Association
British Independent Grocers Association
British Lace Federation
British Office Systems and Stationery Federation
British Retailers Association
The British Scrap Federation
The British Secondary Metals Association
British Soft Drinks Association Ltd.
British Textile Employers' Association
British Toy and Hobby Manufacturers Association
The British Waste Paper Association
The Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association
Clothing Manufacturers Federation
Confederation of British Industry
Co-operative Laundries Society Limited
Co-operative Union Ltd.
Cordage Manufacturers Institute
Drapers Chamber of Trade
The Employers Association of the Linen and Cotton Handkerchief and Household Goods Wages Council
Federation of Bakers
Federation of Merchant Tailors
Food and Drink Federation
Forum of Private Business
The Guild of Hairdressers
Independent Footwear Retailers Association
Independent Footwear Retailers Association—Midland Region
Institute of Directors
Made-Up Textiles Association
Mail Order Traders Association
National Association of Master Bakers, Confectioners and Caterers
National Association of Multiple Shoe Repairers
National Chamber of Trade
National Federation of Fish Friers Limited
National Federation of Fishmongers Ltd.
National Federation of Meat Traders
National Federation of Retail Newsagents
National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses Ltd.
National Hairdressers' Federation
National Hairdressers' Federation—Devon Branch
National Hairdressers' Federation—East of Scotland
National Hairdressers' Federation—Edinburgh Branch
National Hairdressers' Federation—Fife Branch
National Hairdressers' Federation—Kilmarnock and District Branch
National Hairdressers' Federation—Lanarkshire Branch
National Licensed Victuallers Association
Radio, Electrical and Television Retailers Association Ltd.
The Reclamation Association
Scottish Association of Master Bakers
Scottish Grocers' Federation
The Scottish Licensed Trade Association
Society of Master Shoe Repairers
Soho Restaurateurs Association
Union of Independent Companies
United Kingdom Jute Goods Association Ltd.
The Wiping Cloth Manufacturers Association
Voluntary Group Association
Working Men's Club and Institute Union Ltd.

(b) Other Organisations

Aberconwy Borough Council

Adam Smith Institute
Aekta Project
Amalgamated Engineering Union
Association of Professional Executive Clerical and Computer Staff
Barnoldswick Women's Group
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Barton Hill Rights and Advice Centre
Belgrave Baheno
Birmingham City Council
Diocese of Coventry
Diocese of Durham
Diocese of Kingston
Diocese of Knaresborough
Diocese of Manchester
Diocese of Ripon
Diocese of Wakefield
Blythe Neighbourhood Council
Borough of Camden—Libraries and Arts Department's Community Information Service
Borough of Greenwich—Women's Committee
British Institute of Management
Bromsgrove and District Trades Council
Bury South Constituency Labour Party
Camden Community Law Centre
Camden Tribunal and Rights Unit
Campaign Against Poverty
Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless
Cardiff Justice and Peace Group
Cardiff Unemployed Group
Central Area Basic Skills Unit
Centre for Policy Studies
Cheshire County Council
Child Poverty Action Group
Church Action on Poverty
Church Poverty Action Group—Merseyside Branch
Citizens' Advice Bureau—Chelsea Town Hall
Citizens' Advice Bureau—Leicester
Citizens Rights Office
City of Bristol—Employment and Community Development Committee
City of Glasgow
City of Lincoln
City of Newcastle upon Tyne
City of Norwich
City of Salford
City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
Civil and Public Servants Association
Community and Race Relations Unit—British Council of Churches
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Cumbria Association of Trades Councils
Derbyshire County Council
Diocese of Manchester—Board for Social Responsibility
Diocese of Plymouth—Justice & Peace Commission
Dudley Metropolitan Council
Equal Opportunities Commission
Federation of Managerial Professional and General Associations
Firth Park Advice Centre
Furniture Timber and Allied Trades Union
Gateshead Law Centre
General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union
General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union —Midlands and East Coast Region
General Synod of the Church of England—Board for Social Responsibility
Greater Manchester Church Action on Poverty
Greater Manchester Council for Voluntary Service
Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit
Great Grimsby Borough Council
Greenwich Community Law Centre
Greenwich Homeworkers Project
Hackney Council
Hackney Trades Council and Hackney Trade Union Support Unit
Hitslink
Hounslow Community Relations Council
Hounslow Workers Support Unit and Centre for the Unemployed
Hull and District TUC Women's Committee
Hull City Council
Hull Employment Law Project
Indian Workers Association (GB)—Leicester Branch
Industrial Society
The Institute of Economic Affairs
Institute of Economic Development Officers
Institute of Personnel Management
Jamaica Community Service Group
Job Change Project
Kendal and District Trades Council
Kirklees Metropolitan Council
Labour Party—Gorton South Branch
Lambeth Trade Union Resource Centre
Lancashire County Council
Leeds City Council
Leeds City Council—Women's Committee
Leeds Claimants Union
Leeds Industrial Mission
Leicester City Council
Leicester Rights Centre
Leicestershire County Council—Welfare Rights Unit
Lockleaze Community Advice Centre
London Borough of Camden
London Borough of Greenwich
London Borough of Lambeth
London Borough of Southwark—Employment Development Division
London Churches Group—Employment Development Unit
London Steering Group Against Low Pay
London Voluntary Service Council
Low Pay Unit
Northern Low Pay Unit
Manchester City Council
Manchester Council for Voluntary Service
Metropolitan Borough of Bury
Metropolitan Borough of Calderdale
Metropolitan Borough of Stockport
National Council of Women in GB
National Group on Homeworking
National Local Government Officers' Association—Grimsby Branch
National Local Government Officers' Association—Kirklees Metropolitan Branch
National Local Government Officers' Association—North Eastern District
National Local Government Officers' Association—Stockport Branch
National Local Government Officers' Association—South Tyneside Branch
National Union of Civil & Public Servants
National Union of Public Employees
National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers
Newcastle Central Labour Party Women's Council
Newcastle upon Tyne—Council for Voluntary Service
North Humberside Industrial Chaplaincy
North Tyneside Advice and Information Network
North Tyneside Council
Northumbrian Industrial Mission
Norwich and District Citizens' Advice Bureau
Oxford Child Poverty Action Group
Oxford Diocesan Board of Social Responsibility
Piccadilly Advice Centre
Plumstead Community Law Centre Ltd.
Prestatyn Town Council
Quaker Social Responsibility and Education
Retail Book Stationery and Allied Trades—Employees' Association
Rhyl Town Council
Rochdale Metropolitan Council
Roehampton Citizens' Advice Bureau
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation
The Salvation Army
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Scottish Low Pay Unit
Scottish Trades Union Congress
Scottish Women's Aid
Shama—Women's Centre
Sheffield Industrial Mission
Sheffield Information Service
South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
The Spastics Society

Stirling Council—Women's Group
Stockport Trades Council
Tameside Metropolitan Borough
Thamesdown Law Centre
Tooting and Balham Law Centre Ltd.
Tower Hamlets Law Centre
Trades Union Congress
Trades Union Congress—West Midlands Regional Council
Transport and General Workers' Union
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers—Cheltenham Private Trade Branch
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers—Cumbrian Co-op F20
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers—Leeds Private Trade Branch
Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers—(North Eastern Division)
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers—West End One Branch
Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (Yorkshire Regional Branch)
United Road Transport Union
West Midlands Low Pay Unit
West Yorkshire Low Pay Unit
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council
Women For Change
York City Council

Wages (Illegal Underpayment)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he is taking to investigate allegations made by the BBC "Watchdog" programme that named employers were paying illegally low rates of pay to employees and falsifying accounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The wages inspectorate is examining the allegations made in the programme.

The inspectorate treats all of its inquiries and investigations as confidential and the results are disclosed only to those directly involved.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the characteristics of the two cases of underpayment in the Yorkshire and Humberside area which were prosecuted, and on the action taken over the 629 cases of underpayment not prosecuted.

Mr. Nicholls: The cases met the wages inspectorate's criteria for prosecution action. The policy of the inspectorate under all Governments has been to seek compliance by advice and persuasion and to consider prosecution only where an offence is deliberate or repeated and where the evidence is considered adequate to prove a charge in court.

In the great majority of cases where underpayments are found, the employers are being inspected for the first time and many of them are unaware of the regulations. In these and other circumstances where underpayment occurs, the employer is notified of his obligations and asked to give an undertaking to pay not less than the statutory minimum rate in the future. Where the inspectorate has reason to believe that the underpayment may continue, the establishment is identified for re-inspection.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) since the increase in the maximum number of weeks' suspension of unemployment benefit from 13 weeks to 26 weeks, how many claims for unemployment benefit have been received at Stockton unemployment benefit office; in how many of these cases benefit has been suspended; in how many of these cases the maximum 26 weeks' suspension has been initially applied by the adjudication officer; in cases where the maximum 26 weeks' suspension has been applied, in how many cases the length of the suspension has been reduced on review of the case; and in how many of the cases where the 26 weeks' suspension has been initially applied, the suspension has been reduced on appeal;

(2) since the increase in the maximum number of weeks' suspension of unemployment benefit from 13 weeks to 26 weeks, how many claims for unemployment benefit have been received at Billingham unemployment benefit office; in how many of these cases benefit has been suspended; in how many of these cases the maximum 26 weeks' suspension has been initially applied by the adjudication officer; in cases where the maximum 26 weeks' suspension has been applied, in how many cases the length of the suspension has been reduced on review of the case; and in how many of the cases where the 26 weeks' suspension has been initially applied, the suspension has been reduced on appeal;

(3) since the increase in the maximum number of weeks' suspension of unemployment benefit from 13 weeks to 26 weeks, how many claims for unemployment benefit have been received nationally; in how many of these cases benefit has been suspended; in how many of these cases the maximum 26 weeks' suspension has been initially applied by the adjudication officer; in cases where the maximum 26 weeks' suspension has been applied, in how many cases the length of the suspension has been reduced on review of the case; and in how many of the cases where the 26 weeks' suspension has been initially applied, the suspension has been reduced on appeal,

Mr. Lee: The table shows, for the period April 1988 to December 1988, the number of claims for unemployment benefit that were received for the locations requested and for the country as a whole.

Information is not available on how many of these claims were disqualified by the adjudication officer, nor on the numbers where the maximum period of disqualification had been imposed or reduced on review or appeal.

Number of claims taken for period April 1988 to December 1988.

Locations	*Number*
Stockton	10,312
Billingham	3,361
National	2,938,226

Sikhs

Mr. Bidwell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received concerning the freedom of Sikhs to wear their turbans in all work circumstances.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission issued a consultative document in December 1986 containing proposals for regulations to require construction workers to wear head protection. The commission has received a large number of representations in response to the document, both on the proposals as a whole and on their implications for the Sikh community. My colleagues and I have also received letters on the subject.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will announce the results of the review of the rates of allowance payable under the job release scheme and the part-time job release scheme.

Mr. Lee: Although the job release scheme closed on 31 January 1988, the allowances will continue to be paid to participants for up to five years. Following our annual review, the allowances payable from 10 April 1989 under the job release schemes will be as follows:

Full-time scheme

For disabled men who entered the Scheme aged 60, 61, 62, and 63:

those who are married with a dependent wife whose net income from all sources does not exceed £14 a week: £79·25 a week, taxable;

those who do not have a dependent wife or whose wife's income exceeds £14 a week: £62·25 a week, taxable.

For women who entered the scheme aged 59 and men who entered the scheme aged 64:

those who are married with a dependent spouse whose net income from all sources does not exceed £14 a week: £73·75, tax free;

those who are married or whose spouses' income exceeds £14 a week: £58·85 a week, tax free.

Part-time scheme

The part-time job release scheme closed on 30 May 1986. The new rates of allowance for those still remaining on the scheme will be as follows:

For disabled men who entered the part-time scheme aged 60, and 61 and men who entered the scheme aged 62 and 63:

those who are married with a dependent wife whose net income does not exceed £14 a week: £46·95 a week, taxable;

those who do not have a dependent wife or whose wife's income exceeds £14 a week: £39·10 a week taxable.

Earnings Limit

The spouses earnings limit which affects whether the higher or lower rate is paid has been raised from £13 to £14 and the participants earnings limit has been raised from £4 to £5.

Community Insulation Projects

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information his Department has about the number of community insulation projects which were operating in September 1988 and in February of the current year.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 14 March 1989]:* Although the total number of community insulation projects at those two dates is not known, most community insulation projects are registered with Neighbourhood Energy Action. I understand that 444 projects were registered in September 1988 and 260 in February 1989.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest number of *(a)* factory and *(b)* agricultural inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive; how many of these are field inspectors; and how many of these inspectors were employed in each of the inspectorate grades.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 20 March 1989]:* On 1 March 1989, 608·5 factory and 165 agricultural inspectors were employed in the Health and Safety Executive. Of these, 532·5 factory and 142 agricultural inspectors were employed in the Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorate division's field force based in area offices.

The breakdown by grade of factory and agricultural inspectors employed in HSE is as follows:

	Number	*(of which in the field force)*
(i) Factory Inspectors		
Chief inspector	1·0	(—)
Deputy chief inspector	4·0	(—)
Senior area director	4·0	(2·0)
Area director	17·0	(17·0)
Superintending inspector	3·0	(—)
Deputy superintending inspector	38·0	(24·0)
Inspector 1A	163·5	(124·5)
Inspector 1B	275·0	(262·0)
Inspector II	103·0	(103·0)
Total	608·5	(532·5)
(ii) Agricultural inspectors		
Chief inspector	1·0	(—)
Deputy chief inspector	2·0	(—)
Deputy superintending inspector	3·0	(3·0)
Principal inspector 1	7·0	(6·0)
Principal inspector	29·0	(24·0)
Inspector	98·0	(84·0)
Assistant inspector	25·0	(25·0)
Total	165·0	(142·0)

HOME DEPARTMENT

Jeremy Bamber

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in view of the recent decision by the Court of Appeal to refuse leave to appeal to Jeremy Bamber in respect of his conviction on five counts of murder, he will now make a statement about the conduct of police investigations in this case.

Mr. Hurd: After Mr. Bamber's conviction on 28 October 1986, I asked the then chief constable of Essex, Mr. Robert Bunyard, to submit to me an urgent report on the conduct of the investigation of this case by his force. That report acknowledged that mistakes had been made in the early stages of this investigation and made proposals designed to prevent any recurrence. At my request, Sir Richard Barratt, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, discussed with Mr. Bunyard the issues raised in that report and then, in a separate review, sought to identify lessons from this case which might be applied to the police service generally.

It is clear that errors were made in the early stages of the police investigation contrary to existing force practice.

First, the senior investigating officer having assessed the scene of the crime and considered the information provided by Jeremy Bamber, wrongly concluded that Sheila Caffell had taken her own life after shooting her parents and her twin sons. In consequence of this error of judgment, he did not follow normal procedures of potential murder cases and was reluctant to take account of information which challenged his original assessment.

Secondly, there was inadequate supervision of the senior investigating officer to ensure that the existing force practices were observed and that inquiries took account of the information coming to light.

It is clear that prompt and effective action to remedy these shortcomings was taken once the chief constable and senior officers were made aware of the misgivings which

relatives of the Bamber family expressed. Proper procedures were then implemented and they produced the evidence which was then presented to the jury.

I have today placed in the Library a list of the 18 substantive recommendations made by Sir Richard for adoption throughout the police service. They are designed to reinforce standard procedures and ensure proper management supervision to minimise the risk of prejudicing the outcome of a major inquiry.

The recommendations do not call for radical changes in police procedures, rather they clarify and confirm existing good practice so that it is consistently followed.

The recommendations have been forwarded to the Association of Chief Police Officers for their consideration and implementation as necessary.

Law and Order Services (Spending)

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has reached a decision on new arrangements for controlling capital expenditure on the law and order services.

Mr. Hurd: The Government's proposals for law and order services were set out in the consultation document "Capital Expenditure and Finance for Home Office Services" issued on 28 October 1988. I remain of the view that capital spending on the police, probation and magistrates courts services should generally be subject to the capital control system applicable to all local authorities proposed in the Local Government and Housing Bill now before the House.

To meet concerns about the risk of credit approvals being vired away from law and order services, thus jeopardising their capital programmes, I intend, at least initially, that credit approvals should be issued in the form of supplementary credit approvals thereby hypothecating them to those services. I do not intend to recover the specific grant element contained in receipts generated by these services, but to protect the national taxpayer's investment I propose to provide that the reserved part of such receipts should be 75 per cent. I shall also ensure that our support for capital projects is based upon Government priorities and policies through the continuation of a system of project approvals to which payment of grant would be linked. Authorities would be free to spend available resources on projects which do not secure a place in the approved programme but such spending would not attract capital grant.

I am satisfied that the arrangements I propose for law and order services will meet the objectives of the new local authority capital finance system and that authorities will be able to maintain sufficient levels of capital expenditure on those services, while exercising a strict control on Exchequer support in the form of capital grants.

Metropolitan Police Manpower

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will authorise increases in Metropolitan police manpower for 1989-90.

Mr. Hurd: Under the four-year programme of police manpower increases announced in May 1986, I said that I would be prepared to authorise annual increases in Metropolitan police manpower of up to 300 in the police establishment and 150 in the civil staff ceiling, subject to my being satisfied that earlier increases had been properly used. In the first three years of the programme I authorised increases totalling 900 in the police establishment, and 450 in the civil staff ceiling.

Having reviewed the use to which Metropolitan police manpower has been put over the past year, I am satisfied with the progress which has been made. During 1988, almost 600 additional officers were posted to the areas and divisions of the Metropolitan police; the number of man days on foot patrols rose by 16 per cent.; recorded crime reduced and clear-up rates rose. 134 posts were civilianised during the year.

I have therefore decided to authorise the final increases of 300 officers and 150 civil staff, plus the 100 extra civil staff which I announced in the autumn. Of the 250 civil staff, 200 will be used for civilianisation. This will bring the Metropolitan police establishment to the record level of 28,415 as from 1 April 1989.

Prison Inspections

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, *Official Report*, 27 January, columns 769-70, how the inspections by his Department's health and safety officers are validated; and if there are any prison inspections by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Inspections carried out by Home Office health and safety officers are validated by random inspections undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive. These random inspections include prison service establishments.

Formal hygiene inspections of prisons carried out by Home Office health and safety officers are also subject to random, unannounced validation inspections by an environmental health officer from the Department of Health.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fires there have been in prisons in the last ten years; who is responsible for fire precautions in prisons; and who validates the inspections that take place.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Between 1 January 1979 and 31 December 1988, 2,829 fires were reported in penal establishments. Many of these would have been small fires (for example, a lighted rag or newspaper thrown out of a cell windows, and quickly extinguished by prison staff.

The responsibility for fire precautions in each establishment rests with the governor, who nominates a fire officer from among his staff to be responsible to him for all fire safety matters. Governors and fire officers are encouraged to maintain close contact with their local fire brigade.

The responsibility for implementing recommendations resulting from fire prevention surveys conducted by local brigades rests with prison service line management, ie, governors, supported by regional directors and ultimately by headquarters, where the advice of Her Majesty's fire service inspectorate is available if any question arises as to the validity of a particular recommendation.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South on 27 January, *Official Report*, column 769-70, how many validating prison

inspections by environmental health officers from the Department of Health were carried out in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since 1 April 1988, 12 validation inspections have been carried out at prison service establishments by an environmental health officer of the Department of Health.

Food Poisoning (Prisons)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, 27 January, *Official Report*, column 769-70, on how many occasions local authority environmental health officers have been called in to prisons to provide assistance and expertise in tracing the source of food poisoning; and to which prisons they were called.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since 1984, local authority environmental health officers have been called in to prison service establishments on seven occasions to provide assistance and expertise in tracing the source of food poisoning.

The establishments involved were:

1984—Her Majesty's Prison, Leeds
1985—Her Majesty's Prison, Leeds
1987—Her Majesty's Prison, Wakefield
1988—Her Majesty's Prison, Cardiff
Her Majesty's Prison, Rudgate
Her Majesty's Prison, Lincoln
1989—Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institute, Hollesley Bay Colony

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, 27 January, *Official Report*, column 769-70, he will consider requesting the help of local authority environmental health officers in order to prevent food poisoning outbreaks as well as to investigate them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are satisfied that formal hygiene inspections of prison catering facilities by Home Office health and safety officers and Home Office supply and transport catering branch are of a standard comparable to those carried out by local authority environmental health officers. Home Office inspectors have considerable knowledge and experience of food hygiene problems associated with large scale catering operations. Their standards are monitored by random validation inspections undertaken by an environmental health officer from the Department of Health.

Prison governors and medical officers have authority to invite local authority environmental health officers to visit their establishment in an informal advisory capacity should they consider this appropriate.

There are no plans to change existing arrangements at present.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the speed at which entry clearance cases are now being dealt with when referred to his Department.

Mr. Renton: Entry clearance applications may be referred to the immigration and nationality department either for further inquiries to enable the entry clearance officer to reach a decision or for the department to take a decision. In all cases, applications are dealt with as promptly as possible although the need to make inquiries and the volume of work arising from these and on other applications to the Home Office are unavoidable sources of delay. Accordingly, remedies have to be sought not only in respect of entry clearance cases themselves but also in reducing nugatory work wherever possible elsewhere in the control system in order to free resources to be applied to what work remains. Against that background, the following measures are in train or have been taken.

Many referred entry clearance applications require the sponsors in the United Kingdom to be interviewed. These interviews are carried out by the immigration service and, depending on seasonal commitments at the ports, have been subject to delay. Arrangements are now in hand to streamline the handling of interview requirements to smooth out delays so far as practicable by securing a better balance between interview requests to the immigration service and their available manpower. The objective remains of carrying out interviews within three months of receipt of papers in the United Kingdom.

We are also introducing on a phased basis arrangements giving entry clearance officers abroad greater delegated authority to decide entry clearance applications locally. We expect that these new arrangements will be fully in place by January 1990 and will make an important contribution to expediting decisions.

More generally, the Government have taken a number of steps to seek to improve the time taken to process all applications handled by the Department. We introduced immigration rules changes in February 1988 to reduce the amount of nugatory work carried out by the Department and to free resources for resolving essential applications. Wider advertising, improved procedures and the recruitment of part-timers have helped the staffing situation considerably in recent months. Since 1988, a net additional total of 136 staff has been recruited. We are also introducing wherever possible improved working procedures to ensure that applications are processed as promptly as possible.

We believe that, taken together, these initiatives in the United Kingdom and abroad will significantly improve the overall quality of service including directly or indirectly to entry clearance applicants. Their effect will be kept under review.

Policing (North Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the chief constables of Wales to discuss the manning levels of the police forces of the constabularies in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend visited South Wales constabulary on 30 January and plans to visit Dyfed-Powys police later in the year. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State visited North Wales police on 1 February. There were and will be opportunities to discuss police manpower on these and other occasions.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will visit North Wales police headquarters, Colwyn Bay, to discuss with the chief

constable and the police committee police manning levels and the crime rates peculiar to north Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit the North Wales police. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State visited the force on 1 February. Since the Government took office 51 extra police posts have been approved for North Wales. The police authority has applied for a further 10 posts in 1990-91. This will be considered. It is encouraging to see that recorded crime in north Wales fell by 6 per cent. in 1988.

Football Attendances

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of arrests at each Football League ground for the current season to date.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The most up-to-date figures available are those given in the reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) on 10 January at column 492, as corrected for division 4 in the reply to a question from the hon. Member on 2 February at column 389.

New Prisons

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if there are any plans to open any new prisons *(a)* in the north-west and *(b)* in the Warrington area.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: One new prison (Lancaster Farms) is currently under construction in the north-west and three (Kirkham, Rochdale, and Fazakerley) are subject to discussion with relevant planning authorities. There are no plans at present to open a new prison in the Warrington area.

Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Ismail Tinwala

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to take a decision on the application made at the post in Bombay by Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Ismail Tinwala, date of birth 19 November 1932, to settle in the United Kingdom; and when Mr. Tinwala's application was referred to him.

Mr. Renton: Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Ismail Tinwala was interviewed by the entry clearance officer in Bombay on 16 February 1989 and his application was referred to the immigration and nationality department on 20 February. First examination of the application indicates that further information is required from Mr. Tinwala's accountant in the United Kingdom to enable the Department to reach a decision on this case. Once this information is made available the Department will then decide the application without delay. Mr. Tinwala will be notified of the decision direct by the entry clearance officer in Bombay.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what consultations he proposes to undertake to ensure that any regulations made in terms of rule 14 of schedule 7 to the Criminal Justice Act 1988, go as far as possible to facilitate the success of applications on behalf of children who have suffered physical or sexual abuse and whose parents are either unwilling or unable to act on their behalf; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has drafted regulations using his power under rule 14 of schedule 7 to the Criminal Justice Act 1988, to prescribe circumstances and method by which one person may act for another in relation to a claim for compensation to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and to prescribe the powers of the board to manage the payment and investments of awards to persons below the age of 18 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The rules provided for in paragraph 14 of schedule 7 to the Act have not yet been drafted. We shall consult the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and its council and tribunals about the terms of the rules.

Under the present scheme the board will consider applications on behalf of a minor made by a parent or any other person exercising parental rights, including a local authority or by the Official Solicitor or, in Scotland, a judicial factor appointed by a court. We do not propose to adopt narrower arrangements under the rules and are willing to consider any suggestions about the scope of the rules on this point.

Child Abuse

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of children who have received compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for physical or psychological injuries suffered in cases of physical or sexual abuse in each of the past seven years; what was the range of sums awarded in compensation; and what was the average amount awarded to children following such cases.

Mr. John Patten: The board does not at present collate separately details of claims or awards relating to children, but plans to record from 1 April the number of applications which are based on alleged physical or sexual abuse of children.

Broadcasting

Mr. Curry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, having regard to the proposed exemption of BSB from the Council of Europe convention and to the decision taken at the meeting of EEC Ministers on 13 March, permitting member states to exempt national broadcasting channels with no overspill into other territories from the directive's provisions on the insertion and amount of advertising, he will establish a uniform set of controls for all United Kingdom broadcasters.

Mr. Renton: The Council of Europe convention on transfrontier television does not apply to British Satellite Broadcasting, since BSB is not involved in broadcasting across frontiers. Nonetheless, BSB will have to comply with the IBA's rules on advertising. As to the control of broadcast advertising in the longer term, this is a matter which we shall be considering in the light of responses to the White Paper on broadcasting.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many representations have been received by his Department from television companies, in response to the White Paper on the future of broadcasting;

(2) how many representations have been received from television companies concerning the future of regional television with regard to the White Paper on broadcasting.

Mr. Renton: We have so far received nearly 3,000 responses, and a few late ones are still coming in. We have it in mind in due course to place in the Library a list of the main organisations which have responded. The proposals in the White Paper that regional Channel 3 franchises should be required to show regional programming including programmes produced in the region, and that the Independent Television Commission should be responsible for deciding on the geographical division of Channel 3, have been generally welcomed.

Forensic Pathology

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recommendation contained in the recent report from the Home Affairs Select Committee on the forensic science service that his Department should work with the Departments of Health and Education and Science to secure the long-term future of the forensic pathology profession.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We shall be dealing with this recommendation, together with the others made by the Select Committee on Home Affairs in their report on the forensic science service, in the response which we shall be making to the recommendations of the report.

Police Chases

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and in which police authorities *(a)* innocent bystanders, *(b)* offenders and *(c)* police officers have been killed as a result of vehicle chases involving the police in the last year, and in each year since 1979.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information for 1987 is contained in the report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary for that year, a copy of which is in the Library. The information requested for earlier years is not recorded centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Immigration Guidelines

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times he has reversed the decisions of the immigration officers under the terms of the new immigration guidelines concerning representations by hon. Members.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to questions from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 15 March at columns 230-31.

Immigration Rules

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will publish the new immigration rules.

Mr. Renton: We hope to do so in the next few months.

Safer Cities Scheme

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to extend the safer cities scheme beyond the 14 cities now designated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: Twenty safer cities projects will be established by April 1991. Twelve areas have agreed to take part in the programme, two are currently considering invitations, two more will be approached shortly and four others will be invited in 1990-91.

Drugs and Arms (Imports)

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to maintain controls to prevent the importation of illegal drugs and arms into the United Kingdom in the light of proposals from the European Community Commission.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend gave an account of his thinking on these and other points in the explanatory memorandum, dated 6 February, on the Commission's communication to the Council (10412/88 (COM)(88) 640) on the abolition of controls of persons at intra-Community borders. Copies of the memorandum are available from the Vote Office.

Crime Figures

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest crime figures for the Metropolitan police district.

Mr. Patten: The information requested is published in table 7 of Home Office statistical bulletin 7/89, a copy of which is in the Library. More detailed figures for each borough in the Metropolitan police district are also available in the Library.

Immigrant Detainees

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to transfer detainees from Latchmere house to Haslar in Gosport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 13 March at column 9.

Community Volunteer

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Association of Chief Police Officers about the formation of community volunteers schemes.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will estimate the annual cost of running the proposed community volunteer schemes.

Mr. John Patten: In the field of crime prevention the Government have not formulated any proposals for community volunteer schemes. Members of the public are already contributing directly to crime prevention schemes by joining neighbourhood watch or crime prevention panels. We encourage those wishing to give more active support to the police to join the special constabulary.

Football Spectators Bill

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted criminals will be prevented from travelling abroad as a result of part II of the Football Spectators Bill; and how he calculates the figure.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Part II of the Bill enables a court to make a restriction order requiring someone convicted of a football-related offence to report to an agency here on the occasion of designated matches played outside England and Wales. No order may be made unless the court is satisfied that it would help to prevent violence or disorder at or in connection with such matches. The number of people affected will depend on how the courts exercise their powers.

Crime Statistics

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the reported *(a)* violent crimes and *(b)* other crimes in Knowsley borough for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is published annually in the report of the chief constable of the Merseyside police.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present prison remand population for England and Wales; how many of those remand prisoners belong to an ethnic minority group; and what percentage of those remand prisoners who belong to an ethnic minority are charged with an offence that involves violence, robbery or sex.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest readily available information is given in the table. Information on offences is not recorded centrally until the completion of court proceedings.

Untried and convicted unsentenced population[1] of prison service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1988: by type of prisoner and ethnic origin

	Untried	*Convicted unsentenced*
White	6,970	1,440
West Indian, Guyanese, African	1,020	130
Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi	240	35
Chinese, Arab, Mixed origin	220	30
Other, not recorded (including refusals)	630	100
Total	9,080	1,730

[1] Provisional figures.

Police Discipline Code

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many complaints as defined under section 84/4 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 were recorded under section 9 in the discipline code in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988; how many of those complaints were formally investigated; and how many of those investigated were substantiated;

(2) how many internal investigations were carried out by the United Kingdom police forces in 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1988 which related to section 9 of the discipline code; and how many of those were found to be substantiated.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information is as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
Number of complaints				
Recorded[1]	83	197	180	220
Formally investigated	57	142	131	127
Substantiated	0	4	4	5

[1] Does not include complaints which were recorded but subsequently withdrawn.

Information relating to internal investigations which were not based on a complaint under the terms of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and to the subsequent disciplinary proceedings is not held centrally, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Prisoners (Suicide Attempts)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of suicide or self-injury with apparent suicide intent, or other self-injury, occurred among those detained in police cells in 1987 and 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: During 1988, the number of deaths in police cells resulting from self-inflicted injuries was three. The comparable number for 1987 was four. No central record is kept of incidents of self-inflicted injuries which do not result in death.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that circular instruction 3/1987 on suicide prevention is being properly implemented in prison department establishments.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Compliance by establishments with the procedures set out in CI 3/1987 is monitored by the prison service's regional directors. Establishments which are unable to implement the procedures in section C of the circular instruction because of pressure of numbers at reception have been authorised to make alternative arrangements; otherwise I am satisfied that the circular instruction is being complied with.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisons have made arrangements for Samaritans to have access to suicidal prisoners.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Although we have not monitored the progress of this initiative centrally, we are aware that a substantial number of establishments have made arrangements with the Samaritans.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress there has been in implementing the recommendation of the Chief Inspector of Prisons in his report on Her Majesty's remand centre, Risley; and what steps have been taken to implement circular instruction 3/1987 on suicide prevention at that establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A statement by the Home Secretary setting out the action which was being taken, including the

full implementation of CI 3/1987, was published on 30 June last year, and a copy has been placed in the Library. The deputy director general of the prison service is responsible for following up the inspection report and will be visiting Risley for this purpose.

Contracted-out Catering

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those establishments which have contracted-out catering services for inmates and the provision of inmates' canteens to private operators showing in each case who is the private contractor.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is as follows:

Inmates Catering
Ashford Remand Centre—Sutcliffe Catering South-East
Downview Prison (to open shortly)—Tappe Catering Services Ltd.

Inmates Canteen
Ashford Remand Centre—NAAFI

DNA Testing

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce proposals to establish a Government DNA scheme to assist those seeking to settle in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We are considering in what form a centrally organised DNA scheme might be introduced into the entry clearance process. I hope to be in a position to announce our conclusions on this before long.

Whatton Young Offenders Institution

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether riot equipment was used by either prison staff or police during recent disturbances at Whatton young offenders institution;

(2) if he will give details of the type of accommodation currently in use for all prisoners based at the Whatton young offenders institution;

(3) if he will give details of the age categories of all prisoners detained currently at the Whatton young offenders institution;

(4) who carries out night security patrols at Whatton young offenders institution;

(5) if he will give details of recent prison disturbances at the Whatton young offenders institution.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Offenders committed to Whatton young offenders institution fall into two age categories: those aged 14 to 16 and those aged 17 to 20. These age groups are held in separate units, both comprising a mixture of dormitory and cubicular accommodation. In addition, there is a further unit containing a small number of cells. At night, the institution is staffed by a mixture of prison officers and night patrol officers.

On the night of 28 February/1 March, a short series of incidents occurred at the institution involving a small number of inmates in the younger age group. In one of the incidents, inmates in a dormitory damaged windows, fixtures and fittings. It was necessary for prison staff, using protective equipment, to remove the inmates from the dormitory. Two prison officers suffered bruising and nine inmates minor scratches and abrasions, two requiring stitches for cuts believed to have been caused by flying glass. No police officers were involved.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will supply details of sentences and crimes committed by all prisoners detained at the Whatton young offenders institution.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The latest readily available information is given in the table.

Population of Whatton young offender institutions on 31 December 1988: by offence and sentence length

Offence group	*Number of inmates*			
	Up to 4 months	*Over 4 and up to 6 months*	*Over 6 and up to 12 months*	*Total*
Whatton short sentence young offenders institution				
Violence against the person	16	1	—	17
Rape	—	—	—	—
Other sexual offences	—	—	—	—
Burglary	8	1	—	9
Robbery	—	—	—	—
Theft, handling, fraud and forgery	19	—	—	19
Drugs offences	—	—	—	—
Other offences	23	2	—	25
Offence not recorded	8	—	—	8
All offences	74	4	—	78
Whatton juvenile young offenders institution				
Violence against the person	2	4	8	14
Rape	—	—	—	—
Other sexual offences	—	—	—	—
Burglary	12	6	28	46
Robbery	2	1	2	5
Theft, handling, fraud and forgery	2	1	2	5
Drugs offences	—	—	—	—
Other offences	6	3	7	16
Offence not recorded	—	—	—	—
All offences	24	15	47	86

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what compensation will be paid to the holders of firearms which chief officers of police will not allow the holders to retain under the terms of the Firearms Amendment Act 1988 on part one firearms certificates.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no grounds for offering compensation in such cases. A firearm which a chief officer of police will not authorise an individual to hold on a firearm certificate may be sold to a registered firearms dealer or to the holder of a firearm certificate who is authorised to possess or acquire it.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what compensation will be paid to the holders of shotguns which cannot be converted to retain the classification of shotgun under the terms of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no grounds for offering compensation in such cases. A large magazine smooth-bore gun which cannot be adapted to retain the classification of a shotgun under section 2 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 may be held by its owner on a firearm certificate provided the criteria laid down in the Firearms Act 1968 are met. Alternatively, such a gun may be sold to a registered firearms dealer or to the holder of a firearm certificate authorised to possess or acquire it.

Women and Children (Offences)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he has issued any circular relating to the trend in the role of women police officers in relation to crime involving women and children, as recommended by the Women's National Commission;

(2) what circulars he has issued following the Women's National Commission's 1985 recommendation that he issue a further circular, following up H.O. 25/83, on the continued problem of the under-reporting of crimes of rape and sexual assault, and the special needs of victims in relation to rape trauma syndrome.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The deployment of women police officers is an operational matter for chief officers of police in the light of the overall needs of their force and the requirements of equal opportunities legislation. Home Office circular 69/1986, which contains the responses agreed with chief officers to the report of the Women's National Commission on violence against women, recognises the valuable role which women police officers may play, subject to the operational requirements of individual forces.

The responses to the report also specify measures to ensure that sexual assaults are accurately and fully recorded and confirm the importance of making police officers who are involved in the investigation of serious sexual offences aware of the special needs of victims.

Domestic Violence

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what improvements in data collection on domestic violence have been made following the Women's National Commission's 1985 recommendation.

Mr. John Patten: In 1986, we reminded chief officers of police that the criteria for recording offences of violence in a domestic setting were the same as in other contexts. Some forces have made arrangements for relevant information, particularly on civil injunctions, to be collected and made readily available to officers attending incidents. The 1983 and 1987 British crime surveys included questions on domestic violence. A Home Office research and planning unit review of research into domestic violence is to be published shortly.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent action has been taken following the Women's National Commission's 1985 recommendation that a circular be issued by his Department to give guidance and encouragement to chief constables to review training and procedures on domestic violence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The recommendations concerning police training and procedures in dealing with domestic violence which were made by the Women's National Commission in its 1985 report "Violence Against Women" were incorporated in Home Office circular 69/1986. We are currently considering whether further guidance is necessary.

Horse Racing

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the amounts of monies given by the Horse Race Levy Board to each individual horse racecourse in the United Kingdom since 1983.

Mr. John Patten: The powers of the Horserace Betting Levy Board extend only to Great Britain. I understand from the board that the annual financial records of the board do not identify all the information required. Some of the grants it makes are distributed through other racing bodies.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all horse racing courses in the United Kingdom by region showing the number of races held at each course and the levels of prize monies at each course since 1983.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not held by the Home Office or by the Horserace Betting Levy Board.

Arrests (Statistics)

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests were made during recent disturbances at St. Neots in Cambridgeshire and in Oxford; and if he will provide a breakdown of the different offences committed detailing the number of arrests made for each.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Cambridgeshire that, during disorder on the night of 4/5 March in St. Neots, eight people were arrested and were charged with violent disorder under section 2 of the Public Order Act 1986. Fourteen further arrests have subsequently been made for more minor offences. I understand from the chief constable of Thames Valley police that during disorder on the same night in Oxford one person was arrested for threatening behaviour under section 4 of the Public Order Act.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 149**

SESSION 1988–89

13th March–23rd March 1989

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

1, Poultry
Listed buildings 779w

6 Brigade
Helicopters 619w

36 Engineers' Regiment
Consolidated Fund debates (13:03:89) 222-31

A3
373w

A11
207w, 704w

A13
117-9w, 399w

A27
707w

A36
Contracts 403w

A465
Road works 714

A487
Bypasses 713

A850
Road works 314w

Abbott, Ms Diane
Debates etc.
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 552
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1054, 1055
Questions
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 630w

Aberdeen
HM Coastguard 120w

Abolition of Domestic Rates etc (Scotland) Act (Amendment) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (17:03:89) 702

Abortion
Advertising 560w
Anaesthetics 560w
Basildon 65w
Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority 162w
Human organs 571w
Ministers' domestic visits 560w
Private health services 560w
Select Committees 560w

Abortion Act 1967
Questions
65w, 560w

ABRC
see Advisory Board for the Research Councils

ABTA
see Association of British Travel Agents

ACC
see Association of County Councils

ACCEPT
Government grants to voluntary organisations 575w

Access Committee for England
30w

Access to buildings
Handicapped 30w

Accident & emergency departments
768w

Accidents
Boating 212w

Accountants
Military police 477w

ACPO
see Association of Chief Police Officers

ACTRAM
see Advisory Committee on Safe Transport of Radioactive Material

Adams, Mr Allen
Questions
Veterinary services, Animal welfare 341w

ADAS
see Agricultural Development & Advisory Service

ADC
see Association of District Councils

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 977-8
Questions
Business statements 535
Public expenditure, Private investment 542w

Administrative costs
Community charge 627-8w

Administrative delays
Agency Benefits Unit 67w
Attendance allowance 786w
British citizenship 413w
British nationality 413w
Courts 360w
Criminal injuries compensation 3-5w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 2w
Entry clearances 727-8w, 807-8w
Farm woodland scheme 467w
House of Commons broadcasting 20-2
Immigration applications 412-3w, 420w, 539-40w, 809w
NHS charges 78w
Planning authorities 1085
Remand in custody 297w
Social Fund 785-6w
Social security appeals 458w

Advertising
Abortion 560w
Armed forces 52w
Cabinet Office 47w
Central Office of Information 63w, 147-8w
Dept of Education & Science 13w
Dept of Employment 56-7w
Dept of Energy 21w
Dept of Health 71w
Dept of Social Security 30w
Dept of the Environment 89-90w
Dept of Trade & Industry 99-100w
Dept of Transport 115w
Expenditure 5-6w, 13w, 21-2w, 30w, 34-5w, 40w, 47-8w, 56-7w, 63w, 71w, 80-1w, 89-90w, 99-100w, 115w, 147-8w, 249w, 278w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 22w
Health Education Authority 72w
Home Office 5-6w
Lord Chancellor 40w
Metropolitan Police 6w
Ministry of Agriculture 80-1w
Ministry of Defence 52w
Office of Arts & Libraries 48w
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 71w
Prime Minister 47w
Privy Council Office 34w
Scottish Office 35w
Training Agency 57w
Treasury 249w
Welsh Office 278w

Advertising controls
British Satellite Broadcasting 810w
Drug abuse 296w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 281-4w
Professional organisations 281-4w
Television advertising 810w

Advice & Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(16:03:89) 556

Advisory Board for the Research Councils
Biology 291w
Public appointments 290-1w

Advisory bodies
Ministry of Agriculture 86w
Official secrets 86w

Advisory Committee on Safe Transport of Radioactive Material
Transport of radioactive materials 596-7w

AERE
see Atomic Energy Research Establishment

Aerosols
Chlorofluorocarbons 426w

Aerospace industry
North West region 271w

AFCOR Investments
406

Afghanistan
Diplomatic service 24w, 511w

AFRC
see Agricultural & Food Research Council

Age
Dock labour scheme 193w
Employment 186w

Age participation rates
Higher education admission 529w

Agency Benefits Unit
Administrative delays 67w

Agricultural & Food Research Council
344w
Research finance 289w

Agricultural Development & Advisory Service
249w, 340w
Civil service manpower 721-2w

Agricultural Inspectorate
Manpower 416w, 803-4w

Agricultural land
Construction 628-9w
Extensification schemes 516w
Housing construction 350w

Agricultural marketing
Potatoes 524-5

Agricultural policy
USSR 530

Agricultural production
Eggs 522

Agricultural products
EC external trade 351w
Festivals & special occasions 82w
Import duties 353w
Labelling 392w
Northern Ireland 621-2w
Republic of Ireland 621-2w

Agricultural research
340w, 350w
Animal diseases 467w
Animal husbandry 514-5w
Bovine somatotropin 472w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 80w
Food hygiene 342-4w
Government laboratories 352w, 722w
Near market research 84-5w
Research finance 516-7w

Agricultural subsidies
Potatoes 615w

Agricultural Training Board
475w

Agricultural workers
Pay 519

Agriculture
GATT 349w
Nuclear accidents 474w
Scotland 313w
Wales 439w

AIDS
North East Thames Regional Health Authority 154w

AIDS—continued
Prison staff 295w
Prisoners 295-6w
Research finance 569-70w
Sewage 95w
Wales 718

AIDS (Control) Act 1987
Questions
Publishing 569w

Aids for handicapped
Trent Regional Health Authority 388w

Air accidents
Lockerbie 418w, (16:03:89) 555-6, (20:03:89) 731-4, 906, 909-17
Low flying 242-3w
Manchester Airport 122w, (16:03:89) 629-36
Standing Order No 20 applications (16:03:89) 555-6, (20:03:89) 731-4
Tornado aircraft 244w

Air conditioning
Hospitals 236w

Air fares
Europe 9

Air force
Community charge 759w

Air force bases
C130 aircraft 758w
Courts martial 275-6w

Air freight transport
Transport of radioactive materials 596w

Air pollution
Carbon monoxide 321w
Methane 319w
Nitrogen oxides 319w, 321w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 209w

Air pollution control
Chlorofluorocarbons 128w, 630-1w, 1088
Coal fired power stations 21-2w, 391-2w
Developing countries 128w
Exhaust emissions 423w
Fiddler's Ferry power station 22w
Ozone layer 317-8w
Pollution monitoring 776w
Refrigeration 636-7w
Waste disposal 317w, 322-3w, 444w

Air routes
Licensing 401w
Malta 401w
Manchester Airport 9

Air safety
9-10
Aircrew 287w
Civil Aviation Authority (16:03:89) 629-36
Radar 287w

Air traffic
RAF Sculthorpe 759w

Air traffic control
Computer privacy 204-5w

Air transport
Armed forces 509w
EC action 9
Food hygiene 163w

Air travel
Civil servants' visits abroad 595-6w

Aircraft noise
Military aircraft 617-8w

Aircrew
Air safety 287w

Airlines
109w
Food standards 520

Airmisses
Hang gliding 616w
Harrier aircraft 616-7w

Airmisses—continued
Military aircraft 616w

Airport security
112w

Airports
Transport of radioactive materials 596w

Alcoholic drinks
Scotland 545w

Alcoholism
Wales 696w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Questions
Agriculture, GATT 349w

Al-Fayed, Mohammed
Banking Act 1987 543w

***Alison, Rt Hon Michael**, Second Church Estates Commissioner*
Questions
Church buildings, St Leonard's Church Swithland 16
Church Commissioners 16
Church Commissioners, Offices 15
Ministers of religion, Easter 15

Allason, Mr Rupert
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 974-5
Questions
NHS Review 896

Allen, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
War widows' pensions (13:03:89) 38
Questions
Arts sponsorship, Nottingham 227w
Bees 339w
Bicycles, Exports 409-10
Budget, Nottingham 585w
Civil service agencies 48w
Civil Service College 302w
Civil Service College, Members 227w
Coal mining, Redundancy 126w
Community charge 780w
Community charge, Nottingham 319w
Company liquidations, Clothing industry 61w
Courts, Administrative delays 360w
Cruelty to children, Research 384w
Cruelty to children, Sexual offences 574w
Defective housing, Nottingham 209w
Exhaust emission controls 399w
Exhaust emission controls, EC action 320w
Exhaust emissions, Air pollution control 423w
Export promotion 404
Health hazards, Exhaust emissions 667w
Magistrates, Nottingham 172w
Minimum wage, East Midlands 280
Procedure Select Committee, House of Commons debates 18
Public Accounts Commission 16-7
Research assistants, House of Commons passes 457w
Social workers' training, Mental health 387w, 667w, 764-5w

Alternatives to prison
296-7w
Mentally disturbed offenders 408w

Alton, Mr David
Debates etc.
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 654-8
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Homicide (21:03:89) 924-5
Questions
Bird's Eye, Factory closures 286
Cancer, Stomach 236w
Down's syndrome, Babies 573w
Inland waterways, Water pollution 641w

Aluminium
Water pollution 214w

Alzheimer's disease
582w
Community charge 282

"Am I Entitled?"
675-6w

Ambulance services
Railway accidents 667-8w
Regional health authorities 155-6w

Amersham International
Radioactive wastes 777w

Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 768-70
Questions
Business statements 544-5

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc.
British Nationality (Honorary Citizenship) Bill, 1R (22:03:89) 1101-3
Questions
Abortion, Basildon 65w
Abortion, Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority 162w
British Shipbuilders, External financing limits 365-6w
Exports 399-400
Rate support grants, Basildon District Council 640w
Tree planting, Government assistance 88w
Unemployment, Basildon 191w

Ammunition
Forensic science 598w

Amos, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Tourism, Northumberland (15:03:89) 505-10
Questions
Airlines 109w
Housing, Rural areas 642w
National Dock Labour Board, Ports 276
Railway travel 5
Tobacco, Average earnings 61-2w
Tobacco advertising, Duty free shops 70w

Amusement machines
Children (15:03:89) 413

Amusement Machines (Protection of Children) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
1R (15:03:89) 413

Anaesthetics
Abortion 560w
Medical equipment 387-9w

Ancient & Historical Monuments & Constructions of England Royal Commission
368-9w

Ancient monuments
Historic buildings 368-9w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Questions
Housing, Wales 715-6

Anglian Water Authority
Water pollution 423-4w, 508-9w

Anglo Dutch Limited
Company investigations 104w
Company liquidations 103-4w
Licensing 104w
Shareholders 104w

Angola
Peace negotiations 24-5w

Animal breeding
Birds 429w
Water pollution 88w

Animal diseases
Agricultural research 467w
Slaughterhouses 466w

Animal experiments
363w
Cosmetics industry (23:03:89) 1255-61

Animal experiments—continued
Dogs 363w
Statistics 10w

Animal feed
348w
Animal products 85w
Cattle 614w
Composition labelling 614w
Pigs 85w
Salmonella 83w, 719w
Sheep meat 86w

Animal husbandry
Agricultural research 514-5w
Experimental farms 722w

Animal products
Animal feed 85w
Imports 614w

Animal welfare
Medical research 16w
Slaughterhouses 717w
Veterinary services 341w

Annual reports
Hong Kong 26w

Antarctic
Oil pollution 144w

Apartheid
South Africa 284

Appeals
Criminal injuries compensation 3-4w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 3-5w

Appledore Ferguson
Departmental correspondence 377w

Archaeological sites
Planning permission 642-3w

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Questions
Child minding, Child workers 902-3
Child workers, Prosecutions 199w

Architectural conservation
Property development 325w

Arctic terns
Shetland 752-3w

Arfon-Dwyfor Community Health Council
503w

Argentina
Condor 2 missiles 381w
Guided weapons 142-3w

"Ark Manifesto"
45w

Arkwright colliery
Methane (13:03:89) 42-5

Armed forces
Advertising 52w
Air transport 509w
Peace movement 759w
Public relations 54w
Statistics 52-3w

Armed forces deployment
Cyprus 905-6
Falkland Islands 510w
Lindholme 618w
Members' visits abroad 620w
Oman 476w
RAF Greenham Common 757-8w
Scotland 759w
South Korea 476w
Western Europe 620w

Armed forces discharges
Medical treatments 275w
Police 363w
Prison staff 363w

Armed forces pay
Equal pay 245w

Armed forces recruitment
Army 276w

Armed forces strength
Statistics 52-3w
Territorial Army 618-9w

Armed forces training
Helicopters 244w
Low flying 242-3w

Arms control negotiations
Nuclear disarmament 513w

Arms exports
Export credit guarantees 711w

Arms trade
Export controls 129w
Iran 129w

Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Debates etc.
Roads (13:03:89) 207
Special education, Educational health services (13:03:89) 219-21
Questions
British Rail 108w
Childbirth, Young people 768-9w
Children, Supplementary benefits 788w
Curriculum, Teacher training 163w, 165w
Curriculum, Teachers 163-4w
Educational publications, Cost per pupil 685-6w
Income support, Pregnant women 786w
Minimum wage, Fines 181-3w
Nursery schools, Capital investment 683w
Teacher training, Pre-school education 683w

Army
Armed forces recruitment 276w

Army bases
Security 760w
Security industry 621w

Arnold, Mr Jacques
Questions
Water pollution, Pollution control 645w

Arrests
Drunkenness 597w
Football 298w, 809w
Prevention of Terrorism Acts 363-4w
Wimbledon Football Club 298w

Arson
Second homes 716-7
Wales 716-8

Art exhibitions
Museum of Mankind 378w

Art works
Objects in lieu of tax 701w

Artillery
Testing 620w

Arts
Consolidated Fund debates (13:03:89) 78-118
East Midlands 463w
Greater London 362-3w, 462-3w
Marketing 511-2w
North West region 462w
Northern region 461-2w
West Midlands 463w
Yorkshire & Humberside 461w

Arts finance
227-8w

Arts grants
Southern Arts Association 726
Welsh Arts Council 727

Arts sponsorship
Buildings 464w
Nottingham 227w

Arts Support Review Group
726

Arundel bypass
Road construction 707w

Asbestos
Pipelines 372w
Water supply 372w

Ashby, Mr David
Debates etc.
Legal Aid & Legal Advice & Assistance Regulations 1989 (22:03:89) 1215, 1222-4
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 970, 971, 989, 1002-4
Questions
Double taxation, Netherlands Antilles 301w
Employment, East Midlands 191-2w
Water supply industry, Shareholders 240-1w

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 737, 748, 756-61
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1094
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 914
Baton rounds, Police firearms 137w
Nature reserves 207-8w
Security industry 597w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 529

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Questions
Cochlear implants, Medical treatments 70w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 3-4w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Administrative delays 2w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Appeals 3-5w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Domestic violence 2-4w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Expenditure 3-4w
Deaf, Blind 237w
Deaf, Special education 219w
Dept of Health, Environmental health officers 767w
Geriatric patients, Drug side effects 157-8w
Handicapped workers 253w
Handicapped workers, Unemployment 200-1w
Hearing Aid Council 405
Horticulture, Research finance 345w
Prisons, Fires 806w
Prisons, Food hygiene 806-7w
Prisons, Food poisoning 807w
Prosthetics 581w
Regional health authorities, Finance 69w
Self-governing hospitals, Pay 899
Supra-regional services, NHS finance 69-70w
Vaccination, Babies 767w
Vaccine damaged children, Compensation 770-2w
Vaccine damaged children, Whooping cough 770w

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Questions
Coal fired power stations, West Burton 21w
Minimum wage, East Midlands 179-80w

Assisted places scheme
Schools 554w
Scotland 554w

Associated British Ports (Hull) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (16:03:89) 515, (22:03:89) 1071

Associated British [illegible]s (No 2) Bill 1987/88
Debates etc.
3R order read (15:03:89) 393, (16:03:89) 515, (22:03:89) 1071

Association of British Travel Agents
Holidays 793w

Association of Chief Police Officers
812w

Association of County Councils
631w, 643w

Association of District Councils
109w

Assured tenancies
95w

***Atkins, Mr Robert**, Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry*
Questions
Aerospace industry, North West region 271w
Average earnings, North West region 677w
Balance of trade 395-6
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 394-5
Bicycles, Exports 409-10
Bicycles, Imports 396
British Telecom, Pricing 430w
Business development initiative, Expenditure 435-8w
Cars, Batteries 258w
Cellular phones, Northern Ireland 228w
Cellular phones, Prosecutions 601-2w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 128w
Commercial agents, EC law 270w
Confederation of British Industry 263w
Consumer credit, Credit licensing 271w
EC grants & loans 263w
EC grants & loans, Northumberland 263w
EC internal trade, Economic regions 260w
EC internal trade, Manufacturing industries 260w
Employment opportunities, Foreign investment in UK 264w
European Regional Development Fund 128-9w
European Regional Development Fund, Stockport 493w, 541w
Film industry 271w
Foreign companies in UK, North West region 602w
Foreign investment in UK 602w
Foreign investment in UK, Employment opportunities 408
Foreign investment in UK, North West region 602w
Gas supply industry, Competition 271-2w
Gas supply industry, Industrial energy consumption 272w
Gas tariffs, Industrial energy prices 272-4w
Gas tariffs, Industry 130w
Industrial investment 261-2w
Industrial investment, Manufacturing industries 282w, 710-2w
Industry, Inflation 127-8w
Industry, Interest rates 264w
"Infrastructure for Tomorrow" 268w
Iron & steel industry, Gas tariffs 130w
Manufacturing industries, Balance of trade 265w, 395-6
Manufacturing industries, EC grants & loans 403-4
Manufacturing industries, Interest rates 263-4w
Manufacturing industries, North West region 430w
Manufacturing industries, OECD countries 267w, 410
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 263w, 403
MBP Russell Holdings, Insolvency 269w
National income, North West region 430-1w
Office of Telecommunications 712-3w
Radio broadcasting licences, Greater London 129w
Radio frequencies, Cellular phones 262w
Regional aid 267-8w
Regional development grants, Expenditure 432-4w
Regional enterprise grants, Expenditure 433-6w
Regional selective assistance 266w

***Atkins, Mr Robert**—continued*
Regional selective assistance, Expenditure 433-4w, 436w
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Government assistance to industry 270w
Satellite broadcasting, Television reception 129w
Telecommunications technology 258w
Textile industry 398-9
Textile industry, Balance of trade 271w
Textile industry, Education & industry 396-7
Textile industry, Imports 396-9
Textile industry, Redundancy 399
Trade competitiveness 268w
UK companies abroad, EC countries 98w

Atkinson, Mr David
Questions
Income support, Dependants 787w
Information technology, Northern Ireland Office 137-8w

Atomic Energy Research Establishment
679w
Nuclear reactors 558-9w

Atomic Weapons Research Establishment
754w

Attachment of earnings
Community charge 780-1w

Attendance allowance
Administrative delays 786w
Northern Ireland 730w
Social security claims 306-8w
Terminal care 730w

Attorney-General
European Communities 216w

Audiology technicians
157w

Audit
Defence research establishments 760w
Fees & charges 17

Automatic ticketing systems
Computer privacy 373w
London Underground 111w
Repairs & maintenance 373w

Automatic train protection
Railway safety 119w

Average earnings
Dock labour scheme 194w
North West region 415w, 677w
Tobacco 61-2w

Avon County Council
279

AWE Aldermaston
760w
Television programmes 753w

AWE Burghfield
760w

AWRE
see Atomic Weapons Research Establishment

Ayrshire
Employment training 252w

Babies
Down's syndrome 573w
Vaccination 767w

Bail hostels
296w, 361w

Bail information schemes
296w

***Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth**, Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 862-8

***Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth**—continued*
Questions
British Antarctic Survey, Oceanographic vessels 608w
English education, Curriculum 359-60w
Inquiries 18w
School violence 16-8w
"Standards in Education, 1987/88" 219w, 501-2w

Baker, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1134, 1174-5, 1209
Questions
Business statements 539-40
Common land 774w
Dock labour scheme, Average earnings 194w
Family doctors, Pharmacists 765w
MBP Russell Holdings, Insolvency 269w
Planning appeals, Costs 320w
Poultry, Salmonella 352w
Traffic lights, Eye disorders 218w
Vacant land, Land acquisition 629w
Water pollution, Nitrates 615w

Balance of payments
Exports 400-1

Balance of trade
246-7w, 395-6
EC internal trade 267w
Electronic equipment 259w
Information technology 267w
Manufactured goods 246w, 394-5
Manufacturing industries 265w, 395-6
OECD countries 267w
Oil exports 99w
Oil industry 401-2
Standardisation 262w
Textile industry 271w
UK trade with EC 259w

Baldry, Mr Tony
Questions
Art works, Objects in lieu of tax 701w
British Theatre Association, Libraries 462w
Exports, Iron & steel industry 400
Family doctors, Budgeting 768w
Football, Identity cards 637w
Hospitals, Computers in National Health Service 769w
M40, Road construction 13, 706w
Radioactive waste disposal 507-8w
Self-governing hospitals, Medical education 769w
Training & enterprise councils 203-4w

Bamber, Jeremy
804-5w

Bananas
Imports 269w

Bank of England
703w

Banking Act 1987
Questions
Al-Fayed, Mohammed 543w

Banks, Mr Robert
Questions
Environment protection 89w
Hotels 56w
National debt 702w
Restaurants 59w
Road traffic, North Yorkshire 205w
Veterinary services, Government grants 166w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Arts (13:03:89) 79, 81, 89, 91, 93-8, 99, 104
Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace) Bill 1988/89, 2R (14:03:89) 377-82, 384, 385
Oral question time intervention (22:03:89) 1083
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1039, 1050-2, 1055

Banks, Mr Tony*—*continued
Questions
Arctic terns, Shetland 752-3w
Arts, Greater London 462-3w
Birds, Shetland 753w
Bridge programme, Civil servants' secondment 729
Business statements 542
Eggs, Chocolate 522
Food hygiene 343w
Ivory, Import controls 237w
London Underground, Automatic ticketing systems 111w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial investment 402
Opera, Festivals & special occasions 724
Rates & rating, City of Westminster 1087
Roads, South East region 8
Westminster Hall 19-20

BAOR
Tractors 619w

Bar Council
Legal profession 907-8

Barlow Clowes
Compensation 260-1w

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Environment protection, Derbyshire (13:03:89) 232-7, 239, 240, 242, 243, 245
Local government pensions, Derbyshire County Council (17:03:89) 706-7
Questions
Business statements 544
Hazardous wastes 633w
Hospital waiting lists, Trent Regional Health Authority 326w
Income support, Residential care 30w
Information technology, Trade & Industry Select Committee 97w
Minimum wage, Derbyshire 255w
Water supply, Nitrates 241-2

Barnes, Mrs Rosie
Questions
Birds, Animal breeding 429w
Deafness, Departmental publications 70w
Hearing Aid Council 99w
Hearing aids 70w
Hearing aids, NHS 70w
Hearing aids, Private health services 259w

Barnsley
Community charge 626-7w

Barristers
Criminal proceedings 692w

Barton-le-Clay
Radioactive waste disposal 505w
Radioactive wastes 777w

Basildon
399-400
Abortion 65w
Unemployment 191w

Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority
Abortion 162w

Basildon District Council
Rate support grants 640w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 870
Questions
Legal profession 285-6
Loan guarantee scheme 279

Baton rounds
Police firearms 137w

Batteries
Cars 258w

Battle, Mr John
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 431, 458-63
Questions
Arts, Yorkshire & Humberside 461w

Battle, Mr John*—*continued
Attendance allowance, Social security claims 306-8w
Council housing, Press advertising 323w
Dental charges 337w
Ethiopia, Meningitis 302w
Family benefits, Expenditure 790-2w
Family credit, Child benefit 308w
Housing benefits, Private rented housing 176w
Mines, Costs 762w
Minimum wage, Wales 182-3w
South Africa, Overseas aid 311-2w
Sudan 312w
Supplementary benefits, Women 308w

BBC
292w

BCIA
see British Clothing Industry Association

BDH
see British Drug House

Beaches
Scotland 741w
Sea pollution 741w, 1082-4
Water pollution 639w

Beaumont-Dark, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 1015

Beazer's Limited
206w

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 548-9
Questions
National insurance benefits 786-7w
Social Fund 308-9w

Bed & breakfast accommodation
Homelessness 1075-6
Lambeth 544w
Local government expenditure 545w
Wales 137w

Bedford Prison
410w

Beef
Infant foods 346w

Bees
339w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Homicide (21:03:89) 922
Questions
Cellular phones, Northern Ireland 228w
Cellular phones, Prosecutions 601-2w
Marginal land, Northern Ireland 11w
Marginal land, Tribunals 11w
Public Record Office, Fees & charges 139w
Skill shortages, South East region 274-5
Student grants, Community charge 529w
Teachers' pensions, Northern Ireland 731w
Veterinary medicine, Medical students 11-2w

Beith, Mr A J
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 432, 442-7
Tourism, Northumberland (15:03:89) 507
Questions
EC grants & loans, Northumberland 263w
Fisheries, North East region 343-4w
VAT, Unpaid taxes 147w

Belfast
731w

Belgium
Fishing vessels 471w
Low flying 755w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989 (14:03:89) 332-5
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 349

Bell, Mr Stuart*—*continued
Questions
Business statements 539
"Infrastructure for Tomorrow" 268w
Minimum wage, Northern region 181w

Bellgrove
Railway accidents 591w

Bellgrove Rail Accident Inquiry
591w

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1099
Questions
Employment, Norfolk 190w

Benin
Waste disposal 505w

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc.
Arkwright colliery, Methane (13:03:89) 44
Merchant Shipping Act 1988, European Court of Justice (13:03:89) 55, 56-8
Questions
Merchant Shipping Act 1988 6-7

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc.
British Railways Bill 1988/89, 2R (14:03:89) 362-4, 374
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 466, 473-7, 498
Trident (13:03:89) 248-51, 252, 257, 258-9
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1110-3, 1118, 1119
Questions
Cars, Batteries 258w
Challenger tanks, Per capita costs 616w
Channel tunnel, North West region 107w
Channel tunnel, Railway freight transport 3
European Regional Development Fund, Stockport 493w, 541w
Family doctors, Budgeting 894-5
Hedges & ditches 347-8w
Hospitals, Fund raising 236w
Magistrates, Recruitment 14
Minimum wage 181w
Official engagements 514w
Property development, Stockport 1074
Public footpaths 625w
Radiation 210-1w
Radiation, Health hazards 229w
Radio engineering, Glengarry forest 378-9w, 761w
Radio engineering, Rediffusion Radio Systems 379w
Radio engineering, Submarines 379-81w
Radio waves, Health hazards 378w
Sea King helicopters, Per capita costs 616w

Bennett, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 863
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1044, 1050, 1059
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1141
Questions
Abortion Act 1967 560w
Arson, Wales 717
Foreign investment in UK 542w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 438-9w
Local government services, Competition 640w

Benyon, Mr W
Debates etc.
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Homicide (21:03:89) 925

Benzodiazepines
43w
Drug abuse 42-3w, 338w, 581w
Drug industry 390-1w
Prescriptions 338w, 391w
Wales 42-3w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Debates etc.
Legal Aid & Legal Advice & Assistance Regulations 1989 (22:03:89) 1216, 1229-30, 1231
Questions
Advisory Board for the Research Councils, Biology 291w
Advisory Board for the Research Councils, Public appointments 290-1w
Agricultural products, Labelling 392w
Air pollution, Methane 319w
Air safety, Aircrew 287w
Air safety, Radar 287w
Alternatives to prison 296-7w
Animal experiments, Statistics 10w
Animal feed, Pigs 85w
Army, Armed forces recruitment 276w
Bail hostels 296w
Bail information schemes 296w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy working party 80w
Broadcasting Standards Council, Codes of practice 10w
Coal fired power stations, Air pollution control 21-2w
Erythropoietin, Drug abuse 10w
Fiddler's Ferry power station, Air pollution control 22w
Food industry, Tropical products 85w
Heart diseases, Screening 338w
Microelectronics industry, Research finance 105w
North West Water Authority, Sewage 424w
Oils & fats, Tropical products 351-2w
Prison escapes 413w
"Punishment Custody & the Community" 364w
Remand in custody, Administrative delays 297w
Remand in custody, Offenders 297-8w
Remand in custody, Private sector 297-8w
Rivers, Flood control 85-6w
Satellite broadcasting, Television reception 129w
Science & technology, Japan 104-5w
Shipping, Fees & charges 287w
Shipping safety, Information 286w
Shipping safety, Manpower 287w
Television advertising, Commercial television 297-8w
Transport, Research 121w
Transport & Road Research Laboratory, USA 375w
Transportation Unit, Public appointments 121w
Waste disposal, Air pollution control 322-3w

Bettaney, Michael
Solitary confinement 411w

Betting & gaming duties
Horse racing 600-1w

Bevan, Mr David Gilroy
Questions
Director General of Water Services, Offices 781-2w
Tourism, Capital investment 197w
Vacant land, Government departments 635w

Bicycles
East Midlands 409-10
Exports 409-10
Imports 396

Bidwell, Mr Sydney
Questions
Industrial safety, Sikhs 802w
Minimum wage, Greater London 178-9w
Urban development corporations, Land acquisition 636w

Biffen, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 455-8
Questions
Hospital closures, Salop 893

Billingham
801-2w

Biology
Advisory Board for the Research Councils 291w

Birds
Animal breeding 429w
Imports 518
Military aircraft 754w
Poisoning 778w
Shetland 753w

Bird's Eye
Factory closures (13:03:89) 34, 283, 286
Standing Order No 20 applications (13:03:89) 34

Birmingham
Unemployment 189-90w

Birmingham City Council (No 2) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (16:03:89) 515, (22:03:89) 1071

Birmingham Prison
295-6w

BL
see British Library
see Rover Group

Black Country Development Corporation
638w

Blackburn, Dr John G
Debates etc.
Arts (13:03:89) 98-100
Questions
Commercial agents, EC law 270w
Doctors, Manpower 891
Film industry 271w

Blackwall tunnel
Repairs & maintenance 119w
Road traffic 117-9w
Road traffic control 7w

Blair, Mr Tony
Questions
Central Electricity Generating Board, Capital investment 391w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Research 129w

Blind
Deaf 237w
Special education 219w

Blood sports
New Forest 515w, 550w

Blood tests
Drinking & driving 364-5w

Blunkett, Mr David
Questions
Alzheimer's disease 582w
Civil servants' political activities, Minister for the Civil Service 227w
Community charge, Administrative costs 627-8w
Community charge, Attachment of earnings 780-1w
Community charge, EC action 628w
Community charge, Educationally subnormal 628w
Community charge, Ethnic minorities 318-9w
Community charge, Local authority powers 628w
Community charge, Orders & regulations 90w
Community charge rebates, Community charge 90w
Community charge rebates, Hospital patients 90w
Community charges register 90-1w
Consumer credit, Credit licensing 271w
County Hall, Property development 782w
Government grants to local authorities 90w
House prices 95w

Blunkett, Mr David—continued
Social security benefits, Community charge 675w
Tax yields, Tax rates & bands 62w
VAT, Community charge 586w

BM
see British Museum

BMA
see British Medical Association

BNFL
see British Nuclear Fuels

Board of Inland Revenue
see Inland Revenue

Boards of trustees
Public appointments 51w

Boateng, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1171, 1172, 1196-7, 1200-1, 1202, 1208-10
Questions
Health services, Ethnic minorities 489w

Boating
Accidents 212w

Boats
Swimming 241w

Body, Sir Richard
Questions
Agricultural products, Import duties 353w
Common farm prices 354w
Consumer protection, European Commission 285w
GATT, EC action 258-9w
Salmonella, Environmental health 153w
Slaughterhouses, Animal welfare 717w

Body belts
Prisoners 410-1w

Bomb victims
Palestine Liberation Organisation 143w

Bombings
Bristol University 363-4w

Books
Libraries 725
Thatcher, Margaret 126w

Bordes, Pamella
694w
Government information services 692w
House of Commons divisions 457w
House of Commons passes 693-4w
Official cars 509w

Boswell, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Compulsory purchase, Compensation (13:03:89) 69-70
Education (13:03:89) 64
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 971, 979, 987, 995, 1027-8, (22:03:89) 1143, 1194-6, 1200
Questions
Agricultural research, Research finance 516-7w
Agricultural Training Board 475w
Common agricultural policy 348w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Statistics 393w
Eggs, Salmonella 516w
Farm woodland scheme, Administrative delays 467w
Food hygiene, Food labelling 517
Local plans, Planning permission 643-4w

Bottomley, Mr Peter, Under-Secretary of State for Transport
Debates etc.
Air accidents, Manchester Airport (16:03:89) 632-6
Explosions, Ministerial statements (23:03:89) 1266-74
Roads (13:03:89) 201-9
Questions
A36, Contracts 403w

***Bottomley, Mr Peter**—continued*
Advertising, Dept of Transport 115w
Air accidents, Manchester Airport 122w
Air routes, Licensing 401w
Air routes, Malta 401w
Air safety, Aircrew 287w
Air safety, Radar 287w
Air travel, Civil servants' visits abroad 595-6w
Airlines 109w
Airport security 112w
Arundel bypass, Road construction 707w
Blackwall tunnel, Repairs & maintenance 119w
Blackwall tunnel, Road traffic 117-9w
Britannia bridge, Road traffic control 399w
Burscough-Rufford bypass 112w
Bus lanes 400w
Cellular phones, Road safety 705w
Computer privacy, Air traffic control 204-5w
Computer privacy, Dept of Transport 217w
Computer privacy, Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre 114w
Consumer organisations, Dept of Transport 113-4w
Driving, Eyesight 205-6w
Driving, Road safety 13-4
Driving instruction 531w
Driving instruction, Harmonisation of standards 531w
Driving licences, Harmonisation of legislation 374w
Driving tests, Drinking & driving 530w
Driving tests, Fees & charges 530w
Driving tests, Harmonisation of standards 530-1w
European Communities, Dept of Transport 708w
Exhaust emission controls 399w
Exhaust emission controls, Diesel vehicles 650-1w
Lead free petrol 216w
London airports 111w
M1, Road traffic 707w
M1, Traffic lights 218w
M4, Road works 216-7w
M11, Road construction 206w
M40 110w
M40, Road construction 13, 706w
Management consultants, Dept of Transport 117w
Microlight aircraft, Legislation 707w
Motor vehicle registration, Computers 217w
Motor vehicles, Computer privacy 595w
Motor vehicles, Fraud 288w
Motoring 205w
Motorway service areas 375w
Motorways, Business travel 110-1w
Motorways, Road accidents 595w
Motorways, Road safety 6
Motorways, Road works 5-6
Parachuting, Safety measures 286w
Parking, Pedestrian areas 594w
Privatisation, Dept of Transport 118w
Public relations, Dept of Transport 115-6w
Road accidents, Death 592w
Road construction, Competition 589-90w
Road construction, Engineers 707-8w
Road construction, VAT 596w
Road safety, Greater London 11
Road tax, Sub post offices 402w
Road traffic, City of Westminster 401w
Road traffic, Hampshire 207w
Road traffic, North Yorkshire 205w
Road works 109w
Road works, Elveden 207w, 704w
Road works, Government grants 709-10w
Roads, Greater London 10-2
Roads, Hampshire 114w
Select Committees, Dept of Transport 113w
Severn bridge, Fees & charges 595w
Severn bridge, Road accidents 537w
Statistics, Dept of Transport 116-7w
Traffic lights, Eye disorders 218w
Traffic noise, Sound insulation 402-3w
Trailers 111w

***Bottomley, Mr Peter**—continued*
Transport, Research 121w
Transport & Road Research Laboratory, USA 375w
Transport of hazardous materials, Road accidents 589w, 591w
Transport of hazardous materials, Road safety 399-400w
Transport of hazardous materials, Weather 531-2w
Transport of radioactive materials, Air freight transport 596w
Transport of radioactive materials, Doncaster 706w
Transport of radioactive materials, EC action 593w
Transport of radioactive materials, International Atomic Energy Agency 592w
Transport of radioactive materials, Licensing 591w
Transport of radioactive materials, Nuclear safety 592w
Transport of radioactive materials, Plutonium 596-7w, 709w
Transport of radioactive materials, Railway accidents 592-3w
Transport of radioactive materials, Royal Naval College 593w
Transport supplementary grants, West Sussex County Council 112w
Transportation Unit, Public appointments 121w

***Bottomley, Mrs Virginia**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment*
Debates etc.
Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace) Bill 1988/89, 2R (14:03:89) 383
Environment protection, Derbyshire (13:03:89) 237-46, 247
Local government pensions, Derbyshire County Council (17:03:89) 708-11
Voluntary organisations, Bradford (14:03:89) 390-2
Questions
1, Poultry, Listed buildings 779w
Air pollution, Carbon monoxide 321w
Air pollution, Methane 319w
Air pollution, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 209w
Air pollution control, Pollution monitoring 776w
Archaeological sites, Planning permission 642-3w
Association of County Councils 643w
Birds, Animal breeding 429w
British Food & Farming Year 1989, Festivals & special occasions 93w
Brundtland Report 210w
Cancer, Children 639w
Capper Pass, Radioactivity 94w, 211w
Capper Pass, Waste disposal 507w
Chlorofluorocarbons 212w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Aerosols 426w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 630-1w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Exports 426w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Production 630w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Refrigeration 317w, 426w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Research 317w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Waste disposal 317w
Common land 774w
Community councils, Rural areas 321w
Contracts, Local labour 779-80w
Detergents, Phosphates 319w
Dog registration scheme 638w
"Environment in Trust" 631w
Environment protection, International conferences 777w
Environmental policy, Pollution control 645-6w
Exhaust emission controls, EC action 320w
Exhaust emissions, Air pollution control 423w
Forestry, Caithness 38-9w
Forests, Countryside Commission 650w

***Bottomley, Mrs Virginia**—continued*
Globe Theatre, Southwark 421w
Hazardous wastes 633w
Hazardous wastes, Imports 774w
Hazardous wastes, International conferences 209-10w
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 633w
Hinkley Point C, Public inquiries 777w
Historic buildings, Ancient monuments 368-9w
Ivory, Import controls 237w
Lead free petrol 631-2w
Lead free petrol, Publicity 87w
Listed buildings, Church buildings 508w
Litter, Local authorities 319w
Local government property, Property transfer 372w
Local government staff, Political activities 638w
Magpies 646-7w
National parks, Environment protection 507w
National Pet Week 506w
Nature conservation 629w
Nature reserves 207-8w
Nuclear accidents, Gravelines 368w
Ozone layer, Air pollution control 317-8w
Ozone layer, International conferences 426w, 638-9w
Ozone layer, Treaties 92-3w
Parish councils, Local government staff 371w
Pipelines, Waveney District Council 92w
Pollution control 637w
Public footpaths 625w
Radiation 210-1w
Radioactive waste disposal, Barton-le-Clay 505w
Radioactive wastes, Amersham International 777w
Radioactive wastes, Barton-le-Clay 777w
Rain forests, Climate 369-70w, 648w
Refrigeration, Air pollution control 636-7w
Seal products, Imports 776w
Set-aside schemes, Government assistance 429w
Sites of special scientific interest, Severn-Trent Water Authority 94w
Sites of special scientific interest, Tree planting 505-6w
Stonehenge 632w
Supermarkets, Equipment 506-7w
Tree planting, Government assistance 88w
Turtles, Import controls 322w
Waste disposal, Air pollution control 322-3w
Waste disposal, Benin 505w

Boundary Commission for Scotland
Public appointments 749w

Bournemouth
Water charges 90-5

Bovine somatotropin
Agricultural research 472w
Licensing 472w, 516, 725-6w
Milk 515
Netherlands 472-3w
Veterinary Products Committee 339w

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
(13:03:89) 48-9, 80w, 347w, 466-71w, 516w, 612-4w, 720w
Agricultural research 80w
Cattle 525-6
Compensation 347w
Health hazards 515w

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Working Party
80w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Questions
Broadcasting, Community relations 294w
Concessionary television licences 293w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 789w
Long stay patients, Elderly 562w
Pensions, Canada 393w

Bowden, Mr Andrew—*continued*
Public service messages, Dept of Education & Science 356w
Public service messages, Dept of Employment 253w
Public service messages, Dept of Energy 256-7w
Public service messages, Dept of Health 385w
Public service messages, Dept of Social Security 306w
Public service messages, Dept of the Environment 370w
Severe weather payments, Capital rules 789w

Bowden, Mr Gerald
Debates etc.
British Railways Bill 1988/89, 2R (14:03:89) 372-3

Bowis, Mr John
Debates etc.
Arts (13:03:89) 78-86, 88, 95
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 554
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 692-4
Questions
Arts, Marketing 511-2w
Cash limits, Government departments 456w
Central London Rail Study 12
Computer privacy, NATO 52w
Legal aid, Legal costs 39-40w
Mortgage relief, British residents abroad 455-7w
Passive smoking, Health & Safety Executive 367-8w
Primary health care, District health authorities 569w
Puppets 463w
Rates & rating, Wandsworth 1087
School transport, Handicapped 165-6w
Tenants' incentive scheme 641w
Under-fives Education Inquiry 502w
Youth employment 186-7w

Boyes, Mr Roland
Debates etc.
Trident (13:03:89) 253-6, 259
Questions
Arts, Northern region 461-2w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 347w
Minimum wage 178-9w

BR
see British Rail

Bradford
Inner cities initiative 714w
Urban programme 428w
Voluntary organisations 428w
Voluntary work (14:03:89) 386-92

Bradford Health Authority
NHS finance 901

Bradley, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1156-9
Questions
Arts, North West region 462w
Immigrant detainees, Latchmere House 812w
Minimum wage, North West region 183-4w
National Consumer Council 349w
Nursery schools, School population 686-7w
Railway network, North West region 105w

Bradwell power station
Nuclear safety 257w

Brandon-Bravo, Mr Martin M
Debates etc.
Council tenants, Social unrest (13:03:89) 140-3, 144, 149
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 998-9
Questions
Bicycles, Imports 396
Railway transport, Rapid transit systems 109w

Brazier, Mr Julian
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 445, 477-80, 481
Questions
Farm woodland scheme 526-7
Local government staff, Political activities 638w
Shipping, Taxation 59-60w

Brazil
Debts 366w
Foreign loans 625-6w
Official visits 215-6w
Rain forests 143w, 513w

Breast cancer
Highland Health Board 447w
Screening 447w

Brent
Housing investment programmes 645w

Brewing industry
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 494-5w

Bridge programme
Civil servants 729
Civil servants' secondment 729

Bridges
Dornoch Firth 748w
Inverness-Wick/Thurso railway 120w, 708-9w

Bridging allowances
Halifax 59w

Bright, Mr Graham
Questions
Corporation tax, Small businesses 60w
Food contamination, Health hazards 570w

Bristol
Jobclubs 252-3w
Tourism 279

Bristol Channel
276w

Bristol City Council
279

Bristol University
Bombings 363-4w

Britannia bridge
Road traffic control 399w

British Aerospace
(23:03:89) 1323-9

British Antarctic Survey
Oceanographic vessels 608w

British Broadcasting Corporation
see BBC

British citizenship
Administrative delays 413w
Wallenberg, Raoul (22:03:89) 1101-3

British Clothing Industry Association
396-8

British Coal
see British Coal Corporation

British Coal Corporation
763w, (22:03:89) 1234

British Drug House
Health & Safety Executive 556-7w
Industrial health & safety 556-7w

British Film Fund Agency
271w

British Film Institute Southbank Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (16:03:89) 515, (22:03:89) 1071

British Food & Farming Year 1989
Festivals & special occasions 7-8w, 82w, 93w

British Gas
127w, 130w, 271-4w

British Gas Corporation
see British Gas

British Invisible Exports Council
406-7

British Island Airways
401w

British Leyland
see Rover Group

British Library
462w

British Medical Association
670-1w
"Working for Patients White Paper" 564w

British merchant fleet
Shipping registration 115w

British Museum
378w

British nationality
Administrative delays 413w

British Nationality (Honorary Citizenship) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
1R (22:03:89) 1101-3

British Nuclear Fuels
209w, 596-7w, 754w, 760w
Defence contracts 382w
Nuclear power stations 559w

British Racing Commission Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (17:03:89) 702

British Rail
2-5, 105-9w, 119w, 287-8w, (14:03:89) 360-74, 373-4w, 529-30w, 704-5w, 708w
Capital investment 110w, 705w
Crime 113w
Government assistance 374w
Privatisation 110w
Transport police 590w

British Railways Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R (14:03:89) 360-74

British Railways Board
239-40w, (14:03:89) 360-74

British residents abroad
Handicap benefits 675w
Mortgage relief 455-7w

British Satellite Broadcasting
Advertising controls 810w

British Shipbuilders
External financing limits 365-6w
Privatisation 284-5w

British Telecom
Pricing 430w

British Textile Confederation
396-8

British Theatre Association
Libraries 462w

British Tourist Authority
197-8w, 253w

British Transport Police
399w, 590w

British United Provident Association
452w

British Veterinary Association
347w, 472w

Broadcasting
Community relations 294w
Deaf 292w

Broadcasting*—*continued
Dept of Education & Science 356w
Dept of Employment 253w
Dept of Energy 256-7w
Dept of Health 385w
Dept of Social Security 306w
Dept of the Environment 370w
Handicapped 292w

Broadcasting controls
Terrorism 538w

"Broadcasting in the 90s White Paper"
253w, 256-7w, 294w, 306w, 356w, 370w, 385w, 539w, 598w, 810-1w

Broadcasting Standards Council
Codes of practice 10w

Broadleaved woodland grant scheme
723w, 747w
Northern Ireland 732w
Wales 700w

Broadleaved woodlands
Northern Ireland 731-2w

Bromley Borough Council
(14:03:89) 375-85

Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R (14:03:89) 375-85

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter, Paymaster General
Questions
Advertising, Treasury 249w
Civil service pensions, Index linking 301w
EC Finance Council 247w
Management consultants, Treasury 383w
Public relations, Treasury 247-8w, 300w
Public service pensions 586w
Statistics, Treasury 249w

Brown, Mr Gordon
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 809-16
Questions
Environmental health, Official secrets 160-2w, 770w
Health insurance, Pensioners 587-8w
Health insurance, Tax allowances 588w
Income tax assessment, Tax rates & bands 588w
London Underground, Crime 113w
Regional aid, Scotland 711-2w
Tax allowances, Health insurance 451-2w
UK 2000 208w

Brown, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Cruelty to children, Public petitions (16:03:89) 628
Questions
Gas supply industry 127w
Gas supply industry, Competition 271-2w
Gas supply industry, Industrial energy consumption 272w
Gas tariffs, Industrial energy prices 127w, 272-4w
Gas tariffs, Industry 130w
Gas tariffs, Iron & steel industry 130w
Gas tariffs, Price controls 127w
Merchant ships, Certification 121-2w
USSR 513w

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1099
Questions
Companies, Capital 265w

Brown, Mr Ron
Questions
Company liquidations 265w
Minimum wage, Scotland 183-4w
Sea pollution, EC law 1082-3

Browne, Mr John
Questions
Self-employed 188w

Bruce, Mr Ian
Questions
Local education authority training grant scheme, Wales 715

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Water charges, Grampian (22:03:89) 1235-8, 1239
Questions
Hazardous materials, Departmental responsibilities 690-1w
Lindane 725w
Ozone layer, International conferences 638-9w
Pesticides, Safety 724w
Transport of hazardous materials, International conferences 690w
Transport of hazardous materials, Sea transport 706w
Transport of hazardous materials, Shipping accidents 705-6w

Brundtland Report
210w

Brunton
Official engagements 125w

BT
see British Telecom

BTA
see British Tourist Authority

Buchan, Mr Norman
Debates etc.
Arts (13:03:89) 96, 101-4, 108
Questions
"Broadcasting in the 90s White Paper" 539w
Cultural relations, Glasgow 725

Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Questions
"Broadcasting in the 90s White Paper" 598w

Buckley, Mr George J
Debates etc.
Transport safety (13:03:89) 119-21
Questions
Food contamination, Food standards 526
Homelessness 641w
Minimum wage, Wales 182-3w

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 753-4
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 563, 591-2, 627

Budget
Nottingham 585w

Budget March 1989
293-316, (14:03:89) 318-38, (20:03:89) 827-50
Economic situation (15:03:89) 417-504
Employment (20:03:89) 736-850
Industry (16:03:89) 557-628

Budgeting
Family doctors 387w, 768w, 894-8
Prescriptions 902
"Working for Patients White Paper" 561-3w

Building land
Vacant land 1073-4

Building repairs
NHS 742w

Building societies
Repossession orders 743w

Buildings
Arts sponsorship 464w

BUPA
see British United Provident Association

Burnley
Museums & galleries 228w

Burrell Art Gallery
Construction costs 665w

Burry estuary
Lug worms 350-1w

Burscough-Rufford bypass
112w

Burt, Mr Alistair
Debates etc.
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1272
Water Bill, Money res (20:03:89) 857-8
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 1000, (22:03:89) 1131, 1153-6
Questions
Abortion, Anaesthetics 560w
Central Council for Education & Training in Social Work 326-7w
Social workers' training, Mental illness 327-8w
Unemployment, Bury 187w

Bury
Unemployment 187w

Bus lanes
400w

Bus services
Complaints 591w
Greater London 286w
Lluesty Hospital 699w
Privatisation 109w
VAT 589w

Buses
City of Westminster 400w

Business development initiative
Expenditure 435-8w

Business motions
(17:03:89) 703

Business questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:03:89) 535

Business sponsorship incentive scheme
463w

Business statements
533, 535-45

Business travel
Motorways 110-1w

Butane gas
Retail trade 268w, 360-1w

Butcher, Mr John, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Education and Science
Debates etc.
Special education, Educational health services (13:03:89) 215-9
Questions
City technology colleges, Capital investment 355-6w
City technology colleges, Government grants 355w
City technology colleges, Lambeth 499w
City technology colleges, Religion 405-6w
City technology colleges, School population 355w
City technology colleges, Southwark 607-8w
City technology colleges, Voluntary schools 290w
Curriculum, Teacher training 163w, 165w
Curriculum, Teachers 163-4w
Deaf, Special education 219w
Educational finance, Capital investment 167-70w
Educational finance, Government grants to local authorities 170w
Educational finance, Local government expenditure 166-8w
Health education, Curriculum 15w

Butcher, Mr John—continued
Pupil-teacher ratios, North West region 681w
Pupil-teacher ratios, Primary education 289w
Pupils, Transient people 501w
School leaving, General Certificate of Secondary Education 688-9w
School leaving certificates, GCE A level 170-2w
School leaving certificates, General Certificate of Secondary Education 172w
School transport, Handicapped 165-6w
Sex education 605-6w
Sex education, Sexual intercourse 497w
Teachers, Educational qualifications 497w
Teachers, Loughborough School London 499w
Teachers, Manpower 404-5w, 497-8w
Teachers, Retirement 225w
Teachers' pensions, Part-time employment 224-5w
Teachers' pensions, Widowers' benefits 499w
Voluntary schools 407w

Butler, Mr Chris
Questions
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Agricultural research 80w
Bus services, Privatisation 109w
Cervical cancer, Screening 567w
Civil service agencies 727-8
Craft industries, Export promotion 464w
Employment, North West region 273
Overseas investment 260w
Personal equity plans 588w
Planning inquiries, Warrington & Runcorn Development Corporation 643w

Butterfill, Mr John
Questions
Crime, Dorset 231w
European Tourism Year 56w
Foreign tourists, Japan 198w
Holidays, Association of British Travel Agents 793w
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 776-7w
Prescriptions, Per capita costs 489-90w
Water charges, Bournemouth 904-5

Buy British
Employment 270

By election writs
Vale of Glamorgan (14:03:89) 269

Bye laws
Military Lands Act 1892 758-9w

Bypasses
A487 713

C130 aircraft
Air force bases 758w

CAA
see Civil Aviation Authority

Cabinet Office
45-6w
Advertising 47w
Civil servants' secondment 729
Public relations 46w

Cabinet war rooms
780w

Caborn, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 478, 483, 486-9
Questions
Manufacturing industries, EC grants & loans 403-4

Caesarean sections
43w

Caithness
Forestry 38-9w, 550-1w

Calder Hall
382w, 559w

Calderdale
Rates & rating 1087

Calderdale Health Authority
Self-governing hospitals 571w

Callaghan, Mr Jim
Questions
Minimum wage, North West region 182-3w

Calling of Members
Speaker's rulings & statements (14:03:89) 344

Cambridge University
16w
Veterinary medicine 12w

Cameroon
Prisoners 144w

Campbell, Mr Menzies
Questions
Armed forces pay, Equal pay 245w
Sports, Injuries 668w
Sports competitors, Scotland 663w
Sports Council 636w

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Questions
Minimum wage, Northern region 179w
University teachers, Pay 165w
University teachers, Pay settlements 164-5w

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc.
Air accidents, Standing Order No 20 applications (20:03:89) 731-4
British Aerospace (23:03:89) 1323-6, 1328, 1329
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 559, 561, 562, 563
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 341, 342
House of Commons passes, Bordes, Pamella (13:03:89) 35-6
Members' staff (15:03:89) 411
Questions
Bordes, Pamella, Government information services 692w
Bordes, Pamella, Official cars 509w
Civil proceedings, Newspaper press 691w
Financial institutions, Stocks & shares 406
Football, Identity cards 637-8w
Health service ancillary staff, Pay settlements 582w
House of Commons divisions, Bordes, Pamella 457w
House of Commons divisions, City of Westminster 694w
House of Commons passes, Bordes, Pamella 693-4w
House of Commons passes, Shaw, David 313w
Interest rates 586w
Local government property, Property transfer 372w
Low pay 280
Middleton, Michael, Security vetting 694w
Plessey, Takeovers 406
Tornado aircraft, Saudi Arabia 756-7w

Canada
Nuclear submarines 689w
Pensions 393w

Canary Wharf
Tourism 650w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Questions
Social Fund, Scotland 395-6w

Cancer
Children 639w
Humberside 639w
Merseyside 236w
Stomach 236w
Veterinary services 16w

Capital
Companies 265w

Capital allowances
Statute law 145w

Capital gains tax
Statute law 145w

Capital investment
British Rail 110w, 705w
Central Electricity Generating Board 391w
City technology colleges 355-6w
Durham Education Authority 355-6w
Education 742w
Educational finance 167-70w
Electricity supply industry 559w
Higher education 222-3w
NHS finance 571w
North Western Regional Health Authority 77w
Nursery schools 683w
Scotland 744-5w
Tourism 197w

Capital rules
Housing benefits 792w
Severe weather payments 789w

Capper pass
Radioactivity 94w, 211w
Waste disposal 507w

Carbon dioxide
Research 212w

Carbon monoxide
Air pollution 321w

Cardiff
4-5
Council housing 716

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation
721-2

Care Homes
Company liquidations 103-4w
Directors 104w

Career structure
Justices' clerks (23:03:89) 1316-22

Carers
Social security benefits 173-4w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Questions
Common sheep meat regime 86w
Common sheep meat regime, Wales 437w
Lead free petrol 631-2w

Carrington, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 600-2
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 641, 682, 686, 694-6, 701
Questions
Dock labour scheme, Manpower 194w
USA 513w

Cars
Batteries 258w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 613-4, 616
EC law, UK membership of EC (13:03:89) 54-6
Merchant Shipping Act 1988, European Court of Justice (13:03:89) 57
United Nations, Peace keeping operations (23:03:89) 1332
Questions
Merchant Shipping Act 1988 7
NHS & private practice, Laboratories 893
USSR 513w

Cash limits
Government departments 456w

Catalytic converters
320w, 399w

Catering
Prisons 815w

Cattle
Animal feed 614w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 525-6

CBI
see Confederation of British Industry

CCETSW
see Central Council for Education & Training in Social Work

CEGB
see Central Electricity Generating Board

Cellular phones
Northern Ireland 228w
Prosecutions 601-2w
Radio frequencies 262w
Road safety 705w

Central Council for Education & Training in Social Work
326-8w, 387w, 764-5w

Central Electricity Generating Board
21-2w, 239-40w
Capital investment 391w
Coal (13:03:89) 41-2

Central London Rail Study
12, 112w

Central Office of Information
Advertising 63w, 147-8w
Civil service manpower 63w, 543w
Contracts for services 300w
Expenditure 543w, 588-9w
Public relations 62w
Statistics 148w

Central Statistical Office
45-6w

Central Veterinary Laboratory
Civil service manpower 722w

Cereals
Intervention stocks 527, 532
Pesticide residues 717-8w

Cerebrovascular diseases
769w

Certification
Merchant ships 121-2w

Cervical cancer
Screening 567w

Cervical Cancer (Testing & Treatment) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (17:03:89) 702

***Chalker, Rt Hon Lynda**, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
Angola, Peace negotiations 24-5w
Brazil, Debts 366w
Cameroon, Prisoners 144w
Chemical weapons, EC action 730w
Council of Ministers 726-7w
South Africa, Chile 448w
Vietnam, EC external relations 448w

Challenger tanks
Per capita costs 616w

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Management consultants 101w

Chancellor of the Exchequer
see Treasury

Channel Four
292w

Channel tunnel
Economic regions 107w
Electric cables 206w
France 108w
Freight transport 3-4, 401w
King's Cross 4
Liverpool 107w

Channel tunnel*—*continued
London boroughs 106w
North West region 2-3, 106-8w
Railway freight transport 3-4
Railway network 2-3, 106-8w, 373-4w
Railway transport 106w, 108w
Scotland 107w
Yorkshire & Humberside 704-5w

Channel Tunnel Act 1987
Questions
374w

***Channon, Rt Hon Paul**, Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 909-17
Air safety 9-10
Air transport, EC action 9
British Rail 108-9w
Central London Rail Study 12
East London river crossing 706-7w
HM Coastguard 7
Kent County Council 112w
London Regional Transport, Public appointments 594-5w
Manchester Airport, Air routes 9
Merchant Shipping Act 1988 6-7
Milford bypass, Noise control 373w
P & O 108w
Railway transport, Rapid transit systems 109w
Railway travel, Commuters 597w
Roads 8
Roads, East Midlands 8
Roads, Per capita costs 7-8
Roads, South East region 8
Shipping, EC action 6

Chapelcross power station
382w, 559w

Chapel-en-le-Frith/Whaley Bridge bypass
707-8w

Charities
301-2w
EC free food scheme 723w
VAT 65w
VAT zero rated goods 63w

Chatham
Social Fund 676w

Cheese
Minerals 347w
Production levies 725w

Chemical weapons
Disclosure of information 754w
EC action 730w
Egypt 726w
Libyan Arab Republic 624w
USSR 245-6w

Chemicals
Sheep dipping 466-7w, 721w

Cheshire
Police discipline 294-5w

Chief Adjudication Officer
175w

Child benefit
Expenditure 226w
Family credit 308w

Child care
Expenditure 55w
Youth training scheme 55w

Child health
Low flying 617w

Child minding
Child workers 902-3
Family credit 173w

Child safety
Southwark 490-1w

Child workers
Child minding 902-3
Prosecutions 199w

Childbirth
Wales 43w
Young people 768-9w

Children
Amusement machines (15:03:89) 413
Cancer 639w
Dental health 577w
Scotland 745w, 785w
Supplementary benefits 785w, 788w
Television 411w

Children in care
485w
Secure units 484-6w

Children's rights
United Nations 448w

Children's Society
575w

Chile
South Africa 448w

China
Chlorofluorocarbons 317-8w
Human rights 144w
Tibet 366w, 621-2w

Chlorofluorocarbons
209w, 212w, 426w, 777w
Aerosols 426w
Air pollution control 128w, 630-1w, 1088
China 317-8w
Employment opportunities 414w
Exports 426w
Production 630w
Refrigeration 317w, 426w, 1088
Research 317w
Scottish Office 139w
Tax incentives 65w
Waste disposal 317w

Chlorofluorocarbons (Control) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (17:03:89) 702

Chocolate
Eggs 522

Cholesterol
338w

***Chope, Mr Christopher**, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc.
Structure plans, Surrey (13:03:89) 263-7
Questions
Architectural conservation, Property development 325w
Bordes, Pamella, Official cars 509w
Cabinet war rooms 780w
Churston Golf Club, Planning appeals 507w
Energy conservation, Government buildings 240w
Gun sports, Land use 211w, 506w
Housing, Rural areas 209w
Land acquisition, Public bodies 239-40w
Local plans, Planning permission 643-4w
Minerals, Quarrying 648-9w
Planning appeals 635-6w
Planning appeals, Costs 320w
Planning authorities, Housing 92w
Rents, VAT 774w
Structure plans, Norfolk 633w
Urban planning, Outer London boroughs 637w
Water pollution, Dept of the Environment 89w

Church buildings
Listed buildings 508w
St Leonard's Church Swithland 16

Church Commissioners
16
Offices 15

Church of England
15

Churchill, Mr Winston
Questions
Cabinet war rooms 780w

Churston Golf Club
Planning appeals 507w

City of London (Various Powers) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (16:03:89) 515, (22:03:89) 1071
Standing Order No 168 (22:03:89) 1071

City of Westminster
Buses 400w
House of Commons divisions 694w
Rates & rating 1087
Road traffic 401w

City Technology College Trust
446w
Government assistance 446w

City technology colleges
446w
Capital investment 355-6w
Government grants 355w
Lambeth 499w
Religion 405-6w
School population 355w
Southwark 607-8w
Voluntary schools 290w

Civil Aviation Authority
109w, 401w
Air safety (16:03:89) 629-36

Civil Legal Aid (Assessment of Resources) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(22:03:89) 1213-34

Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(16:03:89) 556

Civil Legal Aid (Matrimonial Proceedings) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(22:03:89) 1213-34

Civil list
148w

Civil proceedings
Newspaper press 691w

Civil servants
Bridge programme 729
Dept of Social Security local offices 730
European Communities 215-6w, 226w, 242w, 246w, 250w, 254w, 257w, 338w, 496-7w, 708w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 25w
Veterinary Products Committee 723w

Civil servants' political activities
Councillors 227w
Minister for the Civil Service 227w
Ministerial policy advisers 419-20w

Civil servants' secondment
Bridge programme 729
Cabinet Office 729
Office of Gas Supply 763w

Civil servants' visits abroad
Air travel 595-6w

Civil service
Pay incentives 729-30

Civil service agencies
48w, 461w, 713-4w, 727-8
Civil service dispersal 728
Defence research establishments 276-7w

Civil Service College
302w
Environment protection 730
Members 227w

Civil service dispersal
Civil service agencies 728

Civil service manpower
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 721-2w

Civil service manpower*—*continued
Central Office of Information 63w, 543w
Central Vetefinary Laboratory 722w
Dept of Social Security local offices 29-30w, 730
EC internal trade 315w
Forestry Commission 36-7w
Graduates 529w
HM Coastguard 285w
National Engineering Laboratory 496w
Pesticides 724w
Public relations 5w, 14w, 20w, 23w, 30-2w, 36w, 39w, 46w, 48-9w, 57w, 62w, 71-2w, 81w, 89-90w, 100w, 115-6w, 137-8w, 247-8w
Statistics 7-8w, 14-5w, 19w, 22-3w, 32w, 34-5w, 39w, 41-2w, 45-6w, 49-50w, 53w, 74w, 76w, 81w, 91w, 100-1w, 116-7w, 148w, 249w
Veterinary services 346w
Wages Inspectorate 280

Civil service pensions
Index linking 301w

Clapham Junction
158w, 667-8w

***Clark, Mr Alan**, Minister of State for Trade and Industry*
Questions
Arms exports, Export credit guarantees 711w
Drugs, Greece 666w
EC external trade, Tanzania 493-4w
Export credit, Tornado aircraft 713w
Ivory, Imports 495-6w
Oil exports, Balance of trade 99w
Overseas trade 431-2w
Science & technology, Japan 104-5w
Trade barriers, Turkey 105w
UK companies abroad, South Africa 602w
Wood, Import duties 496w
Wood, Imports 268w

Clark, Dr David
Questions
Advisory bodies, Official secrets 86w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Civil service manpower 721-2w
Agricultural research, Government laboratories 352w, 722w
Agricultural research, Near market research 84-5w
Animal feed, Salmonella 83w
Animal feed, Sheep meat 86w
Bovine somatotropin, Licensing 516, 725-6w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 720w
Central Veterinary Laboratory, Civil service manpower 722w
Cheese, Production levies 725w
Cook-chill catering, Listeria monocytogenes 583w
Departmental publications, Vote Office 465w
Eggs, Salmonella 474w
Experimental farms, Animal husbandry 722w
Experimental farms, Horticulture 722w
Farms, Pesticides 797w
Food microbiology, Food inspection 82w
Fruit, Cyanide 470w
Fruit, Food imports 470w
Health & Safety Executive, Pesticides 797w
Livestock, Radioactivity 719w
Meat, Production 468w
Milk, Goats 469-70w
Milk, Production levies 725w
"Nuclear Accidents & the Farmer" 474w
Pesticides, Civil service manpower 724w
Pesticides, Wild animals 723w
Radioactivity, Cumbria 720w
Salmonella, Research 523
Scrapie, Sheep 469w
Sheep, Radioactivity 475w, 719-20w
Sheep dipping, Chemicals 466-7w, 721w
Sheep dipping, Health hazards 721w
Sheep dipping, Water pollution 721w
Slaughterhouses 83w

Clark, Dr David*—*continued
Slaughterhouses, Animal diseases 466w
Slaughterhouses, Food hygiene 466w
Slaughterhouses, Food inspection 83w
Slaughterhouses, Licensing 83w
Slaughterhouses, Veterinary services 473w
Social Fund, Administrative delays 785-6w
Veterinary Products Committee, Civil servants 723w
Veterinary Products Committee, Disclosure of information 722-3w
Veterinary services, Overseas workers 86-7w

Clark, Dr Michael
Questions
Roads, Per capita costs 7-8

Clark, Sir William
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 755, 775-7

Clarke, Kenneth
Members' allowances 621w

***Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth**, Secretary of State for Health*
Questions
Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food, Public appointments 770w
Cook-chill catering, Food contamination 78-9w
Cook-chill catering, Food poisoning 78w
Cook-chill catering, Listeria monocytogenes 79w, 163w, 583w
Cook-chill catering, Retail trade 251w
District health authorities, Local authorities 574w
Family doctors, Budgeting 387w, 768w, 894-5, 897-8
Family doctors, Contracts 565w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 487-9w, 669-70w
Family doctors, Fees & charges 768w
Family doctors, Income 578w
Family doctors, Resignations 578w
Family doctors, Rural areas 568w, 896-7
Food contamination, Health hazards 570w
Food hygiene, Air transport 163w
Food poisoning 162-3w
General Practice Finance Corporation, Property transfer 667w
Hospital beds, Salop 892
Hospital closures, Salop 893
Hospital finance 160w
Hospital waiting lists 574w
Hospital waiting lists, NHS Review 567w
Infant mortality, Listeria monocytogenes 162w
Listeria monocytogenes 582-3w
Long stay patients, Elderly 562w
Medical malpractice, Disciplinary proceedings 572w
Medical treatments, Costs 564w
NHS 333w
NHS hospital trusts, Salop 892
NHS Policy Board, Professional qualifications 336w
NHS Review 564w, 894-6
"Public Health in England" 561w
Salmonella, Environmental health 153w
Self-governing hospitals 336-7w, 899
Self-governing hospitals, Calderdale Health Authority 571w
Self-governing hospitals, Clergy 669w
Self-governing hospitals, Greater London 899-900
Self-governing hospitals, Medical audit 571-2w
Self-governing hospitals, Medical education 769w
Self-governing hospitals, Pay 337w, 899
Self-governing hospitals, Pay settlements 571w
Self-governing hospitals, Public appointments 334w
Self-governing hospitals, Regional health authorities 564-5w
Vaccine damaged children, Whooping cough 770w

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth—continued
"Working for Patients White Paper" 562-3w, 893-4
"Working for Patients White Paper", British Medical Association 564w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Budgeting 561-3w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Community care 561w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Expenditure 390w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Family doctors 384w, 563w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Health service staff 362w, 562w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Hospital waiting lists 563w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Patients 384w, 563w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Publicity 570w

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 649, 652, 661-4
Questions
Alcoholic drinks, Scotland 545w
Child minding, Child workers 903
Crack, Drug abuse 315w
Developing countries, Debts 510w
Drug crimes, Scotland 546w
Drug seizures, Scotland 546w
Drugs, Prices 540w
EC internal trade, Civil service manpower 315w
EC internal trade, Translation services 546w
International Monetary Fund 542-3w
Israel 726w
Medical equipment, Anaesthetics 387-9w
Medical equipment, Safety 389w
Mentally handicapped, Mental health community care 579w
Mentally ill, Mental health community care 579w
Residential care, Private sector 670w

Clarke Committee
see NHS Policy Board

Clay, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1096, 1098
Questions
Domestic rates, Prison sentences 646w
Firearms, Costs 760w
Local government expenditure 782w
Minimum wage, Northern region 179w
Social Fund, Expenditure 676w
Social security reform 790w

Clelland, Mr David
Questions
British Rail, Transport police 590w
Minimum wage 177-8w
OECD countries, Research finance 266w
Railway safety, Railway signals 708w
Railway workers, Working hours 529-30w

Clergy
Self-governing hospitals 669w

Cleveland
Rates & rating 1088

Climate
Rain forests 369-70w, 648w
Research finance 499w
Seas & oceans 212-3w

Closed shop
201w

Clothing
Income support 460w

Clothing industry
Company liquidations 61w

Clwyd
Museums & galleries 727
NHS Review 690w, 699w

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Questions
Benzodiazepines 43w
Benzodiazepines, Drug abuse 42-3w
Consumer protection 265-6w
Export controls, Arms trade 129w
Food standards, Airlines 520
Housing construction, South Wales 367w
Scrapie, Notifiable diseases 342w
Unemployment, Welsh Development Agency 720
Welsh Arts Council, Arts grants 727

Clwyd Health Authority
698-9w
Finance 699w
NHS Review 689-90w

Coal
Central Electricity Generating Board (13:03:89) 41-2
USSR (13:03:89) 41-2

Coal fired power stations
Air pollution control 21-2w, 391-2w
Planning permission 21w
West Burton 21w

Coal Industry (Restructuring Grants) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(15:03:89) 413, (22:03:89) 1234

Coal mining
Education & industry 408
Equipment 391w
Government assistance 764w
Government assistance to nationalised industries (22:03:89) 1234
Productivity 763w
Redundancy 126w, 270-1
Redundancy pay 126w
Wales 438w

Coalmining Subsidence (Damage Arbitration Prevention & Public Awareness) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (17:03:89) 702

Cochlear implants
Medical treatments 70w

"Codebreaker Extraordinary"
216w

Codes of practice
Broadcasting Standards Council 10w
Hearing Aid Council 262w
Price labelling 431-2w
Sheltered housing (13:03:89) 58-61
Special constables 448-9w

COE
see Council of Europe

Cohabitation
Legal aid 449w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Questions
Air force bases, C130 aircraft 758w
Armed forces, Peace movement 759w
Armed forces deployment, Oman 476w
Automatic ticketing systems, Computer privacy 373w
Automatic ticketing systems, Repairs & maintenance 373w
Bail hostels 361w
Bettaney, Michael, Solitary confinement 411w
British Nuclear Fuels, Defence contracts 382w
British Nuclear Fuels, Nuclear power stations 559w
Butane gas, Retail trade 268w, 360-1w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 630w
Community charge, Leyton 318w
Community charges register, Electoral register 314w
Community charges register, Personal records 370w, 375-6w

Cohen, Mr Harry—continued
Construction materials, Criminal investigation 399w
Crime prevention, Lighting 411w
District health authorities, Ethnic minorities 385w
Driving licences, Disclosure of information 376w
Electoral register, Community charges register 293-4w
Food surpluses 353-4w
Genito-urinary medicine, Medical treatments 328-32w
Genito-urinary medicine, Waltham Forest Health Authority 237w
Irradiated food 249w
London Underground, Rolling stock 372-3w
M11, Road construction 206w
Magistrates, Public appointments 451w
Mentally disturbed offenders 407w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Alternatives to prison 408w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Police training 409-10w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Prison population 408-9w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Prison riots 410w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Prisoners on remand 407w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Psychiatry 409w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Remand in custody 362w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Research 407-8w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Secure psychiatric units 408w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Suicide 376w
Military aircraft, RAF Alconbury 758w
Military Lands Act 1892, Bye laws 758-9w
Military vehicles, Motor vehicle registration 759w
Minimum wage, Greater London 179w
Motor vehicles, Computer privacy 595w
Police, Manpower 361-2w
Police, Sex discrimination 232w, 294w
Police records, Computer privacy 293w
Prisoners, Body belts 410-1w
Prisoners, Suicide 232w
Racial harassment, Research 321w
RAF Greenham Common, Armed forces deployment 757-8w
RAF Sculthorpe, Air traffic 759w
Regional secure units, Finance 482w
Secure psychiatric units, Regional health authorities 328w
Taxis, Driving licences 293w
Transport police, Recruitment 373w

COI
see Central Office of Information

Coleman, Mr Donald
Questions
Homelessness, Wales 722
Local education authority training grant scheme, Wales 714

College closures
Veterinary services 526

Colvin, Mr Michael
Questions
A36, Contracts 403w
Air accidents, Lockerbie 916
Channel tunnel, Electric cables 206w
Hearing aids, Royal National Institute for the Deaf 326w
Homelessness, Bed & breakfast accommodation 1075-6
Housing, Rural areas 209w
Litter, Local authorities 319w
Local employer network scheme 199w
Midwives, Pay 326w
Plessey, Takeovers 405
Property Services Agency, Contracts for services 778w
Veterinary services, College closures 526

Comber bypass
Road construction 731w

Comic Relief
Overseas aid 701w

Commercial agents
EC law 270w

Commercial television
Television advertising 297-8w

Commission of the European Communities
see European Commission

Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food
Public appointments 770w

Committee on the Review of Medicines
Public appointments 68w

Common agricultural policy
347-8w
Fraud 523-4

Common farm prices
354w

Common land
774w

Common Land Forum
774w

Common sheep meat regime
86w, 350w
Wales 437w

Community care
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 662w
Dundee (23:03:89) 1245-54
"Working for Patients White Paper" 561w

Community Care Review
670w

Community charge
(13:03:89) 72-3, 626-7w, 780w, 907
Administrative costs 627-8w
Air force 759w
Alzheimer's disease 282
Attachment of earnings 780-1w
Barnsley 626-7w
Community charge rebates 90w
Crown lands & estates 587w
Departmental publications 628w
EC action 628w
Educationally subnormal 628w
Ethnic minorities 318-9w
Hornsey 626w
Leyton 318w
Local authority powers 628w
Norwich 627w
Nottingham 319w
Nurses 626w
Orders & regulations 90w, 627w
Personal income 175-6w
Scotland 175-6w
Social security benefits 675w
Student grants 529w
Students 370-1w
VAT 586w
Wales 439w
The Wrekin 627w

Community Charge Benefits (General) Regulations 1989
Questions
675w

Community charge rebates
175-6w
Community charge 90w
Hospital patients 90w

Community charges register
90-1w
Electoral register 293-4w, 314w
Personal records 370w, 375-6w
Scotland 314w, 375-6w

Community councils

Community councils*—*continued
Rural areas 321w

Community health services
Expenditure 159-60w
Scotland 750w

Community hospitals
(21:03:89) 1064-70

Community relations
Broadcasting 294w

Community service orders
Scotland 554w

Commuters
Railway travel 597w

Companies
Capital 265w
East Kilbride 553w
VAT registration 59w
Wyre Forest 59w

Companies House Executive Agency
713-4w

Company investigations
105w
Anglo Dutch Limited 104w
Financial institutions 406
Minimum wage 801w

Company liquidations
265w
Anglo Dutch Limited 103-4w
Care Homes 103-4w
Clothing industry 61w
Greater London 61w

Company registration
Public companies 432w

Compensation
Barlow Clowes 260-1w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 347w
Compulsory purchase (13:03:89) 69-70
Firearms 817w
Industrial diseases (16:03:89) 628
Kincora Children's Home 300w
Poultry 522
Vaccine damaged children 770-2w

Competition
Gas supply industry 271-2w
Local government services 640w
Road construction 589-90w

Complaints
Bus services 591w
Low flying 243w

Complaints against police
813-4w

Composition labelling
Animal feed 614w

Comptroller & Auditor General
see National Audit Office

Compulsory purchase
Compensation (13:03:89) 69-70

Computer applications
Magistrates' courts 540-1w

Computer privacy
Air traffic control 204-5w
Automatic ticketing systems 373w
Customs & Excise 60w
Defence 245w
Dept of Health 66-7w
Dept of Social Security 27w
Dept of Transport 217w
Disclosure of information 130w
Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre 114w
Drugs 154w
Family doctors 154w
Home Office 2w, 231w
Hospital waiting lists 66w
Immigration & Nationality Division 231w
Inland Revenue 60-1w

Computer privacy*—*continued
Ministry of Defence 244-5w
Motor vehicles 595w
NATO 52w
Passport Office 231w
Police national computer 231w
Police records 293w
Railway transport 288w
Scotland 376w

Computer terminals
HM Coastguard 285-6w

Computers
Motor vehicle registration 217w

Computers in Government departments
Income support 56w
Unemployment benefits 56w
Welsh Office 278w

Computers in National Health Service
Hospitals 769w

Concessionary television licences
293w
Sheltered housing 293w

Condor 2 missiles
Argentina 381w

Conductive education
Government assistance 396w

Confederation of British Industry
252w, 263w

Conferences
Scientists against Nuclear Arms 381w

Conservative Party
406-7w

Consolidated Fund Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R & rem stages* (13:03:89) 78

Consolidated Fund debates
36 Engineers' Regiment (13:03:89) 222-31
Arts (13:03:89) 78-118
Council tenants (13:03:89) 140-56
Electronic surveillance (13:03:89) 175-87
Environment protection (13:03:89) 232-47
Rain forests (13:03:89) 157-74
Religious sects (13:03:89) 188-96
Roads (13:03:89) 197-209
Special education (13:03:89) 210-21
Transport (13:03:89) 119-39
Trident (13:03:89) 248-60

Consolidated Fund (No 2) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Royal assent (15:03:89) 416

Construction
Agricultural land 628-9w
Hospitals 236w
VAT 703-4w
VAT zero rated goods 61w

Construction costs
Burrell Art Gallery 665w
Dungeness B Power Station 257w

Construction materials
Criminal investigation 399w

Consultants
Housing action trusts 779w
Tourism 253w

Consultation papers
26-7w

Consumer credit
Credit licensing 271w

Consumer Credit Act 1974
Questions
271w

Consumer organisations
266w
Dept of Education & Science 289w
Dept of Energy 18w

***Consumer organisations**—continued*
Dept of Health 65w
Dept of the Environment 778w
Dept of Transport 113-4w
Ministry of Defence 244w
Northern Ireland Office 139w

Consumer protection
265-6w
EC action 267w
European Commission 285w
Food imitations 130w, 481w
Hearing aids 405

Contempt of court
Custodial treatment 450-1w

Continental shelf
Offshore supply vessels 532-8w

Contract gas
272-4w

Contracts
A36 403w
Family doctors 565w
Local labour 779-80w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 754w

Contracts for services
Central Office of Information 300w
NHS 565-6w
Property Services Agency 778w

Contracts of employment
Family doctors 487-9w, 568w, 669-70w

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
660w

Convictions
House of Commons passes 694w
Tipping of waste 444w

Conway, Mr Derek
Questions
Development plans 1072
Employment, Age 186w
Family doctors, Budgeting 898
National debt 146-8w
River pollution, Punishment 631w

Cook, Mr Frank
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Cyprus 905-6
Unemployment benefits, Social security reform 801-2w

Cook, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 566-72
Questions
Child benefit, Expenditure 226w
Health, Homelessness 902
Hospital finance 160w
Hospitals, Expenditure 159-60w
Mental hospitals, Hospital closures 669w
Ministerial policy advisers, Expenditure 246w
NHS finance, Resource management initiative 337w
NHS Review 895-6
Retirement pensions 173w, 303w
Self-governing hospitals, Hospitals 314w
Social security benefits, Carers 173-4w
Social security benefits, Expenditure 174-5w
Social security benefits, Retail price index 790w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Expenditure 390w

Cook-chill catering
162-3w, 517, 582-3w
Food contamination 78-9w
Food poisoning 78w
Listeria monocytogenes 79w, 163w, 583w
Retail trade 251w

Coombs, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 807-8
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 871

***Coombs, Mr Anthony**—continued*
Questions
Black Country Development Corporation 638w
Child safety, Southwark 490-1w
Companies, Wyre Forest 59w
Dock labour scheme 193w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 623-4w
Foreign investment in UK, Employment opportunities 408
Old people's homes 160w
Student grants 502w

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
"Employment for the 1990s White Paper" 200w

***Cope, Rt Hon John**, Minister of State for Employment*
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Employment 56-7w
Advertising, Training Agency 57w
Bridging allowances, Halifax 59w
Coal mining, Redundancy 270-1
Companies, Wyre Forest 59w
"Employment for the 1990s White Paper" 200w
Employment schemes, USA 201w
Enterprise allowance scheme 201-2w
European Communities, Dept of Employment 254w
Further education, Day care of children 416-7w
Industrial democracy 276-7
Industrial training boards, Expenditure 368w
Industrial training boards; Training & enterprise councils 368w
Loan guarantee scheme 279-80
Local employer network scheme 199w
Local enterprise agencies 201w
Low pay 280
Management consultants, Dept of Employment 254-5w
Minimum wage 275-6
Minimum wage, East Midlands 280
Minimum wage, Wages Inspectorate 177w, 281-2
Minimum wage, West Midlands 275
New businesses 202w
Open College, Educational finance 311w
Pay 280
Perivale Skillcentre 309w
Privatisation, Dept of Employment 58w
Public relations, Dept of Employment 57-8w
Public relations, Training Agency 57-8w
Public service messages, Dept of Employment 253w
Restart programme 271
Share option scheme 277
Statistics, Dept of Employment 255-6w
Training, North West region 794w
Training, Women 55w
Training & enterprise councils 54-5w, 204w
Training & enterprise councils, Greater London 309-11w
Unemployment, London docklands 310w
Vocational education, Trades Union Congress 198w
Wages councils 797-801w
"Wages Councils 1988 Consultation Document" 557-8w
Wages Inspectorate 271
Youth training scheme 199-200w
Youth training scheme, Child care 55w
Youth training scheme, Halifax 59w
Youth training scheme, Training Standards Advisory Service 557w
Youth unemployment 186w

Copyright Designs & Patents Act 1988
Questions
EC action 260w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Questions
Animal experiments 363w
Animal experiments, Dogs 363w
Jobclubs, Unemployment 368w

***Corbett, Mr Robin**—continued*
Minimum wage, Wages Inspectorate 179-80w
Prison staff, AIDS 295w
Prisoners, AIDS 295-6w
Sites of special scientific interest, Severn-Trent Water Authority 94w
Turtles, Import controls 322w

Corby
(13:03:89) 45-8

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 552
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 663, 672-7, 683
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1039-40, 1042, 1051-2, 1056-7
Questions
1, Poultry, Listed buildings 779w
Ambulance services, Railway accidents 667-8w
Contracts, Local labour 779-80w
County Hall, Environmental impact assessment 629w
Debts, Developing countries 277w
Deportation, Tamils 234w
Desert Locust Control Organisation in Eastern Africa, UK contributions 382-3w
GATT 258w
Hedges & ditches, Environment protection 520-1
Hospitals, Day nurseries 339w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rates 396w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 395w
Immigration appeals, Members 233w
Income support, Social security reform 395w
Inflation, Group of Seven 542w
Land acquisition, Public bodies 239-40w
Local government expenditure, Redbridge 372w
London Ambulance Service, Manpower 580w
Milford bypass, Noise control 373w
NHS & private practice, Greater London 564w
Nuclear disarmament, Arms control negotiations 513w
Pensioners, Greater London 395w
Political refugees, Tamils 233-4w
Roads, Greater London 10-1
Social Fund, Lockerbie 394w
Teachers, Pay 682w
Teachers, Recruitment 682w
Thames Water Authority, Land ownership & tenure 372w
Widows' benefits, Expenditure 460w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Arts (13:03:89) 89-93
Budget March 1989 (14:03:89) 290

Corporate plans
Sheffield Development Corporation 639-40w

Corporation tax
Small businesses 60w

Cosmetics
Testing (23:03:89) 1255-61

Cosmetics industry
Animal experiments (23:03:89) 1255-61

Cost per pupil
Educational publications 685-6w
Secondary education 718

Cost per student
Medical education 606w

Cot deaths
486-8w
Medical research 235w, 325w, (20:03:89) 885-90

Couchman, Mr James
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 567
Questions
Restart programme 202w

Council for the Protection of Rural England
518-9

Council house rents
Property transfer 323w

Council house sales
633-4w
Inverclyde 37-8w
Publicity 37w
Repossession orders 38w
Right to buy 633w
Scotland 37-8w
Strathclyde 37-8w
Sutton 321-2w
Wales 716

Council house waiting lists
320w
One parent families 320w
Single people 320w

Council housing
Cardiff 716
Housing action trusts 323-4w
Leicester 1078-9
Press advertising 323w
Property transfer 634w, 649-50w
Scotland 548w
Tenants' charter 320w

Council housing finance
Wales 278-82w

Council of Europe
178w, 255w, 278, 623-4w
EC external relations 623w

Council of Ministers
726-7w

Council tenants
Consolidated Fund debates (13:03:89) 140-56
Social unrest (13:03:89) 140-56

Councillors
Civil servants' political activities 227w

Counterfeit manufacturing
Drugs 575-6w

Country Landowners' Association
345-6w

Countryside Commission
345w
Forests 650w

Countryside Commission for Scotland
660w

County councils in Wales
Social workers 696-7w

County Hall
Environmental impact assessment 629w
Property development 782w

Court of Auditors
247w

Courts
Administrative delays 360w

Courts martial
Air force bases 275-6w

Cousins, Mr Jim
Questions
Committee on the Review of Medicines, Public appointments 68w
Drugs, Per capita costs 766w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, EC internal trade 401
Family credit, Child minding 173w
Homeopathy, Drugs 68-9w

Cousins, Mr Jim—continued
Hospital consultants, Health service staff 334w
Hospital waiting lists 668w
Hospitals, Air conditioning 236w
Housing benefits, War pensions 303-6w
Income support, Hostels 393w
Inflation, Group of Seven 542w
Invalid care allowances, Social security benefits rules 173-4w
Junior hospital doctors, Working hours 333-4w
MMR vaccines, Take-up 67-8w
NHS finance, NHS internal market 334w
Prescriptions, Per capita costs 157w
Relocation of employees, House purchase 300w
Self-governing hospitals, Public appointments 334w
Supplementary benefits, Social security recipients 174w
War pensions, Social security recipients 173w
Working hours, Teachers 55w

Cox, Mr Tom
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 106w
Homelessness, Greater London 641w
National Farmers' Union 340w
UK companies abroad, EC countries 98w
Work permits, Immigrants' dependants 149w

CPRE
see Council for the Protection of Rural England

Crack
Drug abuse 315w

Craft industries
Export promotion 464w

Cran, Mr James
Debates etc.
Electronic surveillance (13:03:89) 175-80, 185, 186
Questions
Cancer, Children 639w
Capper Pass, Radioactivity 94w, 211w
Capper Pass, Waste disposal 507w
Energy conservation, Government buildings 240w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Exports 401
Fishing catches 345w
Medical profession, No-fault compensation 670-1w
Motorways, Business travel 110-1w
Vacancies 200w

Credit licensing
Consumer credit 271w

Crime
British Rail 113w
Detection rates 743w
Dorset 231w
London Underground 113w
Questionnaires 140-1w
Survey techniques 1-2w
Waste disposal 653w

Crime prevention
812w
Housing estates 698w
Lighting 411w
Operating costs 812w
Wales 698w

Crime victims
Sexual offences 817w

Crimes of violence
Knowsley 813w
Scotland 743w

Criminal injuries compensation
Administrative delays 3-5w
Appeals 3-4w
Cruelty to children 748-9w, 809-10w

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
3-4w, 748-9w
Administrative delays 2w
Appeals 3-5w
Domestic violence 2-4w
Expenditure 3-4w

Criminal investigation
Construction materials 399w
Military police 477w

Criminal Justice Act 1988
Questions
748-9w

Criminal proceedings
Barristers 692w
Costs 692w

Criminal statistics
Metropolitan Police 812w
Scotland 743w

Crisis loans
737-40w, 785-6w

Crofting
Woodland grant scheme 748w

Crown courts
Judges 450w

Crown Estate Commissioners
Fish farming 383-4w

Crown lands & estates
Community charge 587w

Crown Prosecution Service
149w
Manpower 692w
"Work & Organisation of the Legal Profession Consultation Paper" 692-3w

Crowther, Mr Stan
Questions
Brewing industry, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 494-5w
Mobility allowance, Social security benefits uprating 174w
National parks, Environment protection 507w
Wood, Import duties 496w

Cruelty to children
Criminal injuries compensation 748-9w, 809-10w
Public petitions (16:03:89) 628
Research 384w
Scotland 748-9w
Sexual offences 574-5w

Cryer, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Arts (13:03:89) 97, 106-7
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1273
Legal Aid & Legal Advice & Assistance Regulations 1989 (22:03:89) 1225-6
Water Bill, Money res (20:03:89) 851-3
Questions
Chemical weapons, USSR 245-6w
Contempt of court, Custodial treatment 450-1w
Dungeness B Power Station, Construction costs 257w
EC free food scheme, Charities 723w
European Communities, Attorney-General 216w
European Communities, Dept of Employment 254w
European Communities, Dept of Energy 257w
European Communities, Dept of Health 338w
European Communities, Dept of Social Security 226w
European Communities, Dept of the Environment 242w
European Communities, Dept of Trade & Industry 496-7w
European Communities, Dept of Transport 708w
European Communities, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 215w

Cryer, Mr Bob—continued
European Communities, Ministry of Agriculture 250w
European Communities, Ministry of Defence 246w
Judges, Crown courts 450w
Kincora Children's Home, Compensation 300w
Renshaw, Michelle, Custodial treatment 412w
Sentencing, One parent families 449-50w
Textile industry, Balance of trade 271w
Trade barriers, Turkey 105w
Water supply, Asbestos 372w
Woollen industry, West Yorkshire 254w

Crystal Palace
(14:03:89) 375-85

CSO
see Central Statistical Office

Cullen Committee
see Piper Alpha Inquiry

Cultural relations
European Communities 724
Glasgow 725

Cumbria
Radioactivity 720w

Cummings, Mr John
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 602-3
Questions
City technology colleges, Capital investment 355-6w
City technology colleges, Government grants 355w
City technology colleges, School population 355w
Educational health services, Seaham Harbour 66w
Minimum wage, Northern region 177-8w
NHS finance 530
Prisoners, Members' correspondence 412w
Social security reform, Northern region 27w

Cunningham, Dr John
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 965, 967-74, 987, 1011, 1015, (22:03:89) 1127-37, 1147, 1148, 1178
Questions
Community charge, Departmental publications 628w
Dept of the Environment, Departmental publications 94w
Hazardous wastes, International conferences 651w
Internal drainage boards 250-1w
Parking, Pedestrian areas 594w
Salmon, Drift nets 473w
Sewage, Sea pollution 422w, 1082
Sewage, Welsh Water Authority 504-5w
Water charges, Price increases 240w
Water pollution, Diseases 79w

Curriculum
Departmental publications 606-7w, 684-5w
Drama education 15w
English education 359-60w
Health education 15w
Languages education 681-2w
Teacher training 163w, 165w
Teachers 163-4w

Curry, Mr David
Debates etc.
Ripon & District Hospital, Public petitions (20:03:89) 884
Questions
Europe Open for Business 263w
Television advertising, Advertising controls 810w

Custodial treatment
Contempt of court 450-1w
Renshaw, Michelle 412w

Customs & Excise
147w
Computer privacy 60w

Cyanide
Fruit 470w

Cyprus
Armed forces deployment 905-6

D notices
Defence Press & Broadcasting Committee 1w

DAFS
see Dept of Agriculture & Fisheries for Scotland

Dairy farming
340w, 516

Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1986
Questions
251w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 563, 610-3, 623
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 553
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 646, 647, 650, 666-8, 698
Rain forests (13:03:89) 157-65, 170, 173
Skills Training Agency, Deloitte Haskins & Sells (13:03:89) 35
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 31-2
Questions
Birds, Imports 518
Brazil, Debts 366w
Brazil, Foreign loans 625-6w
Brazil, Official visits 215-6w
Brazil, Rain forests 513w
Business statements 541
Civil Service College, Environment protection 730
"Codebreaker Extraordinary" 216w
Japan, Rain forests 303w
Lurcher's Gully, Planning inquiries 377-8w
Malaria, Medical research 385w
Museum of Mankind, Art exhibitions 378w
Police, Gibraltar 364w
Rain forests, Climate 369-70w, 648w
Research finance, Climate 499w
Thatcher, Margaret, Books 126w

Dance
228w

Darling, Mr Alistair
Questions
Electorate, Parliamentary constituencies 668w
Entry clearances, Immigrants' dependants 150w
Population 668w

Data Protection Act 1984
Questions
293w

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 778-80

Davies, Mr Quentin
Questions
Employment training, Take-up 185-6w

Davies, Mr Ron
Questions
Agricultural land, Extensification schemes 516w
Animal diseases, Agricultural research 467w
Animal feed, Cattle 614w
Animal feed, Composition labelling 614w
Animal products, Imports 614w
Birds, Poisoning 778w
Blood sports, New Forest 550w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 467-71w, 516w, 612-3w

Davies, Mr Ron—continued
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Cattle 525-6
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Health hazards 515w
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme 723w
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme, Northern Ireland 732w
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme, Wales 700w
Broadleaved woodlands, Northern Ireland 731-2w
Domestic animals, Poisoning 44w
Eggs, Imports 249w
Eggs, Salmonella 517
Environmentally sensitive areas, Landlord & tenant 474w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Wales 135-6w
European Regional Development Fund 128-9w
Forestry, Glamorgan 504w
Forestry, Land use 417w
Forestry Commission, Civil service manpower 36-7w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 141-2w
Forestry grants 747w
Forests, Countryside Commission 650w
Industrial health & safety, Transmissible encephalopathies 557w
Ivory, Imports 495-6w
"Mammal & Bird Pests 1985" 249w
Minimum wage, Wales 184-5w
New Forest, Blood sports 515w
Pesticides, Strychnine 44w
Poultry, EC action 515w
Poultry, Manpower 515w
Poultry, Salmonella 613-4w
River pollution, Prosecutions 427-8w
River pollution, Scotland 447w
Sewage, Wales 44w
Sewage, Water pollution 242w
Sites of special scientific interest, Tree planting 505-6w
Strychnine 516w
Transmissible encephalopathies, Mink 468w
Tree felling, Northern Ireland 732w
Tree planting, Environmental impact assessment 657w
Tree planting, Scotland 659-60w
Veterinary Products Committee, Licensing 467w
Veterinary services, Licensing 468w
Water authorities, Debts 94-5w
Water pollution, Nottingham 507w
Water pollution, Sewage 427w
Wild animals, Pesticides 656w
Wild animals, Poisoning 694w
Woodland grant scheme, Scotland 657-8w
Woodland grant scheme, Wales 503w

Davis, Mr David
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 785-7
Questions
Dock labour scheme, Fisheries 194w
River pollution 638w

Davis, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Legal Aid & Legal Advice & Assistance Regulations 1989 (22:03:89) 1228-9
Questions
Hazardous wastes 633w

Day, Mr Stephen
Questions
Countryside Commission 345w
Youth training scheme 200w

Day care of children
Further education 416-7w
Homeworking 253w

Day nurseries
Hospitals 339w

Deaf
Blind 237w
Broadcasting 292w
Special education 219w

Deafness
Departmental publications 70w

Death
Greater Glasgow Health Board 901
Road accidents 592w
Transplant surgery 385-6w

Debts
Brazil 366w
Developing countries 277w, 510w, 542w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 401
Water authorities 94-5w, 238w

Deer farming
Tuberculosis 250w

Deeside waterfront scheme
722-3

Defective housing
Leicester 1078
Nottingham 209w

Defence
Computer privacy 245w

Defence contracts
British Nuclear Fuels 382w
Trident submarines 54w

Defence Export Services Organisation
757w
Middle East 757w

Defence Press & Broadcasting Committee
D notices 1w

Defence research establishments
Audit 760w
Civil service agencies 276-7w

Degrees
Students 421w

Delyn enterprise zone
Unemployment 720

Dental charges
337w

Dental health
Children 577w
Fluoridation 577w

Dept of Agriculture & Fisheries for Scotland
142w

Dept of Education & Science
606-7w, 871w
Advertising 13w
Broadcasting 356w
Consumer organisations 289w
Management consultants 13-4w
Privatisation 13w
Public relations 14-5w
Public service messages 356w
Statistics 14-5w

Dept of Employment
Advertising 56-7w
Broadcasting 253w
European Communities 254w
Management consultants 254-5w
Privatisation 58w
Public relations 57-8w
Public service messages 253w
Statistics 255-6w

Dept of Energy
559w
Advertising 21w
Broadcasting 256-7w
Consumer organisations 18w
European Communities 257w
Management consultants 20w
Ministerial responsibility 256w
Privatisation 19-20w
Public relations 20w

Dept of Energy*—*continued
Public service messages 256-7w
Statistics 19w
Water pollution 20w, 678w

Dept of Health
669-70w, 676w, 811w
Advertising 71w
Broadcasting 385w
Computer privacy 66-7w
Consumer organisations 65w
Environmental health officers 767w
European Communities 338w
Management consultants 76w
Privatisation 75w
Public relations 72-3w
Public service messages 385w
Statistics 76w

Dept of Social Security
Advertising 30w
Broadcasting 306w
Computer privacy 27w
Equal opportunities 676w, 792-4w
European Communities 226w
House of Commons papers 26-7w
Management consultants 31w
Privatisation 31w
Public relations 30-2w
Public service messages 306w
Statistics 32w

Dept of Social Security local offices
28-9w
Civil servants 730
Civil service manpower 29-30w, 730
North West region 29-30w
Statistics 393w

Dept of the Environment
Advertising 89-90w
Broadcasting 370w
Consumer organisations 778w
Departmental publications 94w
European Communities 242w
Management consultants 91-2w
Privatisation 91w
Public relations 89-90w
Public service messages 370w
Publicity 633w
Statistics 91w
Water pollution 89w

Dept of Trade & Industry
Advertising 99-100w
European Communities 496-7w
Management consultants 100-2w
Privatisation 102w
Public relations 100w, 103w
Research 129w
Statistics 100-1w

Dept of Trade inquiries
Insider trading 96-8w

Dept of Transport
(20:03:89) 731-4
Advertising 115w
Computer privacy 2' /w
Consumer organisations 113-4w
European Communities 708w
Management consultants 117w
Privatisation 118w
Public relations 115-6w
Select Committees 113w
Statistics 116-7w

Departmental circulars
Lockerbie 909-14

Departmental coordination
Forensic science 811w

Departmental correspondence
Appledore Ferguson 377w
Press freedom 246w

Departmental leaflets
Young people 786w

Departmental publications
Community charge 628w
Curriculum 606-7w, 684-5w

Departmental publications*—*continued
Deafness 70w
Dept of the Environment 94w
Minerals 648-9w
School governors 406-7w
Tourism 309w
Vote Office 465w

Departmental responsibilities
Hazardous materials 690-1w

Dependants
Income support 787w

Deportation
Tamils 234w

Derbyshire
Environment protection (13:03:89) 232-47
Minimum wage 255w
Rate increases 642w
Water supply industry 95w

Derbyshire County Council
Educational finance 685w
Local government pensions (17:03:89) 704-12

Derelict land grants
(13:03:89) 45-8

DES
see Dept of Education & Science

Desert Locust Control Organisation in Eastern Africa
UK contributions 382-3w

DESO
see Defence Export Services Organisation

Detection rates
Crime 743w
Scotland 743w

Detergents
Phosphates 319w

Developing countries
Air pollution control 128w
Debts 277w, 510w, 542w
Transport of hazardous materials 653-4w

Development aid
(17:03:89) 637-701

Development areas
Unemployment 695-6w

Development plans
1072

Devlin, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1270-1
Legal profession (23:03:89) 1285-7
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1041
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 980, 996-7, 1003
Questions
Legal profession, Bar Council 907-8
NHS finance, Capital investment 571w
Northern Ballet Theatre 463w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 347, 352-5
Questions
Beaches, Sea pollution 741w
Government information services, Scottish Office 229w
Regional development grants, Scotland 651w
Regional selective assistance, Scotland 651w
Schools, Assisted places scheme 554w

Dialysis machines
Patients 313-4w, 441w
Scotland 313-4w
Wales 441w

Diesel vehicles
Exhaust emission controls 650-1w

Diets
Northern Ireland 730w
Social security benefits 730w

DIG
see Disablement Income Group

Dioxins
323w, 444w
Food packaging 249w

Diplomatic service
Afghanistan 24w, 511w

Dir78/659/EEC
641w

Dir83/351/EEC
650-1w

Dir86/653/EEC
270w

Dir88/436/EEC
650-1w

Dir88/76/EEC
650-1w

Dir88/77/EEC
650-1w

Director General of Water Services
(20:03:89) 851-8, (21:03:89) 931-1037, (22:03:89) 1104-212
Offices 781-2w

Director of Public Prosecutions
692-3w

Directors
Care Homes 104w

Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986
Questions
696w
Community care 662w
Scotland 661-2w

Disablement Income Group
675-6w

Disablement Services Authority
581w

Disadvantaged
Health 901

Disciplinary proceedings
Medical malpractice 572w

Disclosure of information
Chemical weapons 754w
Computer privacy 130w
Driving licences 376w
Tax evasion 61w
Veterinary Products Committee 722-3w
Waste disposal 653w

Disease control
Sheep diseases 340w

Diseases
Water pollution 79w

Dismissal
Hospital doctors 142w

Disposable income
Pensioners 791w

District health authorities
Ethnic minorities 385w
Local authorities 574w
Pay 337w
Per capita costs 671-4w
Primary health care 569w
Sex change operations 767w

Divorce law
Scotland (16:03:89) 628

Dixon, Mr Don
Debates etc.
36 Engineers' Regiment, Army bases (13:03:89) 227
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 619

Dixon, Mr Don—continued
Questions
Minimum wage, Northern region 202-3w

DLCOEA
see Desert Locust Control Organisation in Eastern Africa

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Air accidents, Lockerbie (20:03:89) 734
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 747
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 340-1, 345
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 645
Recess motions, Easter (13:03:89) 74
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 31
War widows' pensions (13:03:89) 37-41
Questions
Advertising, Cabinet Office 47w
Advertising, Central Office of Information 63w, 147-8w
Advertising, Dept of Education & Science 13w
Advertising, Dept of Employment 56-7w
Advertising, Dept of Energy 21w
Advertising, Dept of Health 71w
Advertising, Dept of Social Security 30w
Advertising, Dept of the Environment 89-90w
Advertising, Dept of Trade & Industry 99-100w
Advertising, Dept of Transport 115w
Advertising, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 22w
Advertising, Health Education Authority 72w
Advertising, Home Office 5-6w
Advertising, Lord Chancellor 40w
Advertising, Metropolitan Police 6w
Advertising, Ministry of Agriculture 80-1w
Advertising, Ministry of Defence 52w
Advertising, Office of Arts & Libraries 48w
Advertising, Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 71w
Advertising, Prime Minister 47w
Advertising, Privy Council Office 34w
Advertising, Scottish Office 35w
Advertising, Training Agency 57w
Advertising, Treasury 249w
Advertising, Welsh Office 278w
Business statements 533
Central Office of Information, Civil service manpower 63w, 543w
Central Office of Information, Contracts for services 300w
Central Office of Information, Expenditure 543w, 588-9w
House of Commons passes, Government departments 458w
Management consultants, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 101w
Management consultants, Dept of Education & Science 13-4w
Management consultants, Dept of Employment 254-5w
Management consultants, Dept of Energy 20w
Management consultants, Dept of Health 76w
Management consultants, Dept of Social Security 31w
Management consultants, Dept of the Environment 91-2w
Management consultants, Dept of Trade & Industry 100-2w
Management consultants, Dept of Transport 117w
Management consultants, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 23w
Management consultants, Lord Chancellor 40w
Management consultants, Minister for the Civil Service 47-8w
Management consultants, Ministry of Agriculture 81-2w
Management consultants, Ministry of Defence 52w

Dobson, Mr Frank—continued
Management consultants, Office of Arts & Libraries 228w
Management consultants, Prime Minister 48w
Management consultants, Privy Council Office 34w
Management consultants, Scottish Office 36w
Management consultants, Treasury 383w
Management consultants, Welsh Office 42w
Privatisation, Dept of Education & Science 13w
Privatisation, Dept of Employment 58w
Privatisation, Dept of Energy 19-20w
Privatisation, Dept of Health 75w
Privatisation, Dept of Social Security 31w
Privatisation, Dept of the Environment 91w
Privatisation, Dept of Trade & Industry 102w
Privatisation, Dept of Transport 118w
Privatisation, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 23w
Privatisation, Lord Chancellor 40w
Privatisation, Minister for the Civil Service 47w
Privatisation, Ministry of Agriculture 81w
Privatisation, Ministry of Defence 53w
Privatisation, Northern Ireland Office 299w
Privatisation, Office of Arts & Libraries 50w
Privatisation, Scottish Office 36w
Privatisation, Treasury 62w
Privatisation, Welsh Office 42w
Public relations, Cabinet Office 46w
Public relations, Central Office of Information 62w
Public relations, Dept of Education & Science 14-5w
Public relations, Dept of Employment 57-8w
Public relations, Dept of Energy 20w
Public relations, Dept of Health 72-3w
Public relations, Dept of Social Security 30-2w
Public relations, Dept of the Environment 89-90w
Public relations, Dept of Trade & Industry 100w, 103w
Public relations, Dept of Transport 115-6w
Public relations, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 23-4w
Public relations, Health Education Authority 71-2w
Public relations, Home Office 5w
Public relations, Lord Chancellor 39w
Public relations, Metropolitan Police 5w
Public relations, Ministry of Agriculture 81-2w
Public relations, Ministry of Defence 54w
Public relations, Office of Arts & Libraries 48-9w
Public relations, Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 71w, 73w
Public relations, Prime Minister 46w
Public relations, Privy Council Office 34-5w
Public relations, Scottish Office 36w
Public relations, 10 Downing Street 47w
Public relations, Training Agency 57-8w
Public relations, Treasury 247-8w, 300w
Public relations, Welsh Office 42w, 137-8w
Statistics, Armed forces 52-3w
Statistics, Central Office of Information 148w
Statistics, Dept of Education & Science 14-5w
Statistics, Dept of Employment 255-6w
Statistics, Dept of Energy 19w
Statistics, Dept of Health 76w
Statistics, Dept of Social Security 32w
Statistics, Dept of the Environment 91w
Statistics, Dept of Trade & Industry 100-1w
Statistics, Dept of Transport 116-7w
Statistics, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 22-3w
Statistics, Health Education Authority 75-6w

Dobson, Mr Frank—*continued*
Statistics, Home Office 7-8w
Statistics, Lord Chancellor 39w
Statistics, Metropolitan Police 6-7w
Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture 81w
Statistics, Ministry of Defence 53w
Statistics, Office of Arts & Libraries 49-50w
Statistics, Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 74w
Statistics, Prime Minister 45-6w
Statistics, Privy Council Office 34w
Statistics, Scottish Office 35w
Statistics, Treasury 249w
Statistics, Welsh Office 41-2w
Surgery, Per capita costs 482-3w

Dock labour scheme
193-4w, 203w, 252w, 276-7, 281
Age 193w
Average earnings 194w
Dock workers 795w
Employment opportunities 194w
Fisheries 194w
Free movement of labour 193w
Industrial disputes 194w
Manpower 193-4w, 795-7w
Ports 204w
River Thames 194w
Teesside 193w

Dock workers
Dock labour scheme 795w

Doctors
Dudley Health Authority 891
Manpower 891

DOE
see Dept of the Environment

Dog licences
Livestock 351-2w

Dog registration scheme
638w

Dogs
Animal experiments 363w

Domestic animals
Poisoning 44w

Domestic rates
Nottingham 319w
Prison sentences 646w

Domestic violence
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 2-4w
Police records 817-8w
Police training 818w

Don Valley
Sewers 772w

Doncaster
Electoral register 430w
Family income supplements 783w
Supplementary benefits 784w
Transport of radioactive materials 706w

Doran, Mr Frank
Questions
Offshore drilling, Offshore safety 677w
Offshore structures 559w
Offshore structures, Medicine 559w
Offshore supply vessels, Continental shelf 532-8w
Pipelines, Offshore safety 677-8w
Piper Alpha platform, Gas pipelines 678w
Takapu, Offshore safety 532w

Dornoch Firth
Bridges 748w

Dorset
Crime 231w

Double taxation
Netherlands Antilles 301w
Treaties 301w

Douglas, Mr Dick
Debates etc.
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 348-50
Questions
Business statements 544

Douglas, Mr Dick—*continued*
Shipbuilding 279

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James, *Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc.
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1054, 1058
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 946-50, 959, 962-5
Questions
A850, Road works 314w
Arctic terns, Shetland 752-3w
Birds, Shetland 753w
Blood sports, New Forest 550w
Boundary Commission for Scotland, Public appointments 749w
Building societies, Repossession orders 743w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Scottish Office 139w
Community charges register, Electoral register 314w
Council house sales, Inverclyde 37-8w
Council house sales, Publicity 37w
Council house sales, Repossession orders 38w
Council housing, Scotland 548w
Crime, Detection rates 743w
Criminal statistics, Scotland 743w
Cruelty to children, Criminal injuries compensation 748-9w
Dornoch firth, Bridges 748w
Driving licences, Disclosure of information 376w
Drug crimes, Scotland 546w
Drug seizures, Scotland 546w
Electorate, Greenock & Port Glasgow 549w
Fish farming, Isle of Arran 445w
Fish farming, Scotland 445w
Forestry Commission, Civil service manpower 36-7w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 141-2w
Forestry grants 747w
Hazardous Waste Inspectorate, Scotland 653w
Hazardous wastes, Scotland 653w
Housing, Young people 548w
Housing amenities, Scotland 742w
Housing associations, Greenock & Port Glasgow 229w
Housing occupancy, Scotland 744w
Housing standards, Scotland 742w, 744w
Housing starts, Scotland 745w
Legal advice & assistance, Scotland 662w
Legal aid, Scotland 662-3w
"Legal Profession in Scotland" 230w
Lurcher's Gully, Planning inquiries 377-8w
Matrimonial property, Scotland 142w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Suicide 376w
Questionnaires, Crime 140-1w
ReChem International, Waste disposal 652-3w
Remand in custody, Scotland 443w
River pollution, Scotland 447w
Road construction, Scotland 660w
Roads, Expenditure 376-7w
Sentencing, Scotland 741w
Sexual offences, Sentencing 741-2w
Skiing, Scotland 230w
Tipping of waste, Convictions 444w
Tipping of waste, Hazardous Waste Inspectorate 652w
Tipping of waste, Scotland 654-5w
Transport of hazardous materials, Developing countries 653-4w
Tree planting, Environmental impact assessment 657w
Tree planting, Scotland 659-60w
Waste disposal, Air pollution control 444w
Waste disposal, Crime 653w
Waste disposal, Disclosure of information 653w
Waste disposal, Fines 652w
Waste disposal, Scotland 652w
Water pollution, Lead pollution 660-1w
Woodland grant scheme, Scotland 657-8w

Dover, Mr Den
Questions
Unemployment, North West region 188w

Down's syndrome
Babies 573w
Medical research 15-6w
Medical treatments 573w

DPP
see Director of Public Prosecutions

Drama education
Curriculum 15w

Drift nets
Salmon 473w

Drinking & driving
Blood tests 364-5w
Driving tests 530w
Greater Manchester 364-5w, 599w

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre
217w
Computer privacy 114w

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Directorate
see Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre

Driving
Eyesight 205-6w
Road safety 13-4

Driving instruction
531w
Harmonisation of standards 531w

Driving licences
Disclosure of information 376w
Harmonisation of legislation 374w
Taxis 293w

Driving tests
Drinking & driving 530w
Fees & charges 530w
Harmonisation of standards 530-1w

DROPS
Motor vehicle testing 382w

Drug abuse
Advertising controls 296w
Benzodiazepines 42-3w, 338w, 581w
Crack 315w
Erythropoietin 10w
Lost working days 195-6w

Drug crimes
Scotland 546w

Drug industry
Benzodiazepines 390-1w
Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 331w
Prescription drugs 581w
Price increases 331w

Drug seizures
Scotland 546w

Drug side effects
Geriatric patients 157-8w

Drugs
Computer privacy 154w
Counterfeit manufacturing 575-6w
Expenditure 331-3w
Greece 666w
Homeopathy 68-9w
Imports 575w, 812w
Licensing 68w, 328w
Per capita costs 332-3w, 766w
Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 332w
Prices 540w

Drunkenness
Arrests 597w

DTI
see Dept of Trade & Industry

DTp
see Dept of Transport

Dudley Health Authority
Doctors 891

Duffy, Mr A E P
Debates etc.
River Don, River pollution (13:03:89) 51-4
Questions
Unemployment, Sheffield 191w

Dumfries & Galloway
Employment training 252w

Dundee
Community care (23:03:89) 1245-54

Dungeness B Power Station
Construction costs 257w

Dunn, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 864, 869, 872
Questions
Vacant land, Government departments 635w

Dunnachie, Mr Jimmy
Questions
Consumer protection 265-6w
Handicapped workers, Scotland 741w
Minimum wage, Prosecutions 184-5w
Teachers, Vacancies 443w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc.
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (13:03:89) 48-9
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1270
War widows' pensions (13:03:89) 39
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 110w
Minimum wage, North West region 181-3w
Motorways, Road safety 6
Police, Motorways 411-2w
Secure accommodation, North West region 237w
Sick pay 789-90w
Transport of hazardous materials, Road accidents 589w
Transport of hazardous materials, Road safety 399-400w
Young offenders, Prisons 669w

Durham Education Authority
Capital investment 355-6w
Government grants to local authorities 355w
School population 355w

Duty free shops
Tobacco advertising 70w

Duty solicitors
(22:03:89) 1213-34

DVLC
see Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Questions
Balance of trade, Standardisation 262w
Eggs, Salmonella 349w
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 403
Planning permission 1086
Share option scheme 277
Urban planning, Outer London boroughs 637w
"Working for Patients White Paper" 893

Eadie, Mr Alexander
Debates etc.
Newbattle Abbey College, Educational finance (13:03:89) 61-4
Questions
Coal mining, Redundancy 271
Minimum wage, Scotland 177-8w

EAEC
see EURATOM

EAGGF
see European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund

Ealing
Rates & rating 1086-7

Ear nose & throat
38w, 482-3w

Earnings rules
House renovation grants 425-6w

East Anglia
Hedges & ditches 521
Minimum wage 183-4w

East Kilbride
Companies 553w

East Kilbride Development Corporation
553w

East London river crossing
706-7w

East Lothian
Low flying 476w

East Midlands
Arts 463w
Bicycles 409-10
Employment 191-2w
Minimum wage 178-80w, 182-3w, 280
Roads 8
Unemployment 189w

East Midlands Arts Association
463w

Eastbourne Waterworks Company
429w

Easter
Ministers of religion 15
Recess motions (13:03:89) 37-77

Eastham, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 29
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway transport 108w
Industry, Inflation 127-8w
Minimum wage, Wages Inspectorate 179-80w
Planning authorities, Manpower 1085-6

EC action
Air transport 9
Chemical weapons 730w
Community charge 628w
Consumer protection 267w
Copyright Designs & Patents Act 1988 260w
Exhaust emission controls 320w
Food imitations 281w
Fraud 339w
GATT 258-9w
Poultry 515w
Shipping 6, 114-5w
Transport of radioactive materials 593w
VAT zero rated goods 63w

EC Agriculture Commissioner
344w

EC Agriculture Council
615-6w

EC budget
UK contributions 586w

EC Commission
see European Commission

EC Consumer Affairs Council
266w

EC countries
Fraud 16-7
Medical audit 384w
Retail price index 55w
UK companies abroad 98w

EC Draft 6705/88
(13:03:89) 36

EC Economic & Finance Council
see EC Finance Council

EC Environment Council
318w

EC external relations
Council of Europe 623w
Vietnam 448w

EC external trade
Agricultural products 351w
Tanzania 493-4w

EC Finance Council
247w

EC Foreign Affairs Council
623-4w, 730w

EC free food scheme
Charities 723w

EC General Affairs Council
see EC Foreign Affairs Council

EC grants & loans
263w
Manufacturing industries 403-4
Northern Ireland 732w
Northumberland 263w
Shipbuilding 284w

EC Industry Council
270w

EC Internal Market Council
713w

EC internal trade
259-60w, 907
Balance of trade 267w
Civil service manpower 315w
Economic regions 260w
Export Credits Guarantee Department 401
Manufacturing industries 260w
Scottish Office 315w
Translation services 546w

EC law
Commercial agents 270w
Exhaust emissions 650-1w
Sea pollution 89w, 424w, 1082-3
UK membership of EC (13:03:89) 54-6
Water pollution 20w, 51-2w, 89w, 678w, 775w

ECGD
see Export Credits Guarantee Department

ECOFIN
see EC Finance Council

Economic regions
Channel tunnel 107w
EC internal trade 260w

Economic situation
284
Budget March 1989 (15:03:89) 417-504
North East region 282-3
North West region 273-4

ECSC
see European Coal & Steel Community

Education
(13:03:89) 64-6
Capital investment 742w
Inner London boroughs 497w
Scotland 663-5w, 742w

Education & industry
407-8
Coal mining 408
Textile industry 396-7

Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(20:03:89) 859-84

Education Reform Act 1988
Questions
359w

Educational finance
685w
Capital investment 167-70w

***Educational finance**—continued*
Derbyshire County Council 685w
Government grants to local authorities 170w
Higher education 220-3w
Local government expenditure 166-8w
Newbattle Abbey College (13:03:89) 61-4
Open College 311w
Per capita costs 222w
Schools 607w
Voluntary schools 520w
Wales 718-9

Educational health services
Seaham harbour 66w
Special schools (13:03:89) 210-21

Educational Maintenance allowance
220w

Educational publications
Cost per pupil 685-6w
Expenditure 745-7w
Primary education 685-6w
Scotland 745-7w

Educational qualifications
Teachers 497w

Educational standards
501-2w

Educationally subnormal
Community charge 628w

EFDSS
see English Folk Dance & Song Society

EFTA
see European Free Trade Association

***Eggar, Mr Tim**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Debates etc.
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 676
Rain forests (13:03:89) 159, 167-74
United Nations, Peace keeping operations (23:03:89) 1333-8
Questions
Advertising, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 22w
Afghanistan, Diplomatic service 24w, 511w
Antarctic, Oil pollution 144w
Brazil, Official visits 215-6w
Brazil, Rain forests 143w
Civil servants, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 25w
EC external relations, Council of Europe 623w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 623-4w
Egypt, Chemical weapons 726w
El Salvador 726w
El Salvador, Elections 448w
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 727-8w
Entry clearances, Immigration appeals 728-9w
Entry clearances, Immigration controls 728w
Ethiopia, Human rights 729-30w
European Court of Human Rights 622-3w
Hong Kong, Annual reports 26w
Israel 726w
Management consultants, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 23w
Marcos, Ferdinand, Philippines 624w
Namibia, Peace keeping operations 625w
Namibia, South West Africa People's Organisation 624-5w
Pakistan, Entry clearances 26w
Privatisation, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 23w
Public relations, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 23-4w
Statistics, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 22-3w
Tibet, China 366w, 621-2w
Tibet, Human rights 726w
UN Decade of Disabled Persons 1983-1992 215w
United Nations, Children's rights 448w

Eggs
Agricultural production 522
Chocolate 522
Food labelling 520
Imports 249w
Northern Ireland 522-3
Nutrition 522
Salmonella 349w, 474w, 516w, 517, 520

Egypt
Chemical weapons 726w

EH 101 helicopters
Per capita costs 616w

El Salvador
726w
Elections 448w

Elderly
Employment 198w
Long stay patients 562w
Psychiatry 567-8w

Elected Authorities (Northern Ireland) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Royal assent (15:03:89) 416

Election expenses
(15:03:89) 504

Elections
El Salvador 448w
English Folk Dance & Song Society 541w

Electoral register
Community charges register 293-4w, 314w
Doncaster 430w
Northern Ireland 12w

Electorate
Greenock & Port Glasgow 549w
Parliamentary constituencies 414w, 668w
Renfrew West & Inverclyde 549w

Electric cables
Channel tunnel 206w

Electricity area boards
Scotland 749w

Electricity generation
Nuclear power stations 763-4w

Electricity supply industry
Capital investment 559w

Electricity tariffs
Energy costs 678w
Radioactive waste disposal 762w

Electronic equipment
Balance of trade 259w

Electronic surveillance
Consolidated Fund debates (13:03:89) 175-87
Residential care 584w

Elton Committee
see School Discipline Inquiry

Elveden
Road works 207w, 704w

Emergency calls
London Ambulance Service 159w

Emergency planning
Nuclear power 763w
United Kingdom Warning & Monitoring Organisation 599w

Employment
188-90w, 192w
Age 186w
Budget March 1989 (20:03:89) 736-850
Buy British 270
East Midlands 191-2w
Elderly 198w
Greater London 191w
London docklands 316w
Ministerial policy advisers 418-9w
Norfolk 190w

***Employment**—continued*
North West region 273
Northern region 269-70
Scotland 655-6w
South West region 193w
Trades Union Congress 198-9w
Wages councils 197w
Yorkshire & Humberside 188w

Employment Age Discrimination Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (17:03:89) 702

Employment discrimination
Northern Ireland 284
Older workers 252w

"Employment for the 1990s White Paper"
55w, 200w

Employment level
Self-employed 416w

Employment opportunities
271-2, 275
Chlorofluorocarbons 414w
Dock labour scheme 194w
Foreign investment in UK 264w, 408, 602w
Loan guarantee scheme 279
London Docklands 316w
Manufacturing industries 284
Teesside 272-3
Wales 721

Employment schemes
London Docklands 225-6w, 316w
USA 201w

Employment training
225-6w
Ayrshire 252w
Dumfries & Galloway 252w
Expenditure 556w
Graduates 310w
Housing insulation 203w
Inner city areas 256w
Scotland 545w
Take-up 185-6w, 415w
Training allowances 556w
Travelling expenses 256w

Empty housing
(21:03:89) 928-30

Empty Property & Community Aid Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
1R (21:03:89) 928-30

Energy conservation
Government buildings 240w
Property Services Agency 240w

Energy costs
Electricity tariffs 678w

Engineers
Road construction 707-8w

English Channel
Lindane 594w

English education
Curriculum 359-60w

English Folk Dance & Song Society
Elections 541w

English Heritage
see Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England

English Vineyards Association
7-8w, 82w

Enterprise allowance scheme
201-2w
New towns development corporations 552-3w

Enterprise initiative
258w, 394
Exports 399-400

Enterprise zones
Tax allowances 643w

Entry clearances
Administrative delays 727-8w, 807-8w
Genetics 815w
Immigrants' dependants 150w
Immigration appeals 693w, 728-9w
Immigration controls 728w
Pakistan 26w

Environment
210w

"Environment in Trust"
631w

Environment protection
89w
Civil Service College 730
Consolidated Fund debates (13:03:89) 232-47
Derbyshire (13:03:89) 232-47
Hedges & ditches 520-1
International conferences 777w
National parks 507w
Railway freight transport 218w

Environmental health
Official secrets 160-2w, 770w
Salmonella 153w

Environmental health officers
806-7w
Dept of Health 767w

Environmental impact assessment
445w, 503w, 657-8w, 1081
County Hall 629w
Tree planting 657w, 747w

Environmental policy
Pollution control 645-6w

Environmentally sensitive areas
350w
Forestry 38-9w
Landlord & tenant 474w
Scotland 663w
Wales 135-6w
Water authorities 519

Equal opportunities
Dept of Social Security 676w, 792-4w

Equal pay
Armed forces pay 245w

Equipment
Coal mining 391w
HM Coastguard 401-2w
Manufacturing industries 906
Supermarkets 506-7w

Erythropoietin
Drug abuse 10w

Essex
Police 804-5w

Ethiopia
Human rights 729-30w
Meningitis 302w
Overseas aid 302w

Ethnic groups
Remand in custody 813w

Ethnic minorities
Community charge 318-9w
District health authorities 385w
Health services 489w

Ethnic monitoring
Family practitioner committees 385w

EURATOM
679w
Nuclear safeguards 126-7w

EUREKA
105w

Europe
Air fares 9

Europe Open for Business
262-3w

European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund
725w

European Atomic Energy Community
see EURATOM

European Coal & Steel Community
270w

European Commission
351w, 448w, 628w
Consumer protection 285w
Food inspection 83w

European Communities
Attorney-General 216w
Civil servants 215-6w, 226w, 242w, 246w, 250w, 254w, 257w, 338w, 496-7w, 708w
Cultural relations 724
Dept of Employment 254w
Dept of Energy 257w
Dept of Health 338w
Dept of Social Security 226w
Dept of the Environment 242w
Dept of Trade & Industry 496-7w
Dept of Transport 708w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 215w
Ministry of Agriculture 250w
Ministry of Defence 246w

European Court of Human Rights
622-3w

European Court of Justice
779-80w
Merchant Shipping Act 1988 (13:03:89) 55, 56-8

European Free Trade Association
623-4w, 908

European Parliamentary Elections (Amendment) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(15:03:89) 504

European Regional Development Fund
128-9w, 263w
Stockport 493w, 541w

European Space Agency
129w

European Tourism Year
56w

EVA
see English Vineyards Association

Evans, Mr David
Questions
Lost working days, Industrial disputes 198w
New towns development corporations 321w
Official engagements 277-8w
"Public Health in England" 561w

Evans, Mr John
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 436-9
Questions
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy working party 80w
Channel tunnel, Railway transport 106w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power stations 763-4w
NHS 333w
Nuclear submarines, Ionizing radiation 478-80w
Nuclear submarines, Liverpool 125w
Nuclear submarines, Medical records 480w
Nuclear submarines, Merseyside 125w
Nuclear submarines, Nuclear safety 479w
Nuclear submarines, Ports 125w, 479w
Nuclear submarines, Radiation hazards 478-81w
Nuclear submarines, Radioactive waste disposal 479w
Overseas aid, Comic Relief 701w
Personal tax allowances, Married men 585w

Evans, Mr John—continued
Sea pollution, North West region 422w

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Abortion, Ministers' domestic visits 560w
Cheese, Minerals 347w
Employment, Trades Union Congress 198-9w
Teachers, Pay incentives 223-4w

Evidence in Divorce Actions (Scotland) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(16:03:89) 628

Ewing, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 427, 436
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 350-2

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 341-4, 353
Private notice questions (15:03:89) 411
Questions
Legal advice & assistance, Scotland 662w
Legal aid, Scotland 662-3w
Sentencing, Scotland 741w
Sexual offences, Sentencing 741-2w

Examinations
University teachers 684w

Exchange equalisation account
National Loans Fund 702w

Exercise Red Lanyard
Low flying 476w

Exhaust emission controls
399w
Diesel vehicles 650-1w
EC action 320w

Exhaust emissions
Air pollution control 423w
EC law 650-1w
Health hazards 667w

Exhibitions
Rain forests 378w

Experimental farms
Animal husbandry 722w
Horticulture 722w
Wales 438w

Explosions
Ministerial statements (23:03:89) 1266-74
Peterborough (23:03:89) 1266-74

Export controls
Arms trade 129w

Export credit
Tornado aircraft 713w

Export credit guarantees
Arms exports 711w

Export Credits Guarantee Department
711w
Debts 401
EC internal trade 401
Exports 401

Export Credits Guarantee Dept
see Export Credits Guarantee Department

Export licensing
Slaughterhouses 718-9w
Transport of radioactive materials 762w

Export promotion
404
Craft industries 464w

Exports
399-400
Balance of payments 400-1

Exports—continued
Bicycles 409-10
Chlorofluorocarbons 426w
Enterprise initiative 399-400
Export Credits Guarantee Department 401
Interest rates 400
Iron & steel industry 400
Plutonium 127w, 762w
Scotland 553-4w
Transport of radioactive materials 762-3w

Extensification schemes
Agricultural land 516w

External financing limits
British Shipbuilders 365-6w

Extradition
Legislation 540w

Eye disorders
Traffic lights 218w

Eye tests
Optical charges 162w

Eyesight
Driving 205-6w

F111 aircraft
Low flying 244w

Facilities agreements
Trade union officials 416w

Factory closures
Bird's Eye (13:03:89) 34, 283, 286

Factory Inspectorate
556-7w
Manpower 416w, 803-4w

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Questions
Parole, Scotland 750-1w

Falkland Islands
Armed forces deployment 510w

Families
Low incomes 783-4w
Prisoners 365w

Family benefits
Expenditure 790-2w

Family credit
Child benefit 308w
Child minding 173w
Northern Ireland 731w
Scotland 544w
Social security claims 459w
Take-up 393-4w

Family doctors
283
Budgeting 387w, 768w, 894-8
Computer privacy 154w
Contracts 565w
Contracts of employment 487-9w, 568w, 669-70w
Fees & charges 768w
Finance 768w
Income 578w
Information 767-8w
Manpower 578w, 891-2
NHS Review 699-700w
Pay 153-4w, 765w, 768w
Personal income 568w
Pharmacists 765w
Resignations 578w
Rural areas 568w, 896-7
Wales 503-4w, 699-700w
"Working for Patients White Paper" 384w, 563w

Family income supplements
Doncaster 783w
Scotland 544w

Family practitioner committees
Ethnic monitoring 385w
Public appointments 769-70w

Family practitioner services
Government assistance 154w
Nurses' training 579w

FAO
see Food & Agriculture Organisation

Farm & conservation grants scheme
339-40w, 518

Farm diversification scheme
Planning permission 519-20

Farm woodland scheme
518, 526-7
Administrative delays 467w

Farms
Pesticides 797w

Farr, Sir John
Questions
Afghanistan, Diplomatic service 24w, 511w
Deer farming, Tuberculosis 250w
Handicapped, Lifts 388w
Occupational therapists, Trent Regional Health Authority 388w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 864, 879-80
Questions
City technology colleges, Religion 405-6w
Leeds Development Corporation, Planning permission 93-4w
Loan guarantee scheme 279-80
Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 427w
Voluntary schools 407w
Wages councils 309-10w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Questions
Boards of trustees, Public appointments 51w
Ethiopia, Human rights 729-30w
Minimum wage, West Midlands 184-5w

Favell, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Air accidents, Lockerbie (20:03:89) 733
Questions
Agricultural land, Construction 628-9w
Agricultural land, Housing construction 350w
Channel tunnel, Freight transport 3-4, 401w
Hospital waiting lists, NHS Review 567w
Inner cities initiative 258w
Scottish Assembly, Operating costs 741w
Unemployment benefits, Social security abuse 199w

FCO
see Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Fearn, Mr Ronnie
Questions
Audiology technicians 157w
Benzodiazepines, Drug abuse 581w
Cerebrovascular diseases 769w
Family doctors, Manpower 891-2
Health services finance 491-2w, 666w
Health services finance, Voluntary organisations 491w
Hearing aids 157w, 325-6w
HM Coastguard, Equipment 401-2w
HM Coastguard, Overtime 403w
Medical research, Animal welfare 16w
NHS finance, Private health services 492w
NHS finance, Voluntary organisations 492w
Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 565w
Prescription drugs, Drug industry 581w
Royal National Institute for the Deaf 326w

Fees & charges
Audit 17
Driving tests 530w
Family doctors 768w
Management consultants 13-4w, 20w, 23w, 31w, 34w, 36w, 40w, 42w, 47-8w, 52w, 76w, 81-2w, 91-2w, 100-2w, 117w, 228w, 254-5w, 383w

Fees & charges—continued
Public Record Office 139w
Severn bridge 595w, 719
Shipping 287w

Fences
760w
HMS Cambridge 322w, 324w

Fenner, Dame Peggy
Questions
Channel tunnel, King's Cross 4
Social Fund, Chatham 676w
Vacancies, Kent 191w
West Kent Water Company, Water charges 1085

FEOGA
see European Agricultural Guidance & Guarantee Fund

Ferries
Shipping safety 122-4w

Festivals & special occasions
Agricultural products 82w
British Food & Farming Year 1989 7-8w, 82w, 93w
Opera 723-4

Fiddler's Ferry power station
Air pollution control 22w

Field, Mr Barry
Questions
Antarctic, Oil pollution 144w
Civil service pensions, Index linking 301w
Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1986 251w
Forensic science, Departmental coordination 811w
Inspectors of anatomy 561w
Lindane, English Channel 594w
National Audit Office, Public bodies 17
Official engagements 126w, 277-8w, 514w
Older workers, Employment discrimination 252w
Potatoes, Agricultural subsidies 615w
Public service pensions 586w
Sea pollution, EC law 424w
Shipping, EC action 6
Shipping safety, Fishing gear 206w
Social Fund, Funerals 789w

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 551
Questions
Church Commissioners 16
Cruelty to children, Sexual offences 575w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 578w
Self-governing hospitals, Clergy 669w
Unemployment benefits, Computers in Government departments 56w
Vietnam, EC external relations 448w

Fields, Mr Terry
Questions
Minimum wage, North West region 185w

Film industry
271w

Finance Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
(20:03:89) 827-50
1R (20:03:89) 850
Questions
587w

Financial institutions
Company investigations 406
Stocks & shares 406

Fines
Minimum wage 181-3w
Waste disposal 652w

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Questions
EC external relations, Council of Europe 623w

Firearms
Compensation 817w
Costs 760w

Firearms Act 1968
Questions
539-40w

Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988
Questions
817w

Firearms certificates
North Wales 539-40w
Thames Valley police 292w

Fires
Prisons 806w

First Scottish Standing Committee
(14:03:89) 339-57

Fish
Veterinary medicine 145w

Fish farming
Crown Estate Commissioners 383-4w
Isle of Arran 445w
Pesticides 142w
Pollution control 142w
Scotland 142w, 444-5w
Water pollution 444-5w

Fishburn, Mr Dudley
Debates etc.
Arts (13:03:89) 104-6
Questions
Architectural conservation, Property development 325w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Arts (13:03:89) 83, 96, 107-12
Questions
Broadcasting, Deaf 292w
Broadcasting, Handicapped 292w
Libraries, Expenditure 725-6
Victoria & Albert Museum 512w
Victoria & Albert Museum, Manpower 302w

Fisheries
Dock labour scheme 194w
Marine animals 468w
North East region 343-4w

Fishing catches
345w

Fishing gear
Shipping safety 206w

Fishing vessels
Belgium 471w
Netherlands 471-2w

Flannery, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 875, 876
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 985
Questions
Confederation of British Industry 263w
Minimum wage, Yorkshire & Humberside 183-4w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 639w

Flecknoe
277w

Flood control
National Rivers Authority 242w
Research finance 85-6w
Rivers 85-6w

Flue gas desulphurisation
22w, 391-2w

Fluoridation
Dental health 577w
Water supply 773-4w

Flynn, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1271
Questions
AWE Aldermaston, Television programmes 753w

Flynn, Mr Paul—continued
Chemical weapons, Disclosure of information 754w
Eggs, Food labelling 520
Hazardous wastes, Imports 774w
Motorways, Road accidents 595w
National insurance fund, Treasury supplement 544-5w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, West Germany 417w
Nuclear reactors, Radioactive wastes 762w
Nuclear weapons, Modernisation 477-8w, 509w
Nuclear weapons, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 754w
Plutonium, Exports 762w
Severn bridge, Fees & charges 595w
Severn bridge, Road accidents 537w
Transport of radioactive materials, Export licensing 762w
Transport of radioactive materials, Exports 762-3w
Transport of radioactive materials, Licensing 591w
Transport of radioactive materials, Sea transport 400w
Transport of radioactive materials, USA 754w
Unemployment, South Wales 504w
Water charges, Welsh Water Authority 504w

Food Advisory Committee
351-2w

Food & Agriculture Organisation
527, 532

Food composition
Meat products 341-2w

Food contamination
Cook-chill catering 78-9w
Food standards 526
Health hazards 570w

Food hygiene
343w, 517
Agricultural research 342-4w
Air transport 163w
Food industry 80w
Food labelling 517
Prisons 806-7w
Slaughterhouses 466w

Food imitations
Consumer protection 130w, 481w
EC action 281w

Food Imitations (Safety) Regulations 1989
Questions
130w

Food imports
Fruit 470w

Food industry
Food hygiene 80w
Tropical products 85w

Food inspection
European Commission 83w
Food microbiology 82w
Slaughterhouses 83w

Food labelling
Eggs 520
Food hygiene 517

Food microbiology
Food inspection 82w
Laboratories 82w

Food packaging
Dioxins 249w

Food poisoning
162-3w
Cook-chill catering 78w
Prisons 807w

Food standards
Airlines 520
Food contamination 526

Food surpluses
353-4w

Fookes, Dame Janet
Debates etc.
Animal experiments, Licensing (23:03:89) 1255-7
Questions
National Pet Week 506w
Pets 598w
Shipbuilding, Plymouth 284w
Vacant land, Land registration 1076

Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Questions
Minimum wage, Wales 183-4w

Football
Arrests 298w, 809w
Identity cards 637-8w
Travel restrictions 813w

Football League
298w

Football national membership scheme
425w

Football Spectators Bill (HL) 1988/89
Questions
425w, 813w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Advertising 22w
Civil servants 25w
European Communities 215w
Management consultants 23w
Privatisation 23w
Public relations 23-4w
Statistics 22-3w

Foreign companies in UK
265w
North West region 602w

Foreign investment in UK
542w, 602w
Employment opportunities 264w, 408, 602w
Industrial relations 408
North West region 602w
Regional development grants 269w
Wales 438-9w

Foreign languages
681-2w

Foreign loans
Brazil 625-6w

Foreign tourists
Japan 198w
USA 197-8w

Forensic science
Ammunition 598w
Departmental coordination 811w

Forest protection
Rain forests 286-8

Forestry
Caithness 38-9w, 550-1w
Environmentally sensitive areas 38-9w
Glamorgan 504w
Land acquisition 714-8w
Land use 417w
Scotland 660w
Sutherland 550-1w
Yorkshire & Humberside 714-8w

Forestry Commission
503-6w, 657-60w, 700w, 714-8w, 723w, 747w
Civil service manpower 36-7w
Land acquisition 141-2w, 659w

Forestry grant scheme
747w

Forestry grants
505-6w, 747w

"Forestry in Scotland"
660w

Forests
Countryside Commission 650w

Forman, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 617
Questions
Social security appeals 175w

***Forsyth, Mr Michael**, Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc.
Community care, Dundee (23:03:89) 1250-4
Questions
Agriculture, Scotland 313w
Alcoholic drinks, Scotland 545w
Breast cancer, Screening 447w
Burrell art gallery, Construction costs 665w
City Technology College Trust 446w
City Technology College Trust, Government assistance 446w
Community service orders, Scotland 554w
Crack, Drug abuse 315w
Crofting, Woodland grant scheme 748w
Dialysis machines, Patients 313-4w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Community care 662w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Scotland 661-2w
Education, Capital investment 742w
Education, Scotland 663-5w
Educational publications, Expenditure 745-7w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Scotland 663w
Fish farming, Pollution control 142w
Grant Maintained Schools Trust 446w
Grant Maintained Schools Trust, Government assistance 446w
Health, Poverty 446w
Hospital doctors, Dismissal 142w
Hospital finance, Scotland 750w
Hospitals, Public sector assets 141w
Inverclyde Royal Hospital, Hospital waiting lists 38w
Inverclyde Royal Hospital, Resource management initiative 554w
Junior hospital doctors, Working hours 547-8w
Mental welfare officers, Social workers' training 547w
NHS, Building repairs 742w
Nurses, Scotland 444w
Pesticides, Fish farming 142w
Pesticides, Water pollution 445w
Radiation, Health hazards 229w
School leaving, Scotland 745w
Scottish health boards, NHS finance 749-50w
Self-governing hospitals, Hospitals 314w
Self-governing schools, Scotland 446w, 751-2w
Social workers' training, Mental health 547w
Sports competitors, Scotland 663w
Student grants, Scotland 550w
Teachers, Vacancies 443w
Water pollution, Fish farming 444-5w
Wild animals, Pesticides 656w

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Questions
Rates & rating, Northern Ireland 733-4w
Rates & rating, Northern Ireland district councils 732-4w

***Forth, Mr Eric**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Consumer Affairs*
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Trade & Industry 99-100w
Balance of trade, Electronic equipment 259w
Bananas, Imports 269w
Butane gas, Retail trade 268w
Companies, Capital 265w

***Forth, Mr Eric**—continued*
Company liquidations 265w
Consumer organisations 266w
Consumer protection 265-6w
Consumer protection, EC action 267w
Consumer protection, European Commission 285w
Copyright Designs & Patents Act 1988, EC action 260w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Research 129w
EC Consumer Affairs Council 266w
EC internal trade 259-60w
EC internal trade, Balance of trade 267w
Education & industry 407-8
Education & industry, Coal mining 408
Enterprise initiative 258w
Europe Open for Business 262-3w
European Communities, Dept of Trade & Industry 496-7w
Export controls, Arms trade 129w
Export Credits Guarantee Department, EC internal trade 401
Export Credits Guarantee Department, Exports 401
Food imitations, Consumer protection 130w, 481w
Food imitations, EC action 281w
Foreign companies in UK 265w
GATT, EC action 258-9w
Hearing Aid Council 99w, 405
Hearing Aid Council, Codes of practice 262w
Hearing aids, Private health services 259w
Hearing aids, Sales methods 393-4
Industrial research, Research finance 264w
Information technology, Balance of trade 267w
Information technology, Trade & Industry Select Committee 97w
Inner cities initiative, Bradford 714w
Management consultants, Dept of Trade & Industry 100-2w
Microelectronics industry, Research finance 105w
National Engineering Laboratory, Civil service manpower 496w
New businesses, Suffolk 99w
OECD countries, Research finance 266w
Overseas investment 260w
Post Office 257w
Price labelling, Codes of practice 431-2w
Privatisation, Dept of Trade & Industry 102w
Public relations, Dept of Trade & Industry 100w, 103w
Radioactive waste disposal, USSR 128w
Regional aid, Scotland 711-2w
Statistics, Dept of Trade & Industry 100-1w

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc.
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1040, 1043, 1058
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 897-8
Heart of Midlothian Football Club 285
Minimum wage, West Midlands 183-4w
Shipping accidents, Submarines 402w
Smoking 65-6w
Tobacco, Government grants 139w
Tobacco industry 235w

***Fowler, Rt Hon Norman**, Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 736-45
Skills Training Agency, Deloitte Haskins & Sells (13:03:89) 35
Skills Training Agency, Ministerial statements (13:03:89) 23-33
Questions
Employment, Buy British 270
Employment, Northern region 269-70
Employment opportunities 271-2, 275
Employment opportunities, Teesside 272-3
Employment training, Take-up 185-6w
Skill shortages, South East region 274-5
Training & enterprise councils 203-4w, 282

***Fowler, Rt Hon Norman**—continued*
Unemployment 270, 272-3
Unemployment, South East region 271
Unemployment, Wales 272

France
Channel tunnel 108w
Water supply industry 1073

Franks, Mr Cecil
Questions
Foreign companies in UK 265w
Lead free petrol 632w
National Dock Labour Board, Manpower 203w
Unemployment 190w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Hospital waiting lists 563w

Fraser, Mr John
Debates etc.
Legal Aid & Legal Advice & Assistance Regulations 1989 (22:03:89) 1218-22
Legal profession (23:03:89) 1287-8
Questions
Armed forces discharges, Medical treatments 275w
Arts sponsorship, Buildings 464w
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Lambeth 544w
Cameroon, Prisoners 144w
City technology colleges, Lambeth 499w
Legal advice & assistance, Solicitors 449w
Legal aid 449w
Legal aid, Cohabitation 449w
Teachers, Loughborough School London 499w

Fraud
Common agricultural policy 523-4
EC action 339w
EC countries 16-7
Motor vehicles 288w

Free movement of labour
Dock labour scheme 193w

***Freeman, Mr Roger**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health*
Debates etc.
Cot deaths, Medical research (20:03:89) 887-90
Hearing aids (23:03:89) 1303-6
Hospital closures (21:03:89) 1067-70
Questions
Abortion, Advertising 560w
Abortion, Anaesthetics 560w
Abortion, Basildon 65w
Abortion, Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority 162w
Abortion, Human organs 571w
Abortion, Ministers' domestic visits 560w
Abortion, Private health services 560w
Abortion, Select Committees 560w
Abortion Act 1967 560w
ACCEPT, Government grants to voluntary organisations 575w
Agency Benefits Unit, Administrative delays 67w
Alzheimer's disease 582w
Ambulance services, Railway accidents 667-8w
Ambulance services, Regional health authorities 155-6w
Benzodiazepines, Drug abuse 338w, 581w
Bradford Health Authority, NHS finance 901
Cancer, Stomach 236w
Cerebrovascular diseases 769w
Childbirth, Young people 768-9w
Computer privacy, Dept of Health 66-7w
Computer privacy, Family doctors 154w
Computer privacy, Hospital waiting lists 66w
Cot deaths 486-8w
Cot deaths, Medical research 235w, 325w
Deaf, Blind 237w
Dental charges 337w
Dental health, Children 577w
Dept of Health, Environmental health officers 767w

Freeman, Mr Roger*—*continued
District health authorities, Per capita costs 671-4w
Down's syndrome, Babies 573w
Down's syndrome, Medical treatments 573w
Educational health services, Seaham Harbour 66w
Electoral register, Doncaster 430w
Electorate, Parliamentary constituencies 414w, 668w
Environmental health, Official secrets 160-2w, 770w
Genito-urinary medicine, Waltham Forest Health Authority 237w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 578w
Health, Disadvantaged 901
Health, Homelessness 902
Health hazards, Exhaust emissions 667w
Health hazards, Transport of hazardous materials 490w
Health service costing returns 77w
Health services 568w
Health services finance 491-2w, 666w
Health services finance, Voluntary organisations 491w
Heart diseases, Costs 765w
Hospices, Government grants 572w
Hospitals, Air conditioning 236w
Hospitals, Computers in National Health Service 769w
Hospitals, Construction 236w
Hospitals, Fund raising 236w
Hospitals, North Western Regional Health Authority 766w
Hospitals, Railway accidents 158w
Kidney patients 389-90w
Kidney patients, Kidney machines 481-2w
London Ambulance Service, Emergency calls 159w
London Ambulance Service, Finance 158-9w
London Ambulance Service, Manpower 580w
London Ambulance Service, Out-patients 159w
Malaria, Medical research 385w
Medical equipment, Anaesthetics 387-9w
Medical equipment, Safety 389w
Medical ethics 574w
Mental hospitals, Hospital closures 669w
Mental patients, Hospital discharges 582w
Mentally ill, Mental health community care 579w
National Blood Transfusion Service, Management 73-4w
Newchurch Hospital, Hospital closures 769w
NHS, Contracts for services 565-6w
NHS, Expenditure 77w
NHS, Hertfordshire West 566w
NHS, Land values 570-1w
NHS, Performance indicators 900
NHS finance 569w
NHS finance, Capital investment 571w
NHS finance, NHS internal market 334w
NHS finance, Private health services 492w
NHS finance, Resource management initiative 337w
NHS finance, Voluntary organisations 492w
North Western Regional Health Authority, Capital investment 77w
Population 668w
Prescriptions, Budgeting 902
Psychiatry, Elderly 567-8w
Psychiatry, Geriatric patients 158w
Public relations, Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 71w, 73w
Regional health authorities, Finance 69w
Regional secure units, Finance 482w
Secure psychiatric units, Regional health authorities 328w, 575w
Self-governing hospitals 901-2
Sex change operations, District health authorities 767w
South Cumbria Health Authority, Finance 667w

Freeman, Mr Roger*—*continued
South Cumbria Health Authority, Hospital patients 386-7w
Sports, Injuries 668w
Statistics, Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 74w
Supra-regional services, NHS finance 69-70w
Surgery, Per capita costs 482-3w
Toxoplasmosis 576w
Transplant surgery 489w
Transplant surgery, Death 385-6w
Transplant surgery, Hospital waiting lists 386w
Water pollution, Diseases 79w
Weil's disease, Health education 575w
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority, NHS finance 900-1

Freight transport
Channel tunnel 3-4, 401w

French, Mr Douglas
Questions
British Telecom, Pricing 430w
Housing associations, Housing finance 1077
Tourism 197w

Fringe benefits
Tax yields 63-4w

Fruit
Cyanide 470w
Food imports 470w

Fry, Mr Peter
Questions
Sheep diseases, Disease control 340w

Fund raising
Hospitals 236w

Funerals
Social Fund 789w

Further education
Day care of children 416-7w
School leaving 681w

Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989 (14:03:89) 318
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 433
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 346
Questions
Community charge, Alzheimer's disease 282
Consumer organisations 266w
Employment training, Travelling expenses 256w
Trade union officials, Facilities agreements 416w
Trade union officials, Leave 202w
Veterinary services, Civil service manpower 346w

G7
see Group of Seven

Galbraith, Mr Sam
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 898
Hospitals, Public sector assets 141w
Medical audit, EC countries 384w
Nurses, Scotland 444w
Veterinary services, Manpower 341w

Galloway, Mr George
Questions
Minimum wage, Scotland 182-3w

Gardiner, Mr George
Debates etc.
Structure plans, Surrey (13:03:89) 261-3

Garrett, Mr John
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 745-9, 754
Questions
Anglian Water Authority, Water pollution 423-4w, 508-9w

Garrett, Mr John*—*continued
Balance of trade 396
Bradwell power station, Nuclear safety 257w
Community charge, Norwich 627w
Kidney patients 389-90w
Minimum wage, East Anglia 183-4w
"Satanic Verses", Islam 363w
Sea pollution, EC law 89w
Sea pollution, Pollution monitoring 783w
Sewage, AIDS 95w
Thames Water Authority, Water pollution 647-8w
Water pollution, Dept of Energy 20w, 678w
Water pollution, Dept of the Environment 89w
Water pollution, Ministry of Defence 51-2w

Garrett, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 30
Questions
Information technology, Balance of trade 267w
Minimum wage, Northern region 180w

Gas pipelines
Piper Alpha platform 678w

Gas supply industry
127w
Competition 271-2w
Industrial energy consumption 272w

Gas tariffs
Industrial energy prices 127w, 272-4w
Industry 130w
Iron & steel industry 130w
Price controls 127w

GATT
258w, 623-4w
Agriculture 349w
EC action 258-9w

GCE A level
School leaving certificates 170-2w

GEC
405-6, (23:03:89) 1244

General Agreement on Tariffs & Trade
see GATT

General Certificate of Secondary Education
School leaving 688-9w
School leaving certificates 172w

General Electric Company
see GEC

General Medical Services Committee
487-9w, 669-70w

General Practice Finance Corporation
Property transfer 667w

Genetics
Entry clearances 815w
Science & technology research 607w

Genito-urinary medicine
Medical treatments 328-32w
Waltham Forest Health Authority 237w

George, Mr Bruce
Questions
Falkland Islands, Armed forces deployment 510w

Geriatric patients
Drug side effects 157-8w
Psychiatry 158w

German measles
67-8w

Gibraltar
Police 364w

Gill, Mr Christopher
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 588-9
Hospital closures (21:03:89) 1066-7

Gill, Mr Christopher*—*continued
Questions
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 524
European Free Trade Association 908
Meat products, Food composition 341-2w
NHS hospital trusts, Salop 892
Pollution control 637w
USSR, Agricultural policy 530
Youth training scheme 199-200w

Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 439-42
Questions
DROPS, Motor vehicle testing 382w
Pensioners, Disposable income 791w

GLAA
see Greater London Arts Association

Glamorgan
Forestry 504w

Glasgow
540w, 665w
Cultural relations 725

Glengarry forest
380w
Radio engineering 378-9w, 761w

Globe Theatre
Southwark 421w

Gloucester Health Authority
(21:03:89) 1064-70

Glyn, Dr Alan
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989 (14:03:89) 331-2
Questions
Self-governing hospitals 899

GMSC
see General Medical Services Committee

Goats
Milk 469-70w
Scrapie 79w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 560
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1100
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 554
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 961-2
Questions
Appledore Ferguson, Departmental correspondence 377w
Business statements 545
Community service orders, Scotland 554w
Council house sales, Inverclyde 37-8w
Council house sales, Publicity 37w
Council house sales, Repossession orders 38w
Council housing, Scotland 548w
Criminal injuries compensation, Cruelty to children 809-10w
Cruelty to children, Criminal injuries compensation 748-9w
Electorate, Greenock & Port Glasgow 549w
Family credit, Scotland 544w
Fish farming, Isle of Arran 445w
Fish farming, Scotland 445w
Fisheries, Marine animals 468w
Hospital doctors, Dismissal 142w
Housing, Young people 548w
Housing associations, Greenock & Port Glasgow 229w
Industrial investment, Scotland 549w
Inverclyde Royal Hospital, Hospital waiting lists 38w
Inverclyde Royal Hospital, Resource management initiative 554w
Junior hospital doctors, Working hours 547-8w
Mental welfare officers, Social workers' training 547w
Pesticides, Water pollution 445w

Godman, Dr Norman A*—*continued
Remand in custody, Scotland 443w
Shipbuilding, Scotland 548-9w
Social workers' training, Mental health 547w
Unemployment, Greenock & Port Glasgow 229-30w
Veterinary medicine, Licensing 473w
Waste disposal, Air pollution control 444w
Water pollution, Fish farming 444-5w
Young people, Strathclyde 555w
Youth unemployment, Greenock & Port Glasgow 314w

Golding, Mrs Llin
Questions
Arts, West Midlands 463w
Minimum wage, West Midlands 275

Goodhart, Sir Philip
Debates etc.
Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace) Bill 1988/89, 2R (14:03:89) 375-7, 378, 384-5

Goodlad, Mr Alastair
Questions
Average earnings, North West region 415w, 677w
Foreign companies in UK, North West region 602w
Foreign investment in UK 602w
Foreign investment in UK, North West region 602w
Hospital waiting lists, North Western Regional Health Authority 766w
Hospitals, North Western Regional Health Authority 766w
Manufacturing industries, North West region 430w
National income, North West region 430-1w
Police, Manpower 599-600w
Pupil-teacher ratios, North West region 681w
School leaving, North West region 681w
Standard of living, North West region 417w
Training, North West region 794w
Youth unemployment, North West region 795-6w

Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Questions
Assured tenancies 95w
Football, Arrests 298w
Football national membership scheme 425w
Metropolitan Police, Criminal statistics 812w
Post Office 257w
Wimbledon Football Club, Arrests 298w

Gordon, Ms Mildred
Questions
Blackwall tunnel, Repairs & maintenance 119w
Britannia bridge, Road traffic control 399w
Business statements 538
Minimum wage, Greater London 180w

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 805-7
Questions
Chemical weapons, EC action 730w
New businesses 202w

Gould, Mr Bryan
Questions
Export promotion 404
Exports, Balance of payments 400-1
Industrial investment, Manufacturing industries 710-2w
Inflation, Group of Seven 793-4w

Government achievements
663-5w

Government assistance
British Rail 374w
City Technology College Trust 446w

Government assistance*—*continued
Coal mining 764w
Conductive education 396w
Family practitioner services 154w
Grant Maintained Schools Trust 446w
Set-aside schemes 429w
Tree planting 88w

Government assistance to industry
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines 270w

Government assistance to nationalised industries
Coal mining (22:03:89) 1234

Government buildings
Energy conservation 240w

Government departments
Cash limits 456w
House of Commons passes 458w
Vacant land 635w

Government grants
City technology colleges 355w
Hospices 572w
Housing insulation 318w
Road works 709-10w
Scottish Arts Council 701w
Thamesline 286w
Tobacco 139w
Tourism 197w
Veterinary services 166w
Wave power 761-2w

Government grants to local authorities
90w
Durham Education Authority 355w
Educational finance 170w
Pre-school education 358w
Primary education 358w
Secure units 485-6w

Government grants to voluntary organisations
578w
ACCEPT 575w
National Alliance of Women's Organisations 149w

Government information services
Bordes, Pamella 692w
Expenditure 229w
Scottish Office 229w

Government laboratories
Agricultural research 352w, 722w

Government securities
703w

Gow, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 754
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1098
Questions
Eastbourne Waterworks Company 429w
Hordern, Peter 17
Labour Party 529
Water supply industry, Privatisation 639w

Graduates
Civil service manpower 529w
Employment training 310w
Northern Ireland 528-9w
Pay 528w
Veterinary services 392w

Graham, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 819
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 956-8
Questions
Consumer protection, EC action 267w
Minimum wage, Scotland 178-9w

Grampian
Water charges (22:03:89) 1235-42

Grant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 463-5
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 970, 1016, (22:03:89) 1140, 1168-70

Grant, Sir Anthony*—*continued
Questions
Hedges & ditches, East Anglia 521

Grant, Mr Bernie
Questions
Enterprise zones, Tax allowances 643w
Handicap benefits, British residents abroad 675w
Minimum wage, Greater London 180w
Teachers, Republic of Ireland 404w
Tibet, China 366w

Grant maintained schools
(20:03:89) 859-84
School governors 684w

Grant Maintained Schools Trust
446w, (20:03:89) 859-84
Government assistance 446w

Gravelines
Nuclear accidents 368w

Greater Glasgow Health Board
Death 901

Greater London
Arts 362-3w, 462-3w
Bus services 286w
Company liquidations 61w
Employment 191w
Homelessness 641w, 1074-5
Military vehicles 756w
Minimum wage 178-80w
NHS & private practice 564w
Pensioners 395w
Radio broadcasting licences 129w
Railway transport 12
Rates & rating 428-9w
Road safety 11
Roads 10-2
Self-governing hospitals 899-900
Training & enterprise councils 309-11w

Greater London Arts Association
362-3w, 462-3w

Greater Manchester
Drinking & driving 364-5w, 599w
Police discipline 294-5w

Greece
Drugs 666w

Greenbelt
Retail trade 211-2w

Greenock & Port Glasgow
Electorate 549w
Housing associations 229w
Unemployment 229-30w
Youth unemployment 314w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 869
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1273-4
Questions
Business statements 543-4
Closed shop 201w
Horses, Privatisation 291w
London Underground, Police 110w
Mental patients, Hospital discharges 582w
Ministers of religion, Easter 15
Official engagements 126w, 277-8w, 514w
Opera, Festivals & special occasions 723-4
Perivale Skillcentre 309w
Railway Inspectorate 530w
Rates & rating, Rate increases 1086-7
Road safety, Greater London 11
School violence 17-8w

Greenway, Mr John
Debates etc.
Arts (13:03:89) 81-2, 84
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 595-7, 625
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 906
Drunkenness, Arrests 597w

Greenway, Mr John*—*continued
Employment, Yorkshire & Humberside 188w
Public order offences, St Neots 818w

Gregory, Mr Conal
Debates etc.
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1269-70
Questions
Tourism, Consultants 253w
Vacant land, Land acquisition 629w

Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Questions
Road works, Elvoden 207w, 704w

Griffiths, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Housing & elderly, Sheltered housing (23:03:89) 1291-4
Questions
Housing benefits, Capital rules 792w
Minimum wage, Scotland 179w
Personal income 392-3w, 791w

Griffiths, Mr Win
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 738-9, 801-3
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 873
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 933-4
Questions
Bovine somatotropin, Agricultural research 472w
Bovine somatotropin, Licensing 472w
Bovine somatotropin, Netherlands 472-3w
EC external trade, Tanzania 493-4w
Employment 188-90w
Employment level, Self-employed 416w
Exports, Interest rates 400
Nuclear power, Emergency planning 763w
Refrigeration, Air pollution control 636-7w
Regional selective assistance 266w
Sea pollution, Beaches 1083
Tanzania, Overseas aid 517-8w
Teachers, Retirement 225w
Teachers' pensions, Part-time employment 224-5w

Griffiths Committee
see Community Care Review

Grist, Mr Ian, Under-Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Wales 137w
Benzodiazepines 43w
Benzodiazepines, Drug abuse 42-3w
Childbirth, Wales 43w
House renovation grants, Wales 131-2w
Medical treatments, Wales 41w
Prosthetics, North Wales 40-1w
Prosthetics, Wales 41w
Sewage, Wales 44w
Urban development grants, Wales 136w

Grocott, Mr Bruce
Questions
Community charge, The Wrekin 627w
Crime prevention 812w
Electorate, Parliamentary constituencies 414w
Food hygiene, Food industry 80w
Hospital beds, Salop 892
Income support, Residential care 787w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Health service staff 362w

Group of Seven
710-2w
Inflation 542w, 793-4w

Grylls, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 27
Questions
Income & Corporation Taxes Act 1988 587w

Grylls, Mr Michael*—*continued
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 453-5w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial investment 402
Police, Essex 804-5w

Guided weapons
Argentina 142-3w

Guillotine
312-3w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, Minister of State for Local Government
Questions
Community charge 627w, 780w
Community charge, Administrative costs 627-8w
Community charge, Attachment of earnings 780-1w
Community charge, Barnsley 626-7w
Community charge, EC action 628w
Community charge, Educationally subnormal 628w
Community charge, Ethnic minorities 318-9w
Community charge, Leyton 318w
Community charge, Local authority powers 628w
Community charge, Norwich 627w
Community charge, Nottingham 319w
Community charge, Orders & regulations 90w, 627w
Community charge, Students 370-1w
Community charge, The Wrekin 627w
Community charge rebates, Community charge 90w
Community charge rebates, Hospital patients 90w
Community charges register 90-1w
Community charges register, Personal records 370w
County Hall, Property development 782w
Domestic rates, Prison sentences 646w
Government grants to local authorities 90w
Local government expenditure 782w
Local government services, Competition 640w
London Residuary Body, Occupational pensions 649w
Neighbourhood councils 1080
Neighbourhood councils, Local authority powers 1079
Neighbourhood councils, Tower Hamlets 1079-80
Rate increases 631w, 636w
Rate increases, Derbyshire 642w
Rate support grants, Basildon District Council 640w
Rates & rating, Calderdale 1087
Rates & rating, City of Westminster 1087
Rates & rating, Cleveland 1088
Rates & rating, Nurses 428-9w
Rates & rating, Rate increases 1086-7
Rates & rating, Wandsworth 1087
Small businesses, Non-domestic rates 644w

Gun sports
Land use 211w, 506w

Gwynedd Health Authority
438w
Hospital closures (23:03:89) 1262-5, 1275-81

Hague, William
Maiden speeches (20:03:89) 761-4

Hague, Mr William
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 761-4

Halifax
Bridging allowances 59w
Social security appeals 33w
Youth training scheme 59w

Hamilton, Mr Archie, Minister of State for the Armed Forces
Questions
Advertising, Ministry of Defence 52w
Armed forces, Air transport 509w

Hamilton, Mr Archie*—*continued
Armed forces deployment, Oman 476w
Armed forces deployment, South Korea 476w
Armed forces deployment, Western Europe 620w
Army bases, Security 760w
Army bases, Security industry 621w
Chemical weapons, USSR 245-6w
Computer privacy, Defence 245w
Computer privacy, Ministry of Defence 244-5w
Computer privacy, NATO 52w
Condor 2 missiles, Argentina 381w
Falkland Islands, Armed forces deployment 510w
Nuclear disarmament, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 381w
Nuclear disarmament, Treaties 381-2w
Nuclear submarines, Ionizing radiation 478-80w
Nuclear submarines, Liverpool 125w
Nuclear submarines, Medical records 480w
Nuclear submarines, Merseyside 125w
Nuclear submarines, Nuclear safety 479w
Nuclear submarines, Ports 125w, 479w
Nuclear submarines, Radiation hazards 478-81w
Nuclear submarines, Radioactive waste disposal 479w
Nuclear weapons, Modernisation 477-8w, 509w
"Peace & Security" 381w
Public relations, Ministry of Defence 54w
Radio engineering, Submarines 379-81w

Hamilton, Mr Neil
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 755, 794-7
Questions
Balance of trade 395
Dock labour scheme 281
Police discipline, Cheshire 294-5w

Hampshire
Housing construction 210w
River pollution 239w
Road traffic 207w
Roads 114w, (13:03:89) 197-209

Hampshire County Council
114w

Handicap benefits
675-6w
British residents abroad 675w

Handicapped
Access to buildings 30w
Broadcasting 292w
Lifts 388w
Local government expenditure 440-1w
Northern Ireland 420-1w
School transport 165-6w
Social workers 696-7w
Students 421w
Survey techniques 420-1w
Wales 439-41w, 696w

Handicapped workers
253w
Scotland 741w
Unemployment 200-1w

Hang gliding
Airmisses 616w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy
Questions
Council for the Protection of Rural England 518-9
Employment, Greater London 191w
London Regional Transport, Public appointments 594-5w
Road haulage licences 532w
Sports sponsorship, Tobacco industry 238w
UK companies abroad, South Africa 602w

Hannam, Mr John
Questions
UN Decade of Disabled Persons 1983-1992 215w, 386w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Community care 561w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Patients 384w

Harbours, Docks & Piers Clauses Act 1847
Questions
448-9w

Hard core unemployed
189w
Youth unemployment 192w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 32
Questions
Common agricultural policy 347w
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 524
Electricity supply industry, Capital investment 559w
Electricity tariffs, Energy costs 678w
Hedges & ditches 521-2
Minimum wage, Yorkshire & Humberside 182-3w
Private Bills, House of Commons procedure 19

Hargreaves, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Empty Property & Community Aid Bill, 1R (21:03:89) 928-9
Questions
Abortion, Private health services 560w
Taxis 112w

Harland & Wolff
Ministerial statements (22:03:89) 1089-100

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
Channel tunnel, France 108w
City technology colleges, Southwark 607-8w
Registered Homes tribunals, Public appointments 492w
Self-governing hospitals, Greater London 899-900

Harmonisation of legislation
Driving licences 374w

Harmonisation of standards
Driving instruction 531w
Driving tests 530-1w

Harrier aircraft
Airmisses 616-7w

Harris, Mr David
Questions
Beaches, Water pollution 639w
Employment, South West region 193w
Magistrates' courts, Computer applications 540-1w
Prisoners, Families 365w

Harvard Securities
406

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 917

Hawkins, Mr Christopher
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 738, 777
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 561
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 1031, 1033, (22:03:89) 1113, 1144

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 878, 880

Hayes, Mr Jerry*—*continued
Questions
Drugs, Licensing 328w
Foreign tourists, USA 197-8w
Medicines Control Agency, Public appointments 328w
NHS finance, National Association of Health Authorities 903-4
"Working for Patients White Paper", British Medical Association 564w

Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Questions
Business statements 539

Haynes, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 577-9
Questions
Arts, East Midlands 463w
Education & industry, Coal mining 408
Housing, Young people 629w
Nottingham Health Authority, NHS finance 903
Planning authorities, Housing construction 1080-2
Roads, East Midlands 8

Hazardous materials
Departmental responsibilities 690-1w

Hazardous Waste Inspectorate
Scotland 652-3w
Tipping of waste 652w

Hazardous wastes
633w
Imports 774w
International conferences 209-10w, 651w
Scotland 653w
Transport of hazardous materials 690w
Waste disposal (13:03:89) 70-2, 633w

HBMC
see Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England

Health
Disadvantaged 901
Homelessness 902
Poverty 446w
Scotland 446w

Health & Safety Commission
see Health & Safety Executive

Health & Safety Executive
416w, 556-7w, 803-4w, 806w
British Drug House 556-7w
Passive smoking 367-8w
Pesticides 797w

Health education
Curriculum 15w
Toxoplasmosis 576w
Weil's disease 575w

Health Education Authority
Advertising 72w
Public relations 71-2w
Statistics 75-6w

Health hazards
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 515w
Exhaust emissions 667w
Food contamination 570w
Radiation 229w
Radio waves 378w
Sheep dipping 721w
Transport of hazardous materials 490w

Health insurance
Pensioners 587-8w
Tax allowances 451-2w, 588w

Health service ancillary staff
Pay settlements 582w

"Health Service Costing Returns"
77w

Health service staff
Hospital consultants 334w
Pay 387w

***Health service staff**—continued*
Scientists 573w
South Cumbria Health Authority 386w
Temporary staff 583-4w
"Working for Patients White Paper" 362w, 562w

Health services
568w
Ethnic minorities 489w

Health services finance
491-2w, 666w
Voluntary organisations 491w

Hearing Aid Council
99w, 393, 405
Codes of practice 262w

Hearing aids
70w, 157w, 325-6w, (23:03:89) 1299-306
Consumer protection 405
Leicestershire Health Authority 670-1w
NHS 70w
Private health services 259w
Royal National Institute for the Deaf 326w
Sales methods 393-4

Heart diseases
Costs 765w
Screening 338w

Heart of Midlothian Football Club
285

Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 749-55

Heathrow Airport
490w
Night flying 906
Road traffic 216-7w

Heating & Ventilating Contractors' Association
65w

Heddle, Mr John
Questions
Agency Benefits Unit, Administrative delays 67w
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Local government expenditure 545w
Coal fired power stations, Air pollution control 391-2w
Council house waiting lists 320w
Council house waiting lists, One parent families 320w
Council housing, Tenants' charter 320w
Rents, VAT 774w
Vacant land, Government departments 635w
VAT, Construction 703-4w
VAT, Leisure facilities 61w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 1073

Hedgerows Bill 1988/89
Questions
521-2

Hedges & ditches
347-8w, 521-2
East Anglia 521
Environment protection 520-1

Heffer, Mr Eric S
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 593-5
Private notice question intervention (14:03:89) 298
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1145-7, 1148, 1165
Questions
Bird's Eye, Factory closures 283
Minimum wage, North West region 180w

Helicopters
6 Brigade 619w
Armed forces training 244w

Henderson, Mr Doug
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 106w
Sex change operations, District health authorities 767w

***Henderson, Mr Doug**—continued*
Textile industry, Redundancy 399

Herald of Free Enterprise
122-4w

Hereford Cathedral
Mappa Mundi 464w

Hernia operations
482-3w

Hertfordshire West
NHS 566w

Hicks, Mrs Maureen
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 874
Questions
Curriculum, Departmental publications 684-5w
Unemployment, West Midlands 189w
University teachers, Industrial disputes 684w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Questions
Housing, Rural areas 519

HIDB
see Highlands & Islands Development Board

Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 780-3
Questions
Motorways, Road works 6

Higher education
Capital investment 222-3w
Educational finance 220-3w
University Grants Committee 221w
VAT (22:03:89) 1234

Higher education administration
University finance 406w

Higher education admission
Age participation rates 529w
Northern Ireland 529w

Highland Health Board
Breast cancer 447w

Highland Regional Council
314w, 550-1w
Sewage 1081

Highlands & Islands Development Board
552w

Hill, Mr James
Debates etc.
Trident (13:03:89) 251-3

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 994-8, (22:03:89) 1172-4
Questions
Cook-chill catering, Food contamination 78-9w
Cook-chill catering, Food poisoning 78w
Cook-chill catering, Listeria monocytogenes 79w, 163w
Food hygiene 517
Infant mortality, Listeria monocytogenes 162w
Listeria monocytogenes 582-3w
Nursing homes, Property transfer 78w
Old people's homes, Whitby 157w
Residential care, Electronic surveillance 584w
Residential care, Property transfer 570w
Rugby, Police 231-2w
Sewage, Water pollution 211w, 640w

Hind, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc.
Legal profession (23:03:89) 1288-9
Questions

***Hind, Mr Kenneth**—continued*
Burscough-Rufford bypass 112w
Community councils, Rural areas 321w
Driving licences, Harmonisation of legislation 374w
Employment training, Scotland 545w
Manchester Airport, Air routes 9
Manufacturing industries, OECD countries 410
Self-governing hospitals 901-2
Take-home pay, Married men 585w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Patients 563w

Hinkley Point C
Public inquiries 777w

Hip replacements
482-3w

Historic buildings
Ancient monuments 368-9w

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England
368-9w, 421w, 632w

HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary
see HM Inspectorate of Constabulary

HM Coastguard
7
Aberdeen 120w
Civil service manpower 285w
Computer terminals 285-6w
Equipment 401-2w
Overtime 403w
Public petitions (15:03:89) 504, (23:03:89) 1244
Ramsey 121w
Repairs & maintenance 206-7w
Swansea 120w

HM Factory Inspectorate
see Factory Inspectorate

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
2w, 804-5w

HM Inspectorate of Pollution
94w, 211w, 507w, 645-6w, 776w

HM Inspectorate of Schools
219w, 501-2w

HMI
see HM Inspectorate of Schools

HMS Cambridge
Fences 322w, 324w
Planning permission 322w, 324w

***Hogg, Mr Douglas**, Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office*
Debates etc.
Animal experiments, Licensing (23:03:89) 1257-61
Questions
Advertising, Metropolitan Police 6w
Ammunition, Forensic science 598w
Animal experiments 363w
Animal experiments, Dogs 363w
Animal experiments, Statistics 10w
Bettaney, Michael, Solitary confinement 411w
Blackwall tunnel, Road traffic control 7w
Butane gas, Retail trade 360-1w
Complaints against police 813-4w
Computer privacy, Home Office 231w
Computer privacy, Police national computer 231w
Domestic violence, Police training 818w
Drugs, Imports 812w
Drugs, Prices 540w
Electoral register, Community charges register 293-4w
Erythropoietin, Drug abuse 10w
Firearms, Compensation 817w
Firearms certificates, North Wales 539-40w
Firearms certificates, Thames Valley police 292w
Football, Arrests 298w, 809w
Football, Travel restrictions 813w

Hogg, Mr Douglas—continued
Forensic science, Departmental coordination 811w
Immigrant detainees, Latchmere House 9-10w, 812w
Mentally disturbed offenders 407w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Alternatives to prison 408w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Police training 409-10w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Prison population 408-9w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Prison riots 410w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Prisoners on remand 407w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Psychiatry 409w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Research 407-8w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Secure psychiatric units 408w
Metropolitan Police, Resignations 152w
Pets 598w
Police, Armed forces discharges 363w
Police, Leicestershire 2w, 292-3w
Police, Manpower 361-2w, 599-600w
Police, Motorways 411-2w
Police, Newspaper press 8w
Police, North Wales 808-9w
Police, Sex discrimination 232w
Police, Wales 808w
Police custody, Suicide 814w
Police discipline, Cheshire 294-5w
Police firearms, Training 598w
Police vehicles, Road accidents 811w
Policewomen 817w
Prison discipline 234w
Prison escapes 413w
Prison Service, Privatisation 538w
Prison staff, AIDS 295w
Prisoners, AIDS 295-6w
Prisoners, Body belts 410-1w
Prisoners, Families 365w
Prisoners, Members' correspondence 412w
Prisoners, Prison sentences 291-2w
Prisoners, Suicide 232w, 814w
Prisons, Catering 815w
Prisons, Fires 806w
Prisons, Food hygiene 806-7w
Prisons, Food poisoning 807w
Prisons, North West region 809w
Public order offences, St Neots 818w
Public relations, Home Office 5w
Public relations, Metropolitan Police 5w
Remand in custody, Ethnic groups 813w
Remand in custody, Private sector 297-8w
Renshaw, Michelle, Custodial treatment 412w
Risley Remand Centre, Suicide 814-5w
Rugby, Police 231-2w
Statistics, Home Office 7-8w
Statistics, Metropolitan Police 6-7w
Taxis, Driving licences 293w
Whatton Detention Centre 815w
Whatton Detention Centre, Prison sentences 816w
Wimbledon Football Club, Arrests 298w
Wines, Licensing 7-8w

Hogg, Mr Norman
Questions
New towns development corporations, Public sector housing sales 666w

Holidays
Association of British Travel Agents 793w

Holland, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 479, 491-6, 498-9
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 650, 668, 686-92

Holt, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Air accidents, Lockerbie (20:03:89) 732
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 741

Holt, Mr Richard—continued
Questions
Civil servants, Dept of Social Security local offices 730
Employment opportunities, Teesside 272-3
Horse racing, Betting & gaming duties 600-1w
Official engagements 126w
Rates & rating, Cleveland 1088
Rent arrears, Langbaurgh District Council 642w
Training & enterprise councils 54-5w

Home Office
150-2w, 811w
Advertising 5-6w
Computer privacy 2w, 231w
Public relations 5w
Statistics 7-8w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 429, 430
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 959, 960-1
Questions
Agricultural workers, Pay 519
Attendance allowance, Administrative delays 786w
Business statements 538-9
Chlorofluorocarbons 212w
Community charge 907
Invalid care allowances, Take-up 784-5w
Low flying, East Lothian 476w

Homelessness
641w
Bed & breakfast accommodation 1075-6
Greater London 641w, 1074-5
Health 902
Housing finance 641w
Rented housing 1074-5
Wales 722
Young people 306-7w, 1074-5

Homeopathy
Drugs 68-9w

Homes for the Elderly Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (17:03:89) 703

Homeworking
Day care of children 253w

Homicide
Northern Ireland 10-1w
Royal Ulster Constabulary (21:03:89) 918-27

Hong Kong
Annual reports 26w

Hood, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1047, 1055
Questions
Dept of the Environment, Publicity 633w

Hordern, Peter
17

Hordern, Sir Peter
Questions
Hordern, Peter 17
National Audit Office 17
National Audit Office, Public bodies 17
Public Accounts Commission 16-7

Hornsey
Community charge 626w

Horse racing
Betting & gaming duties 600-1w
Finance 818w
Prize money 818w

Horserace Betting Levy Board
600-1w, 818w

Horses
Privatisation 291w

Horticulture
Experimental farms 722w
Research finance 345w

Hospices
Government grants 572w

Hospital beds
Salop 892

Hospital closures
(21:03:89) 1064-70
Gwynedd Health Authority (23:03:89) 1262-5, 1275-81
Lluesty Hospital 698w
Mental hospitals 669w
Newchurch Hospital 769w
Salop 893
Ysbyty Madog 503w

Hospital consultants
Health service staff 334w
Immunopathology 718

Hospital discharges
Mental patients 582w

Hospital doctors
Dismissal 142w
Inverclyde Royal Hospital 142w

Hospital finance
160w
Scotland 750w

Hospital patients
Community charge rebates 90w
South Cumbria Health Authority 386-7w

Hospital waiting lists
153w, 531-2, 574w, 668w
Computer privacy 66w
Inverclyde Royal Hospital 38w
Mersey Regional Health Authority 766w
NHS Review 567w
North Western Regional Health Authority 766w
Norwich Health Authority 566-7w
Transplant surgery 386w
Trent Regional Health Authority 153w, 326w
Wakefield Health Authority 908
"Working for Patients White Paper" 563w

Hospitals
Air conditioning 236w
Computers in National Health Service 769w
Construction 236w
Day nurseries 339w
Expenditure 159-60w
Fund raising 236w
Mersey Regional Health Authority 766w
Mid Glamorgan 439w
NHS 514w
North Western Regional Health Authority 766w
Port Talbot 137w
Public sector assets 141w
Railway accidents 158w
Scotland 141w
Self-governing hospitals 314w

Hostels
Income support 393w, (16:03:89) 546-54
Social security recipients 393w

Hotels
56w

House of Commons broadcasting
Administrative delays 20-2

House of Commons debates
18
Procedure Select Committee 18

House of Commons division of time
Speaker's rulings & statements (21:03:89) 946

House of Commons divisions
Bordes, Pamella 457w
City of Westminster 694w

House of Commons Library
457w

House of Commons papers
Dept of Social Security 26-7w

House of Commons passes
Bordes, Pamella 693-4w
Convictions 694w
Government departments 458w
Parliamentary security 693-4w
Research assistants 457w
Shaw, David 313w
Speaker's rulings & statements (13:03:89) 36

House of Commons procedure
Private Bills 19
Private Members' Bills 18-9
Speaker's rulings & statements (20:03:89) 732-4, 735, (21:03:89) 946, 1039, 1059, 1060

House of Commons souvenirs
19-20

House of Commons staff
Speaker's rulings & statements (23:03:89) 1338

House of Commons standing orders
457w

House prices
95w

House purchase
Relocation of employees 300w

House renovation grants
Earnings rules 425-6w
North West region 777-8w
Wales 131-2w

Housing
Planning authorities 92w
Rural areas 92w, 209w, 518-9, 640w, 642w
Scotland 548w
Wales 715-6, 722
Young people 548w, 629w

Housing Act 1988
Questions
176w, 240w, 649-50w, 774w

Housing action trusts
Consultants 779w
Council housing 323-4w

Housing amenities
Scotland 742w

Housing & elderly
Private sector (13:03:89) 58-61
Sheltered housing (23:03:89) 1291-8

Housing associations
Greenock & Port Glasgow 229w
Housing finance 1077-8
Scotland 229w

Housing benefits
Capital rules 792w
Housing subsidies (21:03:89) 1038-63
Local government expenditure 176w
Private rented housing 176w
Rent allowances 544w
Social security benefits rates 396w
Social security recipients 785w
Social security reform 306w, 395w, 789w
Student grants 306w
War pensions 303-6w

Housing capital allocations
Wales 278-82w

Housing construction
Agricultural land 350w
Hampshire 210w
London boroughs 647w
Planning authorities 1080-2
South Wales 367w
Vacant land 1074

Housing cooperatives
774w

Housing Corporation
1077

Housing estates
Crime prevention 698w

Housing finance
Homelessness 641w
Housing associations 1077-8

Housing for Wales
721-2

Housing insulation
803w
Employment training 203w
Government grants 318w

Housing investment programmes
Brent 645w
Leicester 1078

Housing management
(23:03:89) 1291-8

Housing occupancy
Scotland 744w

Housing problems
Newham (23:03:89) 1307-15

Housing revenue accounts
(21:03:89) 1038-63

Housing standards
Scotland 742w, 744w

Housing starts
Scotland 745w

Housing stock
1076

Housing subsidies
Housing benefits (21:03:89) 1038-63
Scotland (21:03:89) 1038-63

***Howard, Mr Michael**, Minister of State for Water and Planning*
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 997, 1030-2, (22:03:89) 1104, 1130, 1132-3, 1134, 1135, 1147, 1175-81
Questions
Agricultural land, Construction 628-9w
County Hall, Environmental impact assessment 629w
Development plans 1072
Director General of Water Services, Offices 781-2w
Eastbourne Waterworks Company 429w
Greenbelt, Retail trade 211-2w
HMS Cambridge, Fences 322w
Housing, Rural areas 640w, 642w
Lowermoor water treatment works, Pollution monitoring 88w
Lowermoor water treatment works, Water pollution 88w, 208-9w
Pield Heath Nurseries Uxbridge, Planning appeals 631w
Planning appeals, Planning permission 1080
Planning authorities, Administrative delays 1085
Planning authorities, Housing construction 1080-2
Planning authorities, Manpower 1085-6
Planning permission 1086
Planning permission, Urban areas 1086
Property development, Stockport 1074
River pollution, Hampshire 239w
River pollution, Pollution monitoring 427w
River pollution, Punishment 631w
Sea pollution, Beaches 1083-4
Sea pollution, EC law 1082-3
Sea pollution, Lindane 1084
Sea pollution, Southampton Water 239w
Sewage, AIDS 95w
Sewage, Water pollution 211w, 640w
South West Water Authority, Sewage 644w
Unitary development plans 1072
Vacant land, Building land 1073-4
Vacant land, Housing construction 1074

***Howard, Mr Michael**—continued*
Water authorities, Debts 94-5w
Water charges, Low incomes 1085
Water charges, Price increases 213-4w, 643w, 645w
Water pollution, Manpower 87-8w
Water pollution, Oxford 642w
Water pollution, Punishment 632w
Water pollution, Research 238w
Water supply industry, Derbyshire 95w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 238w, 1084
Water supply industry, Shareholders 240-1w
West Kent Water Company, Water charges 1084-5

Howarth, Mr George
Debates etc.
Bird's Eye, Standing Order No 20 applications (13:03:89) 34
Questions
Channel tunnel, North West region 107w
Crimes of violence, Knowsley 813w
Dock labour scheme, Dock workers 795w
Dock labour scheme, Manpower 795-7w
HM Coastguard, Civil service manpower 285w
HM Coastguard, Computer terminals 285-6w
House renovation grants, North West region 777-8w
Housing associations, Housing finance 1077
Infant foods, Beef 346w
Private rented housing 781w

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Questions
"Working for Patients White Paper", Budgeting 562-3w

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 573-7

Howell, Rt Hon Denis
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 868-72, 875

Howell, Mr Ralph
Questions
Cereals, Intervention stocks 527, 532
Employment schemes, USA 201w
Income tax assessment, Taxpayers 63w
NHS, Land values 570-1w

Howells, Mr Geraint
Questions
Experimental farms, Wales 438w
Vale of Rheidol railway line, Privatisation 402w

Howells, Dr Kim
Questions
Fraud, EC action 339w
Hospitals, Mid Glamorgan 439w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1096
Questions
EC internal trade, Manufacturing industries 260w
Minimum wage, North West region 180-1w
Newchurch Hospital, Hospital closures 769w
Operating department assistants, Manpower 577w
Operating department assistants, Pay 390w
Prisons, North West region 809w
Whitley Councils 577w

HSE
see Health & Safety Executive

Hughes, Mr John
Questions
Minimum wage, West Midlands 177-8w

Hughes, Mr Robert
Questions
Income tax, Scotland 455-7w
Railway safety, Automatic train protection 119w

Hughes, Mr Robert G
Debates etc.
Playgrounds, Safety standards (15:03:89) 414-6
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1046-9, 1059
Safety in Children's Playgrounds Bill, 1R (15:03:89) 414-6
Questions
Abortion, Advertising 560w
Dock labour scheme, Manpower 193w
London Residuary Body, Occupational pensions 649w
Metropolitan Police, Manpower 805-6w
Milk Marketing Board 349w
Neighbourhood councils, Tower Hamlets 1079-80
Take-home pay 704w
Urban programme 645w

Hughes, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989 (14:03:89) 329-31
Questions
Balance of trade 246w
Homelessness, Rented housing 1074-5
Roads, Expenditure 366-7w, 376-7w
Severn bridge, Fees & charges 719
Unemployment, Newport 719-20

Hughes, Mr Sean
Questions
Army bases, Security 760w
Balance of trade, OECD countries 267w
Channel tunnel, North West region 106-7w
Minimum wage, North West region 179w
Ministry of Defence, Security 760w
Ministry of Defence, Security guards 760w
Ministry of Defence police, Manpower 760-1w
Ministry of Defence police, Pay 761w
Ministry of Defence police, Training 761w
Scrapie, Goats 79w
Tax evasion, Disclosure of information 61w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 865-6, 877-9
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 108w
Education, Inner London boroughs 497w
Family credit, Social security claims 459w
Globe Theatre, Southwark 421w
Homelessness, Young people 1074-5
Housing cooperatives 774w
National Audit Office 17
Nuclear weapons tests 477w
Self-governing hospitals, Regional health authorities 564-5w
Social security reform 396-8w

Human organs
385-6w, 489w
Abortion 571w

Human rights
China 144w
Ethiopia 729-30w
Iraq 144w
Tibet 726w
Turkey 215w, 285

Humberside
Cancer 639w

Hume, Mr John
Questions
Graduates, Civil service manpower 529w
Graduates, Pay 528w
Higher education admission, Age participation rates 529w
Mature students, Northern Ireland 527-8w

Hume, Mr John—continued
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Mortgage defaulters 733w
Public sector housing sales, Northern Ireland 736-8w
Student loans, Northern Ireland 421w, 527w
Students, Degrees 421w
Students, Handicapped 421w
Teachers, Secondary education 520-8w
Voluntary schools, Educational finance 520w
Voluntary schools, Expenditure 519-20w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Roads (13:03:89) 197-200, 203, 204, 207
Questions
Agricultural research 350w
Cot deaths, Medical research 235w, 325w
Dairy farming 516
Housing construction, Hampshire 210w
Medical treatments, Costs 564w
Planning authorities, Administrative delays 1085
Road traffic, Hampshire 207w
Terrorism, Broadcasting controls 538w
Training & enterprise councils 204w

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas, Secretary of State for the Home Department
Questions
Advertising, Home Office 5-6w
Bristol University, Bombings 363-4w
Computer privacy, Home Office 2w
D notices, Defence Press & Broadcasting Committee 1w
Drinking & driving, Greater Manchester 364-5w
English Folk Dance & Song Society, Elections 541w
Horse racing, Betting & gaming duties 600-1w
Independent Broadcasting Authority, Tax yields 152-3w
Law enforcement, Local government expenditure 805w
Magistrates' courts, Computer applications 540-1w
Magistrates' Courts Procedure Review 413-4w
Metropolitan Police, Manpower 805-6w
Police, Essex 804-5w
Police, Gibraltar 364w
Terrorism, Broadcasting controls 538w

Hythe Kent Marina Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (16:03:89) 515, (22:03:89) 1071

IAEA
see International Atomic Energy Agency

IBA
see Independent Broadcasting Authority

Ideal Home Exhibition
501-2w

Identity cards
Football 637-8w

Illsley, Mr Eric
Questions
British Coal Corporation 763w
Community charge, Barnsley 626-7w

IMF
see International Monetary Fund

Immigrant detainees
Latchmere House 9-10w, 812w

Immigrants' dependants
Entry clearances 150w
Work permits 149w

Immigration & Nationality Division
Computer privacy 231w

Immigration appeals
Entry clearances 693w, 728-9w
Members 233w, 811w

Immigration applications
Administrative delays 412-3w, 420w, 539-40w, 809w
Pakistan 8-9w

Immigration controls
Entry clearances 728w

Immigration rules
811w

Immunopathology
Hospital consultants 718

Import controls
Ivory 237w
Turtles 322w

Import duties
Agricultural products 353w
Wood 496w

Imports
Animal products 614w
Bananas 269w
Bicycles 396
Birds 518
Drugs 575w, 812w
Eggs 249w
Hazardous wastes 774w
Ivory 495-6w
Seal products 776w
Textile industry 396-9
Wood 268w

"In the Dark"
620w

Income
Family doctors 578w

Income & Corporation Taxes Act 1988
Questions
587w

Income support
460w
Clothing 460w
Computers in Government departments 56w
Dependants 787w
Hostels 393w, (16:03:89) 546-54
Ministerial statements (16:03:89) 546-54
Pregnant women 786w
Residential care 30w, 787w
Social security claims 33w
Social security reform 395w
Water charges 460w
Young people 33w

Income tax
Scotland 455-7w
Tax rates & bands 453-5w

Income tax assessment
Pay 63-4w
Tax rates & bands 588w
Taxpayers 63w

Independent Broadcasting Authority
129w, 296w
Tax yields 152-3w

Independent local radio
292w

Index linking
Civil service pensions 301w

India
Languages education 681-2w

Industrial democracy
276-7

Industrial development
River Severn 719

Industrial diseases
Compensation (16:03:89) 628

Industrial disputes
Dock labour scheme 194w
Lost working days 198w
University teachers 684w

Industrial energy consumption
Gas supply industry 272w

Industrial energy prices
Gas tariffs 127w, 272-4w

Industrial health & safety
British Drug House 556-7w
Transmissible encephalopathies 557w

Industrial investment
261-2w
Manufacturing industries 282w, 402, 710-2w
Scotland 549w

Industrial relations
Foreign investment in UK 408
Unemployment 272

Industrial research
Research finance 264w

Industrial safety
Sikhs 802w

Industrial training
Expenditure 368w
Wales 714-5

Industrial training boards
Expenditure 368w
Training & enterprise councils 368w

Industries
Museums & galleries 228w

Industry
Budget March 1989 (16:03:89) 557-628
Gas tariffs 130w
Inflation 127-8w
Interest rates 264w

Industry & Trade Select Committee
see Trade & Industry Select Committee

Infant foods
Beef 346w

Infant mortality
Listeria monocytogenes 162w

Inflation
Group of Seven 542w, 793-4w
Industry 127-8w

INFORM
see Information Network Focus on Religious Movements

Information
Family doctors 767-8w
Shipping safety 286w

Information Network Focus on Religious Movements
(13:03:89) 188-96

Information technology
Balance of trade 267w
Northern Ireland Office 137-8w
Trade & Industry Select Committee 97w

"Infrastructure for Tomorrow"
268w

Ingram, Mr Adam
Questions
National Engineering Laboratory, Civil service manpower 496w
National Engineering Laboratory, Management 603-4w

Injuries
Sports 663w, 668w

Inland Revenue
Computer privacy 60-1w
Resignations 64-5w

Inland waterways
Water pollution 641w

Inner cities initiative
258w, 262-3w
Bradford 714w

Inner city areas
Employment training 256w

Inner London boroughs
Education 497w

Innovation
Regional enterprise grants 442w

Inquiries
18w
Low flying 243w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 530-1

Insider trading
Dept of Trade inquiries 96-8w

Insolvency
MBP Russell Holdings 269w

Inspectors of anatomy
561w

Institution of Professional Civil Servants
346w

Interception of Communications Act 1985
Questions
514w

"Interception of Communications Commissioner Annual Report 1988"
514w

Interest charges
Retail price index 55w

Interest rates
586w, 704w
Exports 400
Industry 264w
Manufacturing industries 263-4w
West Germany 541-2w

Internal drainage boards
250-1w

International Atomic Energy Agency
679w
Transport of radioactive materials 592w

International conferences
Environment protection 777w
Hazardous wastes 209-10w, 651w
Ozone layer 44w, 426w, 638-9w
Transport of hazardous materials 690w

International Fund for Ireland
731w

International Monetary Fund
517w, 542-3w, 625-6w

International Tropical Timber Organisation
496w

Intervention Board
346w, 353w

Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce
see Intervention Board

Intervention stocks
610-2w
Cereals 527, 532

Invalid care allowances
Social security benefits rules 173-4w
Take-up 784-5w

Inverclyde
Council house sales 37-8w

Inverclyde Royal Hospital
Hospital doctors 142w
Hospital waiting lists 38w
Resource management initiative 554w

Inverness
Social Fund 394w

Inverness-Wick/Thurso railway
Bridges 120w, 708-9w

Investors Discount Brokerage
406

Invisible exports
406-7

Invisible trade balance
UK contributions to EC budget 586w

INWARD
602w

Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985
Questions
479-81w

Ionizing radiation
Nuclear submarines 478-80w

IPCS
see Institution of Professional Civil Servants

IRA
(21:03:89) 918-27

Iran
Arms trade 129w
Political prisoners (13:03:89) 70-2

Iraq
Human rights 144w

Irish Republican Army
see IRA

Iron & steel industry
Exports 400
Gas tariffs 130w

Irradiated food
249w

Irvine, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 489-91
Questions
Dock labour scheme 193w
Inner cities initiative 262-3w

Islam
Satanic Verses 363w

Isle of Arran
Fish farming 445w

Israel
726w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 143-4w
Peace negotiations 623w

Ivory
Import controls 237w
Imports 495-6w

Jack, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Sheltered housing, Codes of practice (13:03:89) 58-61
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 32
Questions
Aerospace industry, North West region 271w
Arts finance 227-8w
Bridge programme, Civil servants 729
Employment, Northern region 269-70
Employment, Scotland 655-6w
Health service costing returns 77w
Job release scheme, Non-contributory benefits 803w
NHS, Expenditure 77w
NHS, Performance indicators 900
Rain forests, Forest protection 286-8

***Jackson, Mr Robert**, Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science*
Questions
Advisory Board for the Research Councils, Biology 291w
Advisory Board for the Research Councils, Public appointments 290-1w
Cambridge University, Veterinary medicine 12w
Carbon dioxide, Research 212w
Down's syndrome, Medical research 15-6w

Jackson, Mr Robert—continued
Educational finance, Higher education 220-3w
Educational finance, Per capita costs 222w
Educational Maintenance allowance 220w
Higher education, University Grants Committee 221w
Medical education 606w
Medical education, Cost per student 606w
Medical education, Private sector 605w
Medical research, Animal welfare 16w
Medical students, Student numbers 606w
Natural Environment Research Council, Research facilities 604-6w
Research finance, Agricultural & Food Research Council 289w
Research finance, Climate 499w
School leaving, North West region 681w
Science & technology research, Genetics 607w
Seas & oceans, Climate 212-3w
Student grants 219-20w, 502w
Student grants, Parental contributions 219w
Student grants, Travelling expenses 220w
Student loans 499-501w, 605w
Tuition fees, Part-time education 220w
University finance 406w
University finance, Higher education administration 406w
University teachers, Industrial disputes 684w
University teachers, Pay 165w, 682-3w
University teachers, Pay settlements 164-5w
Veterinary medicine, Overseas students 13w
Veterinary services, Government grants 166w

Janman, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 759, 767, 788, 799-801
Questions
Dock labour scheme 276
Lost working days, Industrial disputes 198w
Nurses, Pay 565w
Public companies, Company registration 432w

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
Business statements 540
Council housing, Leicester 1079
Equal opportunities, Dept of Social Security 676w, 792-4w
Housing investment programmes, Leicester 1078

Japan
Foreign tourists 198w
Rain forests 303w
Science & technology 104-5w

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc.
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 696-7
Questions
Dock labour scheme, Industrial disputes 194w
Libraries, Books 725
Nature conservation 629w
Night flying, Heathrow Airport 906
Thames flood barrier 349w

Job release scheme
Non-contributory benefits 803w

Jobclubs
201w
Bristol 252-3w
Unemployment 368w

Jones, Mr Barry
Questions
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Wales 137w
Clwyd Health Authority, Finance 699w
Crime prevention, Housing estates 698w
Deeside waterfront scheme 722-3
Employment opportunities, Wales 721

Jones, Mr Barry—continued
House renovation grants, Wales 131-2w
Housing capital allocations, Wales 278-82w
Lluesty Hospital 698w
Lluesty Hospital, Bus services 699w
Lluesty Hospital, Hospital closures 698w
NHS Review, Clwyd 690w, 699w
NHS Review, Clwyd Health Authority 689-90w
NHS Review, Family doctors 699w
NHS Review, "Working for Patients White Paper" 699w
Police, North Wales 690w, 808-9w
Police, Wales 808w
Teachers' pensions, Widowers' benefits 499w
Urban development grants, Wales 136w
Urban programme, Wales 132-6w
Welsh Office, Computers in Government departments 278w

Jones, Mr Gwilym
Questions
Community charge, Wales 439w
Council housing, Cardiff 716
Welsh Water Authority, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 700-1w

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn
Debates etc.
Hospital closures, Gwynedd Health Authority (23:03:89) 1262-5, 1275, 1281
Oral question time point of order (20:03:89) 716-7
Questions
Council house sales, Wales 716
Gwynedd Health Authority 438w
Natural Environment Research Council, Research facilities 604-6w
Nuclear weapons, NATO 620w
Paramedical staff, Wales 697-8w
Social workers, Handicapped 696-7w
Transport of radioactive materials, EC action 593w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Family doctors 563w

Jones, Mr Martyn
Questions
Agriculture, Wales 439w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Water authorities 519
Minimum wage, East Midlands 180w
National Farmers' Union 340w

Jones, Mr Robert B
Questions
Dock labour scheme 193-4w
Nature Conservancy Council 341-2w
NHS, Hertfordshire West 566w

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 584-6
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 1026
Questions
South Cumbria Health Authority, Finance 667w
South Cumbria Health Authority, Health service staff 386w
South Cumbria Health Authority, Hospital patients 386-7w

Jordan
Tornado aircraft 691w, 756-7w

"Judgements of Crime Seriousness"
1-2w

Judges
Crown courts 450w

Junior hospital doctors
Scotland 547-8w
Working hours 333-4w, 547-8w

Justices' clerks
Career structure (23:03:89) 1316-22
Pay 1w
Recruitment (23:03:89) 1316-22
Resignations 149w

Kampuchea
Overseas aid 626w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Questions
Trident submarines, Defence contracts 54w

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Debates etc.
Air accidents, Lockerbie (20:03:89) 732
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 740, 750, 811
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 860
Questions
Prescriptions 905
Retail price index, EC countries 55w
Retail price index, Interest charges 55w
Sea pollution, Beaches 1084

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Debates etc.
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 28
Questions
A850, Road works 314w
Employment training, Take-up 186w
Family doctors, Rural areas 568w
Manufacturing industries, Interest rates 263-4w
Offshore Supplies Office, Oil industry 402
Sewage, Sea pollution 1081
"Working for Patients White Paper" Family doctors 384w

Kent
Vacancies 191w

Kent County Council
112w

Key, Mr Robert
Questions
Animal feed, Salmonella 719w
EC Internal Market Council 713w
Health service staff, Scientists 573w
Housing associations, Housing finance 1077-8
Listed buildings, Church buildings 508w
Military police, Accountants 477w
Military police, Criminal investigation 477w
Stonehenge 632w
Teachers, Manpower 404-5w

Kidney machines
Kidney patients 481-2w

Kidney patients
386w, 389-90w
Kidney machines 481-2w

Kilfedder, Mr James
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1095
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Homicide (21:03:89) 922-3
Questions
Homicide, Northern Ireland 10-1w
Mandela, Nelson 528

Kincora Children's Home
Compensation 300w

Kincraig Committee
see Parole System Scotland Review

King, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 872
Transport safety (13:03:89) 120, 125-7
Questions
EC grants & loans, Northern Ireland 732w
NHS, Contracts for services 565-6w
Overseas investment 285
Unemployment, Birmingham 189-90w

King, Rt Hon Tom, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Debates etc.

King, Rt Hon Tom—continued
Harland & Wolff, Ministerial statements (22:03:89) 1089-100
Terrorism, Ministerial statements (21:03:89) 918-27

King Committee
see Bellgrove Rail Accident Inquiry

King's Cross
Channel tunnel 4

King's Cross Railways Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (14:03:89) 269, (16:03:89) 515, (22:03:89) 1071

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989 (14:03:89) 289
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 424, 425, 430, 435
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 909-14
Budget March 1989 293-316
Family doctors 283
NHS Review 905
Water supply industry, Privatisation 528

Kirkhope, Mr Timothy
Questions
Employment 192w
Performing arts, Training 464w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 597-600, 615, 624
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 551
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1053-4
Questions
Air pollution, Carbon monoxide 321w
Family doctors, Income 578w
Family doctors, Pay 765w
Family doctors, Resignations 578w
Family doctors, Rural areas 568w
Hang gliding, Airmisses 616w
Harrier aircraft, Airmisses 616-7w
Income support 460w
Income support, Clothing 460w
Income support, Water charges 460w
Low flying, Belgium 755w
Low flying, Child health 617w
Low flying, Morocco 617w
Low flying, Scotland 755w
Low flying, West Germany 755-6w
Members' allowances, Clarke, Kenneth 621w
Military aircraft, Aircraft noise 617-8w
Military aircraft, Airmisses 616w
Military aircraft, Birds 754w
Military aircraft, Otterburn 618w
NHS Review 904
Sewage, Sea pollution 648w
Skyguard radar, Roxburgh & Berwickshire 755w
Unemployment benefits, Social security appeals 458-9w

Knapman, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Hospital closures (21:03:89) 1064-6
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1117, 1140, 1159-61
Questions
Eggs, Nutrition 522
Export promotion 404
Vacant land, Government departments 635w
Vocational education, Trades Union Congress 198w

Knight, Mr Greg
Questions
Coal mining, Productivity 763w
Environmentally sensitive areas 350w
M1, Traffic lights 218w
Rates & rating, Nurses 428-9w

Knight, Dame Jill
Questions
Medical malpractice, Disciplinary proceedings 572w
Medical profession, Manpower 892

Knowles, Mr Michael
Questions
Official engagements 286

Knowsley
Crimes of violence 813w

Knox, Mr David
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989 (14:03:89) 318-22
Questions
Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food, Public appointments 770w
Council house sales 633w
Dairy farming 340w
EC grants & loans 263w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 669-70w
General Practice Finance Corporation, Property transfer 667w
Hospital waiting lists 153w
Motorways, Road works 5
NHS finance 903
Secondary education, Cost per pupil 718

Kohl, Helmut
417w

Labelling
Agricultural products 392w
Milk 515
Untreated milk 520

Laboratories
Food microbiology 82w
NHS & private practice 893
Private sector 893

Labour force survey
269-70, 415w

Labour Party
529

Lambeth
Bed & breakfast accommodation 544w
City technology colleges 499w

Lamond, Mr James
Questions
Housing, Rural areas 640w
Textile industry, Redundancy 273
Turkey, Human rights 215w, 285

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman, Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 446, 496-504
Finance Bill, 1R (20:03:89) 850
Questions
Budget, Nottingham 585w
Capital gains tax, Statute law 145w
Company liquidations, Clothing industry 61w
Computer privacy, Inland Revenue 60-1w
Corporation tax, Small businesses 60w
Double taxation, Netherlands Antilles 301w
Health insurance, Pensioners 587-8w
Health insurance, Tax allowances 588w
Income & Corporation Taxes Act 1988 587w
Income tax, Scotland 455-7w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 453-5w
Income tax assessment, Pay 63-4w
Income tax assessment, Tax rates & bands 588w
Income tax assessment, Taxpayers 63w
Inland Revenue, Resignations 64-5w
Mortgage relief, British residents abroad 455-7w
Personal equity plans 588w
Personal tax allowances, Married men 585w
Privatisation, Treasury 62w

Lamont, Rt Hon Norman—continued
Relocation of employees, House purchase 300w
Shareholders 247w
Shipping, Taxation 59-60w
Take-home pay 704w
Take-home pay, Married men 585w
Tax allowances, Health insurance 451-2w
Tax allowances, Merchant seamen 452w
Tax evasion, Disclosure of information 61w
Tax incentives, Chlorofluorocarbons 65w
Tax yields, Tax rates & bands 62w
Taxation, Shipping 453-4w

Lancaster Prison
809w

Land acquisition
Forestry 714-8w
Forestry Commission 141-2w, 659w
Public bodies 239-40w
Urban development corporations 636w
Vacant land 629w

Land Authority for Wales
367w

Land Drainage Act 1976
Questions
250-1w

Land ownership & tenure
Thames Water Authority 372w

Land registration
Private sector 1076
Vacant land 1076

Land use
Forestry 417w
Gun sports 211w, 506w
Vacant land (13:03:89) 49-51

Land values
NHS 570-1w

Landlord & tenant
Environmentally sensitive areas 474w

Lang, Mr Ian, Minister of State for Scotland
Debates etc.
Water charges, Grampian (22:03:89) 1238-42
Questions
Appledore Ferguson, Departmental correspondence 377w
Capital investment, Scotland 744-5w
Children, Scotland 745w
Community charges register, Personal records 375-6w
Companies, East Kilbride 553w
Employment, Scotland 655-6w
Employment training, Scotland 545w
Exports, Scotland 553-4w
Handicapped workers, Scotland 741w
Industrial investment, Scotland 549w
Manufacturing industries, Scotland 744w
New towns development corporations, Enterprise allowance scheme 552-3w
New towns development corporations, Public sector housing sales 666w
Privatisation, Scottish Office 36w
Regional development grants, Scotland 446w, 651-2w
Regional enterprise grants, Scotland 315-6w, 555-6w, 665w
Regional selective assistance, Scotland 447w, 547w
Scottish Development Agency 652w
Shipbuilding, Scotland 548-9w
Tourism, Scotland 552w
Unemployment, Greenock & Port Glasgow 229-30w
Young people, Strathclyde 555w
Youth unemployment, Greenock & Port Glasgow 314w

Langbaurgh District Council
Rent arrears 642w

Languages education
Curriculum 681-2w
India 681-2w

Latchmere House
Immigrant detainees 9-10w, 812w

Latham, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 988-90
Questions
Church buildings, St Leonard's Church Swithland 16
Cot deaths 486-8w
Grant maintained schools, School governors 684w
Maternity services, Rural areas 572w
Palestine Liberation Organisation 24w
Rushdie, Salman 25-6w
Westminster Hall 20

Law enforcement
Local government expenditure 805w

Law Officers' Dept
see Attorney-General

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Questions
Dental health, Children 577w
Food imitations, Consumer protection 130w
Magistrates' Courts Procedure Review 413-4w
Vacant land 634w
Water supply, Fluoridation 773-4w

Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 422
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 754, 755, 816-23
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 563
Questions
Budget March 1989 293-316
Civil list 148w
Crown Estate Commissioners, Fish farming 383-4w
Debts, Developing countries 542w

LDDC
see London Docklands Development Corporation

Lead
Water pollution 775w

Lead free petrol
216w, 631-2w
Oil companies 18w
Publicity 87w

Lead pipes
775w

Lead pollution
Water pollution 660-1w

Leadbitter, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
Arts (13:03:89) 80, 82, 85, 86-9
Questions
Minimum wage, Northern region 184-5w

Leave
Trade union officials 202w

Lee, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Employment
Debates etc.
Tourism, Northumberland (15:03:89) 510-4
Questions
Average earnings, North West region 415w
Economic situation, North West region 273-4
Employment 188-90w, 192w
Employment, Age 186w
Employment, East Midlands 191-2w
Employment, Greater London 191w
Employment, Norfolk 190w
Employment, North West region 273
Employment, South West region 193w
Employment, Yorkshire & Humberside 188w

Lee, Mr John—continued
Employment level, Self-employed 416w
European Tourism Year 56w
Foreign tourists, Japan 198w
Foreign tourists, USA 197-8w
Handicapped workers 253w
Handicapped workers, Unemployment 200-1w
Hard core unemployed 189w
Holidays, Association of British Travel Agents 793w
Hotels 56w
Inflation, Group of Seven 793-4w
Job release scheme, Non-contributory benefits 803w
Jobclubs 201w
Jobclubs, Bristol 252-3w
Jobclubs, Unemployment 368w
Labour force survey 415w
Restart programme 202w
Restaurants 59w
Retail price index, EC countries 55w
Retail price index, Interest charges 55w
Self-employed 188w
Self-employed, OECD countries 187w
Shipbuilding 279
Standard of living, North West region 417w
Textile industry, Redundancy 273
Tourism 197w
Tourism, Bristol 279
Tourism, Capital investment 197w
Tourism, Consultants 253w
Tourism, Departmental publications 309w
Tourism, Government grants 197w
Trade union officials, Leave 202w
Unemployment 186w, 190w, 192w, 274
Unemployment, Basildon 191w
Unemployment, Birmingham 189-90w
Unemployment, Bury 187w
Unemployment, East Midlands 189w
Unemployment, Liverpool 187w
Unemployment, North West region 188w, 192w
Unemployment, Sheffield 191w
Unemployment, West Midlands 189w
Unemployment benefits, Computers in Government departments 56w
Unemployment benefits, Social security abuse 199w
Unemployment benefits, Social security reform 801-2w
Vacancies 200w
Vacancies, Kent 191w
Voluntary organisations, Manpower 200w
Women's employment 58w, 192w
Woollen industry, West Yorkshire 254w
Working hours, Teachers 55w
Youth employment 186-7w
Youth unemployment, Hard core unemployed 192w
Youth unemployment, North West region 795-6w

Leeds
323-4w

Leeds Development Corporation
Planning permission 93-4w

Legal advice & assistance
Scotland 662w
Solicitors 449w

Legal Advice & Assistance at Police Stations (Remunerations) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(22:03:89) 1213-34

Legal Advice & Assistance (Duty Solicitor) (Remuneration) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(22:03:89) 1213-34

Legal Advice & Assistance Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(22:03:89) 1213-34

Legal Advice & Assistance (Scope) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(22:03:89) 1213-34

Legal Advice & Assistance (Scope) Regulations 1989—continued
Questions
449w

Legal aid
449w
Cohabitation 449w
Legal costs 39-40w
Scotland 662-3w

Legal Aid Board
(22:03:89) 1213-34

Legal aid capital limits
(22:03:89) 1213-34

Legal Aid (Functions) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(22:03:89) 1213-34

Legal Aid in Criminal & Care Proceedings (Costs) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(22:03:89) 1213-34

Legal Aid in Criminal & Care Proceedings (General) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(22:03:89) 1213-34

Legal costs
Legal aid 39-40w

Legal profession
285-6, (23:03:89) 1282-90
Bar Council 907-8
Scotland 37w
Treasury 275w

"Legal Profession in Scotland"
230w

Legal representation
(22:03:89) 1213-34

Legislation
Extradition 540w
Microlight aircraft 707w

Leicester
Council housing 1078-9
Defective housing 1078
Housing investment programmes 1078

Leicestershire
Police 2w, 292-3w

Leicestershire Health Authority
388w
Hearing aids 670-1w

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
Legal profession (23:03:89) 1282-5
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 992-4, (22:03:89) 1129, 1144, 1147, 1171-2
Questions
Business statements 541
National Rivers Authority, Flood control 242w
"Working for Patients White Paper" 562w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 737
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 560, 589-91
Housing problems, Newham (23:03:89) 1307-11, 1312, 1314
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 26
Questions
Bus services, Greater London 286w
Canary Wharf, Tourism 650w
London Docklands, Employment 316w
London Docklands, Employment opportunities 316w
London Docklands, Employment schemes 225-6w, 316w
London Docklands, Relocation of employees 316-7w

Leighton, Mr Ron—continued
London Docklands, Tourism 650w
London Docklands, Unemployment 310w
Tourism, Departmental publications 309w
Training & enterprise councils, Greater London 309-11w

Leisure facilities
VAT 61w

Lester, Mr Jim
Questions
Social security benefits rules, Young people 27-8w

Lestor, Miss Joan
Debates etc.
Cot deaths, Medical research (20:03:89) 885-7
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 637-44, 699-701
Rain forests (13:03:89) 166-7
Questions
Channel tunnel, North West region 107w
Minimum wage, North West region 179w
Overseas trade 431-2w
School governors, Departmental publications 406-7w

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway transport 108w

Leyton
Community charge 318w

Libraries
462w
Books 725
British Theatre Association 462w
Expenditure 725-6

Libyan Arab Republic
Chemical weapons 624w

Licensing
Air routes 401w
Anglo Dutch Limited 104w
Bovine somatotropin 472w, 516, 725-6w
Drugs 68w, 328w
Slaughterhouses 83w
Transport of radioactive materials 591w
Veterinary medicine 473w
Veterinary Products Committee 467w
Veterinary services 468w
Wines 7-8w

Lifts
Handicapped 388w

Lighting
Crime prevention 411w

***Lilley, Mr Peter**, Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 481, 482, 492
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 568, 621-8
Questions
Advertising, Central Office of Information 63w, 147-8w
Al-Fayed, Mohammed, Banking Act 1987 543w
Central Office of Information, Civil service manpower 63w, 543w
Central Office of Information, Contracts for services 300w
Central Office of Information, Expenditure 543w, 588-9w
Charities 301-2w
Computer privacy, Customs & Excise 60w
Exchange equalisation account, National Loans Fund 702w
Government securities 703w
Inflation, Group of Seven 542w
Interest rates 586w, 704w
Interest rates, West Germany 541-2w
International Monetary Fund 542-3w
National debt 146-8w, 249-50w, 455-6w, 702w
Public relations, Central Office of Information 62w

Lilley, Mr Peter—continued
Statistics, Central Office of Information 148w
Tobacco, Average earnings 61-2w
VAT, Bus services 589w
VAT, Charities 65w
VAT, Community charge 586w
VAT, Construction 703-4w
VAT, Leisure facilities 61w
VAT, Unpaid taxes 147w
VAT registration, Suffolk 147w
VAT zero rated goods, Charities 63w

Lindane
725w
English Channel 594w
Sea pollution 1084

Lindholme
Armed forces deployment 618w

Liscombe experimental husbandry farm
514-5w

Listed buildings
1, Poultry 779w
Church buildings 508w

Listeria monocytogenes
582-3w
Cook-chill catering 79w, 163w, 583w
Infant mortality 162w

Litherland, Mr Robert
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway transport 108w

Litter
Local authorities 319w
Vacant land 1076-7

Litter Act 1983
Questions
319w

Liverpool
Channel tunnel 107w
Nuclear submarines 125w
Unemployment 187w

Livestock
Dog licences 351-2w
Radioactivity 719w

Livingstone, Mr Ken
Questions
Housing investment programmes, Brent 645w
Manufacturing industries, Equipment 906

Livsey, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 941, 990-2, (22:03:89) 1109-10, 1150-3, 1201, 1205
Questions
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 630w
Common sheep meat regime 350w
Family doctors, Rural areas 896-7
Housing, Wales 722
Nurses, Wales 437w

Lloyd, Sir Ian
Debates etc.
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 552

***Lloyd, Mr Peter**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security*
Debates etc.
Housing & elderly, Sheltered housing (23:03:89) 1294-8
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Social Security 30w
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Lambeth 544w
Child benefit, Expenditure 226w
Children, Scotland 785w
Children, Supplementary benefits 788w
Computer privacy, Dept of Social Security 27w
Dept of Social Security local offices 28-9w

Lloyd, Mr Peter—continued
Dept of Social Security local offices, North West region 29-30w
Dept of Social Security local offices, Statistics 393w
Equal opportunities, Dept of Social Security 676w, 792-4w
European Communities, Dept of Social Security 226w
Family benefits, Expenditure 790-2w
Family credit, Child benefit 308w
Family credit, Child minding 173w
Family credit, Scotland 544w
Family credit, Social security claims 459w
Family income supplements, Doncaster 783w
Handicap benefits, British residents abroad 675w
Homelessness, Young people 306-7w
House of Commons papers, Dept of Social Security 26-7w
Housing benefits, Capital rules 792w
Housing benefits, Private rented housing 176w
Housing benefits, Rent allowances 544w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rates 396w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 785w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 306w, 395w, 789w
Housing benefits, Student grants 306w
Housing benefits, War pensions 303-6w
Income support 460w
Income support, Clothing 460w
Income support, Dependants 787w
Income support, Hostels 393w
Income support, Pregnant women 786w
Income support, Residential care 30w, 787w
Income support, Social security claims 33w
Income support, Social security reform 395w
Income support, Water charges 460w
Income support, Young people 33w
Low incomes, Families 783-4w
National insurance fund, Treasury supplement 544-5w
One parent families, Social security recipients 787-8w
Pensioners, Greater London 395w
Pensioners, Personal income 172w
Pensions, Canada 393w
Personal income 392-3w, 791w
Personal income, Community charge 175-6w
Privatisation, Dept of Social Security 31w
Public relations, Dept of Social Security 30-2w
Public service messages, Dept of Social Security 306w
Residential care, Retirement pensions 307w
Retirement age 459w
Retirement age, Costs 308w
Retirement pensions 173w, 303w
Severe weather payments, Capital rules 789w
Sick pay 789-90w
Social Fund 308-9w
Social Fund, Administrative delays 785-6w
Social Fund, Chatham 676w
Social Fund, Expenditure 676w
Social Fund, Funerals 789w
Social Fund, Lockerbie 394w
Social Fund, Scotland 395-6w
Social security, Merchant seamen 460-1w
Social security appeals, Administrative delays 458w
Social security appeals, Training 33w
Social security benefits, Carers 173-4w
Social security benefits, Community charge 675w
Social security benefits, Retail price index 790w
Social security reform 396-8w, 790w
Social security reform, Northern region 27w
Statistics, Dept of Social Security 32w
Supplementary benefits, Doncaster 784w

Lloyd, Mr Peter—continued
Supplementary benefits, Social security recipients 174w
Supplementary benefits, Women 308w
Unemployment benefits, Social security appeals 458-9w
Vaccine damaged children, Compensation 770-2w
Voluntary unemployment, Social security benefits disqualification 558w
War pensions, Social security recipients 173w
Widows' benefits, Expenditure 460w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Questions
Air safety 9
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 80w
Channel tunnel, Railway freight transport 4
China, Human rights 144w
Coal mining, Redundancy 270
Dept of Social Security local offices 28-9w
Dept of Social Security local offices, North West region 29-30w
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 727w, 807-8w
Health services 568w
Iraq, Human rights 144w
Justices' clerks, Pay 1w
Justices' clerks, Resignations 149w
Kampuchea, Overseas aid 626w
Road construction, Engineers 707-8w
Traffic noise, Sound insulation 402-3w
Unemployment 274
Water pollution, Aluminium 214w

Lincoln Hospital
689-90w, 698w
Bus services 699w
Hospital closures 698w

Loan guarantee scheme
279-80
Employment opportunities 279

Loans
National Rivers Authority 242w

Local authorities
District health authorities 574w
Litter 319w
Mental health community care 696w
Road construction 589-90w

Local authority powers
Community charge 628w
Neighbourhood councils 1079

Local education authority training grant scheme
Voluntary organisations 714
Wales 714-5

Local employer network scheme
199w

Local enterprise agencies
201w

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
Questions
427w

Local government expenditure
782w
Bed & breakfast accommodation 545w
Educational finance 166-8w
Handicapped 440-1w
Housing benefits 176w
Law enforcement 805w
Pre-school education 358-9w
Primary education 683w
Redbridge 372w

Local government pensions
Derbyshire County Council (17:03:89) 704-12

Local government property
Property transfer 372w

Local government services
Competition 640w
Mental health community care 696w

Local government staff
Parish councils 371w
Political activities 638w
Redundancy pay (16:03:89) 628

Local labour
Contracts 779-80w

Local plans
Planning permission 643-4w

Lockerbie
Air accidents 418w, (16:03:89) 555-6, (20:03:89) 731-4, 906, 909-17
Departmental circulars 909-14
Social Fund 394w

Locusts
Pest control 382-3w

Lofthouse, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Transport safety (13:03:89) 124-5
Questions
Homelessness, Housing finance 641w
Minimum wage, Fines 181-3w

London airports
111w

London Ambulance Service
667-8w
Emergency calls 159w
Finance 158-9w
Manpower 580w
Out-patients 159w

London boroughs
Channel tunnel 106w
Housing construction 647w
Rented housing 647w

London docklands
Employment 316w
Employment opportunities 316w
Employment schemes 225-6w, 316w
Newspaper press 316-7w
Relocation of employees 316-7w
Tourism 650w
Unemployment 310w

London Docklands Development Corporation
310w, 316w

London Regional Transport
404w
Public appointments 594-5w

London Residuary Body
782w
Occupational pensions 649w

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
639w

London Underground
12, 373w
Automatic ticketing systems 111w
Crime 113w
Police 110w
Rolling stock 372-3w
Security 207w

London Underground (Victoria) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (16:03:89) 515, (22:03:89) 1071

Londonderry
731w

Long stay patients
Elderly 562w

Lord, Mr Michael
Questions
Confederation of British Industry 263w
Unemployment 186w

Lord Chancellor
216w
Advertising 40w
Management consultants 40w

Lord Chancellor—continued
Privatisation 40w
Public relations 39w
Statistics 39w

Lord Chancellor's Office
see Lord Chancellor

Lost working days
Drug abuse 195-6w
Industrial disputes 198w

Loughborough estate Sunderland
323-4w

Loughborough School London
Teachers 499w

Low flying
Air accidents 242-3w
Armed forces training 242-3w
Belgium 755w
Child health 617w
Complaints 243w
East Lothian 476w
Exercise Red Lanyard 476w
F111 aircraft 244w
Inquiries 243w
Military police 243-4w
Morocco 617w
Noise control 243w
Nuclear power stations 276w
RAF Finningley 756w
Scotland 755w
West Germany 755-6w
Yorkshire & Humberside 756w

Low incomes
Families 783-4w
Water charges 1085

Low pay
278, 280

Lowermoor water treatment works
(13:03:89) 66-9
Pollution monitoring 88w
Water pollution 88w, 208-9w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Questions
Channel tunnel, Liverpool 107w
Employment training, Expenditure 556w
Employment training, Take-up 415w
Employment training, Training allowances 556w
HM Coastguard, Ramsey 121w
HM Coastguard, Repairs & maintenance 206-7w
Laboratories, Private sector 893
Planning permission, Urban areas 1086
Sewage, Sea pollution 644w

LRT
see London Regional Transport

Luce, Rt Hon Richard, Minister of State Privy Council Office (Minister for the Arts)
Debates etc.
Arts (13:03:89) 112-8
Questions
Advertising, Office of Arts & Libraries 48w
Art works, Objects in lieu of tax 701w
Arts, East Midlands 463w
Arts, Greater London 362-3w, 462-3w
Arts, Marketing 511-2w
Arts, North West region 462w
Arts, Northern region 461-2w
Arts, West Midlands 463w
Arts, Yorkshire & Humberside 461w
Arts finance 227-8w
Arts sponsorship, Buildings 464w
Arts sponsorship, Nottingham 227w
Boards of trustees, Public appointments 51w
Bridge programme, Civil servants 729
Bridge programme, Civil servants' secondment 729
British Library 462w
British Theatre Association, Libraries 462w
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 463w

Luce, Rt Hon Richard*—*continued
Civil servants, Dept of Social Security local offices 730
Civil servants' political activities, Minister for the Civil Service 227w
Civil service, Pay incentives 729-30
Civil service agencies 48w, 461w, 727-8
Civil Service College 302w
Civil Service College, Environment protection 730
Civil Service College, Members 227w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Social Security local offices 730
Craft industries, Export promotion 464w
Cultural relations, European Communities 724
Cultural relations, Glasgow 725
Dance 228w
Libraries 462w
Libraries, Books 725
Libraries, Expenditure 72–6
Management consultants, Office of Arts & Libraries 228w
Mappa Mundi, Hereford Cathedral 464w
Museum of Mankind, Art exhibitions 378w
Museums & galleries 463w
Museums & galleries, Burnley 228w
Museums & galleries, Industries 228w
Northern Ballet Theatre 463w
Opera, Festivals & special occasions 723-4
Performing arts, Training 464w
Privatisation, Office of Arts & Libraries 50w
Public relations, Office of Arts & Libraries 48-9w
Puppets 463w
Scottish Arts Council, Government grants 701w
Southern Arts Association, Arts grants 726
Statistics, Office of Arts & Libraries 49-50w
Victoria & Albert Museum 512w
Victoria & Albert Museum, Manpower 302w
Welsh Arts Council, Arts grants 727

Lug worms
Burry estuary 350-1w
Sea fishing 351w

Lurcher's Gully
Planning inquiries 377-8w

Lyell, Sir Nicholas, Solicitor-General
Debates etc.
Legal Aid & Legal Advice & Assistance Regulations 1989 (22:03:89) 1213-8, 1231-2
Legal profession (23:03:89) 1289-90
Questions
Crown Prosecution Service, "Work & Organisation of the Legal Profession Consultation Paper" 692-3w
Entry clearances, Immigration appeals 693w

M1
Road traffic 707w
Traffic lights 218w

M4
723
Road works 216-7w

M11
Road construction 206w

M40
110w
Road construction 13, 706w

McAllion, Mr John
Debates etc.
Community care, Dundee (23:03:89) 1245-7, 1250, 1251, 1254
Questions
Channel tunnel, Economic regions 107w
Minimum wage, Wages Inspectorate 281-2
Offshore safety 412-3w

McAvoy, Mr Thomas
Questions
Abortion, Select Committees 560w
Trade competitiveness 268w
Veterinary services 346w

McCartney, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 462, 464, 465
Council tenants, Social unrest (13:03:89) 142, 145-8, 156
Security industry, MYL Security (17:03:89) 677-8
Tourism, Northumberland (15:03:89) 508
Transport safety (13:03:89) 129-31, 138
Questions
Channel tunnel, North West region 2-3
"Environment in Trust" 631w
Manufacturing industries, OECD countries 267w
Minimum wage, North West region 180w

McCrea, Rev William
Debates etc.
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Homicide (21:03:89) 924

McCrindle, Mr Robert
Questions
London airports 111w
Rented housing 642w
Retirement age, Costs 308w
"Working for Patients White Paper", Publicity 570w

McCusker, Mr Harold
Debates etc.
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Homicide (21:03:89) 926-7

Macdonald, Mr Calum
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 480-3
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 107w
El Salvador 726w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Scotland 663w

McFall, Mr John
Questions
Channel tunnel, Economic regions 107w
Industry, Interest rates 264w
Minimum wage 181w

Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Questions
Bus lanes 400w
Buses, City of Westminster 400w
Council house sales, Sutton 321-2w
Office of Gas Supply, Civil servants' secondment 763w
Office of Telecommunications 712-3w
Road traffic, City of Westminster 401w

McGrady, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Homicide (21:03:89) 921-2
Questions
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 284
Official engagements 514w

MacGregor, Rt Hon John, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 340w
Agricultural products, EC external trade 351w
Agricultural research 340w, 350w
Agricultural research, Research finance 516-7w
Agricultural Training Board 475w
Agriculture, GATT 349w
Bovine somatotropin, Licensing 516
Common agricultural policy 347-8w
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 523-4
Common farm prices 354w
Common sheep meat regime 86w, 350w
Country Landowners' Association 345-6w
Dairy farming 516
EC Agriculture Commissioner 344w

MacGregor, Rt Hon John*—*continued
EC Agriculture Council 615-6w
Eggs, Agricultural production 522
Eggs, Chocolate 522
Eggs, Northern Ireland 522-3
Eggs, Nutrition 522
Eggs, Salmonella 349w, 516w, 517
Environmentally sensitive areas 350w
Food hygiene 343w, 517
Food hygiene, Food labelling 517
Fraud, EC action 339w
Milk, Labelling 515
Milk Marketing Board 349w
National Consumer Council 349w
National Farmers' Union 340w
Potatoes, Agricultural subsidies 615w
Salmonella, Research 523
Set-aside schemes 348w
Untreated milk 516
Veterinary services, Animal welfare 341w
Veterinary services, Manpower 341w
Water pollution, Nitrates 615w

McKay, Mr Allen
Debates etc.
Council tenants, Social unrest (13:03:89) 143-5, 155
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 992, 999, 1026-7, (22:03:89) 1197-8, 1207
Questions
Industry, Interest rates 264w
Minimum wage, Prosecutions 184-5w
Planning appeals 635-6w
Unemployment 270

MacKay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 746
Questions
Business statements 537-8
Unemployment 190w

McKelvey, Mr William
Questions
Council of Ministers 726-7w

McLeish, Mr Henry
Questions
Building societies, Repossession orders 743w
Business development initiative, Expenditure 435-8w
Capital investment, Scotland 744-5w
Children, Scotland 745w, 785w
City Technology College Trust 446w
City Technology College Trust, Government assistance 446w
Crime, Detection rates 743w
Criminal statistics, Scotland 743w
Education, Capital investment 742w
Educational publications, Expenditure 745-7w
Grant Maintained Schools Trust 446w
Grant Maintained Schools Trust, Government assistance 446w
Housing amenities, Scotland 742w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 785w
Housing occupancy, Scotland 744w
Housing standards, Scotland 742w, 744w
Housing starts, Scotland 745w
Manufacturing industries, Scotland 744w
NHS, Building repairs 742w
Regional aid, Expenditure 441-2w
Regional development grants, Expenditure 432-4w, 441w
Regional development grants, Scotland 446w, 651-2w
Regional enterprise grants, Expenditure 433-6w, 442-3w
Regional enterprise grants, Innovation 442w
Regional enterprise grants, Scotland 315-6w, 555-6w, 665w
Regional selective assistance, Expenditure 433-4w, 436w, 441-2w
Regional selective assistance, Scotland 447w, 547w
School leaving, Scotland 745w

McLeish, Mr Henry—continued
Scottish Arts Council, Government grants 701w
Self-governing schools, Scotland 446w, 751-2w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 343
Questions
Archaeological sites, Planning permission 642-3w
Breast cancer, Screening 447w
British Library 462w
Crofting, Woodland grant scheme 748w
Dornoch firth, Bridges 748w
Employment training, Housing insulation 203w
Housing insulation 803w
Inverness-Wick/Thurso railway, Bridges 120w, 708-9w
Sea pollution, Pollution control 288-9w
Shipping, Refuse 593w

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 863
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1060
Questions
AIDS, Research finance 569-70w
Dialysis machines, Patients 313-4w, 441w
Family practitioner committees, Public appointments 769-70w
Heart diseases, Costs 765w
Kidney patients, Kidney machines 481-2w
Nurses, Manpower 569w
Patients, Wales 441w
Rate increases, Derbyshire 642w
Transplant surgery 489w
Transplant surgery, Death 385-6w
Transplant surgery, Hospital waiting lists 386w
Transport of hazardous materials, Weather 531-2w

McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Debates etc.
Transport safety (13:03:89) 121-3
Questions
Conductive education, Government assistance 396w
Food hygiene 343w
Supermarkets, Equipment 506-7w

McNair-Wilson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
British Railways Bill 1988/89, 2R (14:03:89) 360-2, 373-4
Questions
Economic situation 284
Environmental policy, Pollution control 645-6w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Homicide (21:03:89) 918-9

McTaggart, Bob
Members' deaths (23:03:89) 1265

McTaggart, Mr Bob
Questions
EC Consumer Affairs Council 266w
Minimum wage, Scotland 183-4w
Tibet, Human rights 726w
Veterinary services 346w

McWilliam, Mr John
Questions
Minimum wage, Northern region 184-5w

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc.
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1274
Sentencing, Renshaw, Michelle (15:03:89) 412

Madden, Mr Max—continued
Voluntary organisations, Bradford (14:03:89) 386-90
Questions
Al-Fayed, Mohammed, Banking Act 1987 543w
Bradford Health Authority, NHS finance 901
British citizenship, Administrative delays 413w
Business statements 540
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 727-8w
Entry clearances, Genetics 815w
Entry clearances, Immigration controls 728w
Immigrant detainees, Latchmere House 9-10w
Immigration applications, Administrative delays 412-3w, 420w, 539-40w, 809w
Immigration applications, Pakistan 8-9w
Inner cities initiative, Bradford 714w
Languages education, India 681-2w
Minimum wage, Company investigations 801w
Pakistan, Entry clearances 26w
Pickles, James 285
Textile industry 398
Urban programme, Bradford 428w
Voluntary organisations, Bradford 428w
Voluntary organisations, Manpower 200w

Madel, Mr David
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 470-3
Questions
Intervention Board 346w
Water charges, Price increases 213-4w, 643w

MAFF
see Ministry of Agriculture

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1097
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Homicide (21:03:89) 925-6

Magistrates
14
Nottingham 172w
Public appointments 451w
Recruitment 14

Magistrates' courts
Computer applications 540-1w

Magistrates' Courts Procedure Review
413-4w

Magpies
646-7w

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 460
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 787-90
Questions
Bridging allowances, Halifax 59w
British Rail 108w
Crime prevention, Operating costs 812w
District health authorities, Pay 337w
Employment training, Graduates 310w
Eye tests, Optical charges 162w
Income support, Social security claims 33w
Income support, Young people 33w
Minimum wage, Manpower 278
NHS charges, Administrative delays 78w
NHS Policy Board, Professional qualifications 336w
Public sector housing, Rent arrears 908
Pupil-teacher ratios, Primary education 289w
Rates & rating, Calderdale 1087
Residential care, Costs 77-8w
Self-governing hospitals 336-7w
Self-governing hospitals, Calderdale Health Authority 571w

Mahon, Mrs Alice—continued
Self-governing hospitals, Pay 337w
Social security appeals, Training 33w
Water authorities, Pay 424w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 424-5w, 1072-3
Youth training scheme, Halifax 59w

Maiden speeches
Hague, William (20:03:89) 761-4

Major, Rt Hon John, Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 421, 425-35, 447
Private notice question intervention (14:03:89) 316
Questions
Balance of trade 246-7w
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 246w
Cash limits, Government departments 456w
Community charge, Crown lands & estates 587w
Finance Bill 1988/89 587w
Foreign investment in UK 542w
Invisible trade balance, UK contributions to EC budget 586w
Public expenditure, Private investment 542w
Select Committees, Treasury 146w
Tax yields, Scotland 585w

Malaria
Medical research 385w

Malins, Mr Humfrey
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 571

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Questions
Eggs, Northern Ireland 522-3
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Inquiries 530-1

Malta
Air routes 401w

"Mammal & Bird Pests 1985"
249w

Management agreements
663w

Management consultants
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 101w
Dept of Education & Science 13-4w
Dept of Employment 254-5w
Dept of Energy 20w
Dept of Health 76w
Dept of Social Security 31w
Dept of the Environment 91-2w
Dept of Trade & Industry 100-2w
Dept of Transport 117w
Fees & charges 13-4w, 20w, 23w, 31w, 34w, 36w, 40w, 42w, 47-8w, 52w, 76w, 81-2w, 91-2w, 100-2w, 117w, 228w, 254-5w, 383w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 23w
Lord Chancellor 40w
Minister for the Civil Service 47-8w
Ministry of Agriculture 81-2w
Ministry of Defence 52w
Office of Arts & Libraries 228w
Prime Minister 48w
Privy Council Office 34w
Scottish Office 36w
Treasury 383w
Welsh Office 42w

Managing agents
310w

Manchester Airport
Air accidents 122w, (16:03:89) 629-36
Air routes 9

Manchester City Council
636w

Mandela, Nelson
528

Mans, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 437, 440, 453, 483-6
Questions
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation 284-5w
Housing action trusts, Council housing 323-4w
Ports, Dock labour scheme 204w

Manufactured goods
Balance of trade 246w, 394-5

Manufacturing industries
Balance of trade 265w, 395-6
EC grants & loans 403-4
EC internal trade 260w
Employment opportunities 284
Equipment 906
Industrial investment 282w, 402, 710-2w
Interest rates 263-4w
North West region 403, 430w
OECD countries 267w, 410
Productivity 263w, 403
Scotland 744w

Maples, Mr John
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 859, 875
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 30
War widows' pensions (13:03:89) 37
Questions
Business statements 536-7
Museums & galleries 463w

Mappa Mundi
Hereford Cathedral 464w

Marcos, Ferdinand
Philippines 624w

Marek, Dr John
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 441
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 583, 614-21, 624
Questions
Civil service manpower, Dept of Social Security local offices 730
Immunopathology, Hospital consultants 718
Medical treatments, Wales 41w
National Blood Transfusion Service, Management 73-4w
Prosthetics, North Wales 40-1w
Prosthetics, Wales 41w
Welsh Arts Council, Arts grants 727

Marginal land
Northern Ireland 11w
Tribunals 11w

MARILYN report
276w

Marine animals
Fisheries 468w

Marketing
Arts 511-2w

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Air accidents, Lockerbie (20:03:89) 733-4
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 739, 753, 758
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 867
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 969
Questions
Agricultural products, Republic of Ireland 621-2w
Private Members' Bills, House of Commons procedure 19

Marlow, Mr Tony*—*continued
Restart programme 271
Untreated milk 516
Wages Inspectorate 271

Marriage
Rape 230w

Married men
Personal tax allowances 585w
Take-home pay 585w

Marshall, Mr David
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 916-7
Minimum wage, South East region 178-9w
Road construction, Scotland 660w
Road construction, VAT 596w, 695w

Marshall, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1090-1
Questions
Defective housing, Leicester 1078
Regional aid 267-8w
Restart programme 202w
Small businesses, Non-domestic rates 644w

Marshall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 869, 878
Questions
Europe Open for Business 262w
Export promotion 404
Food poisoning 162-3w
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Bomb victims 143w
Petrol, Oil companies 126w
USSR, Prilutzkaya, Malka 510w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 1084
"Working for Patients White Paper" 894

Marshall, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
British Aerospace (23:03:89) 1329
Questions
Arundel bypass, Road construction 707w

Martin, Mr David
Debates etc.
Arts (13:03:89) 81
Questions
Driving, Road safety 13-4
Employment 192w
Family doctors, Contracts 565w
Independent Broadcasting Authority, Tax yields 152-3w
Legal profession 285
Motorway service areas 375w
Mozambique, Peace negotiations 528-9

Martin, Mr Michael J
Debates etc.
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 339
Questions
Railway accidents, Bellgrove 591w
Railway safety 705w

Martlew, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 984, 1000-2

Mason, Doreen
490-1w

Maternity services
Rural areas 572w

Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981
Questions
142w

Matrimonial property
Scotland 142w

Mature students
Northern Ireland 527-8w

Maude, Mr Francis, Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs
Questions
Advertising controls, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 281-4w

Maude, Mr Francis*—*continued
Anglo Dutch Limited, Company investigations 104w
Anglo Dutch Limited, Licensing 104w
Anglo Dutch Limited, Shareholders 104w
Brewing industry, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 494-5w
Care Homes, Company liquidations 103-4w
Care Homes, Directors 104w
Companies House Executive Agency 713-4w
Company investigations 105w
Consumer credit, Credit licensing 271w
EC Internal Market Council 713w
Insider trading, Dept of Trade inquiries 96-8w
Public companies, Company registration 432w

Mawhinney, Dr Brian, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Higher education admission, Age participation rates 529w
Mature students, Northern Ireland 527-8w
Music, Travelling expenses 519w
Part-time education, Queen's University Belfast 741w
Public Record Office, Fees & charges 139w
Student grants, Community charge 529w
Student loans, Northern Ireland 421w, 527w
Students, Degrees 421w
Students, Handicapped 421w
Teachers, Secondary education 520-8w
Teachers' pensions, Northern Ireland 731w
Voluntary schools, Educational finance 520w
Voluntary schools, Expenditure 519-20w

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc.
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1057-60
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 946-7, 950-3, 959

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1097
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 1004, 1007-8, 1014
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 897

Mayday Hospital
158w

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick, Attorney-General
Questions
Advertising, Lord Chancellor 40w
Barristers, Criminal proceedings 692w
"Codebreaker Extraordinary" 216w
Contempt of court, Custodial treatment 450-1w
Crown Prosecution Service, Manpower 692w
European Communities, Attorney-General 216w
Judges, Crown courts 450w
Legal advice & assistance, Solicitors 449w
Legal aid 449w
Legal aid, Cohabitation 449w
Legal aid, Legal costs 39-40w
Legal profession, Treasury 275w
Magistrates, Nottingham 172w
Magistrates, Public appointments 451w
Management consultants, Lord Chancellor 40w
Privatisation, Lord Chancellor 40w
Public relations, Lord Chancellor 39w
Sentencing, One parent families 449-50w
Special constables, Codes of practice 448-9w
Statistics, Lord Chancellor 39w

MBP Russell Holdings
Insolvency 269w

Meacher, Mr Michael

***Meacher, Mr Michael**—continued*
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 739-40, 744
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 24, 33
Questions
Courts martial, Air force bases 275-6w
Insider trading, Dept of Trade inquiries 96-8w
Labour force survey 415w
Minimum wage 275-6
Prisoners, Prison sentences 291-2w
Unemployment 273
Wages councils 797-801w

Meale, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
British Railways Bill 1988/89, 2R (14:03:89) 370-2
Environment protection, Derbyshire (13:03:89) 235, 241, 243
Religious sects (13:03:89) 188-91, 193, 194
Transport safety (13:03:89) 120
Questions
Air pollution control, Pollution monitoring 776w
District health authorities, Per capita costs 671-4w
Exhaust emission controls, Diesel vehicles 650-1w
Horse racing, Finance 818w
Horse racing, Prize money 818w
Minimum wage, East Midlands 179w
Whatton Detention Centre 815w
Whatton Detention Centre, Prison sentences 816w

Meat
Production 468w

Meat products
Food composition 341-2w

Medical audit
EC countries 384w
Self-governing hospitals 571-2w

Medical education
606w
Cost per student 606w
Private sector 605w
Self-governing hospitals 769w

Medical equipment
Anaesthetics 387-9w
Safety 387-9w

Medical ethics
574w

Medical malpractice
Disciplinary proceedings 572w

Medical profession
Manpower 892
No-fault compensation 670-1w

Medical records
Nuclear submarines 480w

Medical research
Animal welfare 16w
Cot deaths 235w, 325w, (20:03:89) 885-90
Down's syndrome 15-6w
Malaria 385w

Medical Research Council
505w, 777w

Medical students
Student numbers 578w, 606w
Veterinary medicine 11-2w, 145w
Wales 606w

Medical treatments
Armed forces discharges 275w
Cochlear implants 70w
Costs 564w
Down's syndrome 573w
Genito-urinary medicine 328-32w
Preventive medicine 566w
Wales 41w

Medicine
Offshore structures 559w

Medicines Control Agency
Public appointments 328w

***Mellor, Mr David**, Minister of State, Dept of Health*
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Health 71w
Advertising, Health Education Authority 72w
Advertising, Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 71w
AIDS, North East Thames Regional Health Authority 154w
AIDS, Research finance 569-70w
AIDS (Control) Act 1987, Publishing 569w
Audiology technicians 157w
Benzodiazepines, Drug industry 390-1w
Benzodiazepines, Prescriptions 338w, 391w
Central Council for Education & Training in Social Work 326-7w
Cervical cancer, Screening 567w
Child minding, Child workers 902-3
Child safety, Southwark 490-1w
Children in care 485w
Cochlear implants, Medical treatments 70w
Committee on the Review of Medicines, Public appointments 68w
Computer privacy, Drugs 154w
Consumer organisations, Dept of Health 65w
Cruelty to children, Research 384w
Cruelty to children, Sexual offences 574-5w
Deafness, Departmental publications 70w
District health authorities, Ethnic minorities 385w
District health authorities, Pay 337w
Doctors, Manpower 891
Drug industry, Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 331w
Drug industry, Price increases 331w
Drugs, Counterfeit manufacturing 575-6w
Drugs, Expenditure 331-3w
Drugs, Imports 575w
Drugs, Licensing 328w
Drugs, Per capita costs 332-3w, 766w
Drugs, Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 332w
European Communities, Dept of Health 338w
Eye tests, Optical charges 162w
Family doctors, Finance 768w
Family doctors, Information 767-8w
Family doctors, Manpower 578w, 891-2
Family doctors, Pay 153-4w, 765w, 768w
Family doctors, Pharmacists 765w
Family practitioner committees, Public appointments 769-70w
Family practitioner services, Government assistance 154w
Genito-urinary medicine, Medical treatments 328-32w
Geriatric patients, Drug side effects 157-8w
Handicapped, Lifts 388w
Health service ancillary staff, Pay settlements 582w
Health service staff, Pay 387w
Health service staff, Scientists 573w
Health service staff, Temporary staff 583-4w
Health services, Ethnic minorities 489w
Hearing aids 70w, 157w, 325-6w
Hearing aids, Leicestershire Health Authority 670-1w
Hearing aids, NHS 70w
Hearing aids, Royal National Institute for the Deaf 326w
Heart diseases, Screening 338w
Homeopathy, Drugs 68-9w
Hospital consultants, Health service staff 334w
Hospital waiting lists 153w, 668w
Hospital waiting lists, North Western Regional Health Authority 766w
Hospital waiting lists, Norwich Health Authority 566-7w
Hospital waiting lists, Trent Regional Health Authority 153w, 326w

***Mellor, Mr David**—continued*
Hospitals, Day nurseries 339w
Hospitals, Expenditure 159-60w
Inspectors of anatomy 561w
Junior hospital doctors, Working hours 333-4w
Laboratories, Private sector 893
Management consultants, Dept of Health 76w
Maternity services, Rural areas 572w
Medical audit, EC countries 384w
Medical profession, Manpower 892
Medical profession, No-fault compensation 670-1w
Medical students, Student numbers 578w
Medical treatments, Preventive medicine 566w
Medicines Control Agency, Public appointments 328w
Mentally handicapped, Mental health community care 579w
Midwives, Pay 326w
Midwives, Students 325w
MMR vaccines, Take-up 67-8w
NHS & private practice, Greater London 564w
NHS & private practice, Laboratories 893
NHS charges, Administrative delays 78w
NHS finance 903
NHS finance, National Association of Health Authorities 903-4
Northern Regional Health Authority 574w
Nottingham Health Authority, NHS finance 903
Nurses, Manpower 569w
Nurses, Pay 565w
Nurses' training, Family practitioner services 579w
Nursing homes, Property transfer 78w
Occupational therapists, Trent Regional Health Authority 388w
Old people's homes 160w
Old people's homes, Whitby 157w
Operating department assistants, Manpower 577w
Operating department assistants, Pay 390w
Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 565w
Prescription charges 157w
Prescription drugs, Drug industry 581w
Prescriptions, Per capita costs 157w, 334-6w, 489-90w
Preventive medicine 567w
Primary health care, District health authorities 569w
Privatisation, Dept of Health 75w
Prosthetics 581w
Public relations, Dept of Health 72-3w
Public relations, Health Education Authority 71-2w
Public service messages, Dept of Health 385w
Registered Homes tribunals, Public appointments 492w
Residential care, Costs 77-8w
Residential care, Electronic surveillance 584w
Residential care, Private sector 670w
Residential care, Property transfer 570w
Royal National Institute for the Deaf 326w
Secure accommodation, North West region 237w
Secure units, Children in care 484-6w
Secure units, Government grants to local authorities 485-6w
Smoking 65-6w
Social workers' training, Mental health 327-8w, 387w, 667w, 764-5w
South Cumbria Health Authority, Health service staff 386w
Sports, Injuries 668w
Statistics, Dept of Health 76w
Statistics, Health Education Authority 75-6w
Sunderland Health Authority, Performance related pay 336w
Tobacco advertising, Duty free shops 70w
Tobacco industry 235w
Toxoplasmosis, Health education 576w

Mellor, Mr David—continued
Toxoplasmosis, Screening 576w
Toxoplasmosis, Vaccination 577w
Trent Regional Health Authority, Water pollution 765-7w
UN Decade of Disabled Persons 1983-1992 386w
Vaccination, Babies 767w
Whitley councils 577w
Young offenders, Prisons 669w

Members
Civil Service College 227w
Immigration appeals 233w, 811w
Speaker's rulings & statements (23:03:89) 1338

Members' allowances
Clarke, Kenneth 621w

Members' conduct
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:03:89) 436, (20:03:89) 717, 851, 874, (21:03:89) 913, 1010, 1038

Members' correspondence
Prisoners 412w

Members' deaths
McTaggart, Bob (23:03:89) 1265

Members' interventions
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:03:89) 426, (16:03:89) 529, 530, (20:03:89) 874, (22:03:89) 1083

Members' speeches
Speaker's rulings & statements (13:03:89) 101, 125, 145, (15:03:89) 430, (16:03:89) 557, 577, (20:03:89) 749, 781, 783, 805, 760, 877, (21:03:89) 1002, (22:03:89) 1092, 1098, 1145, (23:03:89) 1269

Members' staff
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:03:89) 411

Members' suspension
Sillars, Jim (14:03:89) 289-90, 292

Members' visits abroad
Armed forces deployment 620w

Meningitis
Ethiopia 302w

Mental health
Social workers' training 327-8w, 387w, 547w, 667w, 764-5w

Mental health community care
Local authorities 696w
Local government services 696w
Mentally handicapped 579w
Mentally ill 579w
Wales 696w

Mental hospitals
Hospital closures 669w

Mental patients
Hospital discharges 582w

Mental welfare officers
Scotland 547w
Social workers' training 547w

Mentally disturbed offenders 407w
Alternatives to prison 408w
Police training 409-10w
Prison population 408-9w
Prison riots 410w
Prisoners on remand 407w
Psychiatry 409w
Remand in custody 362w
Research 407-8w
Scotland 376w
Secure psychiatric units 408w
Suicide 376w

Mentally handicapped
Mental health community care 579w

Mentally ill
Mental health community care 579w
Social workers' training 667w

Merchant seamen
Social security 460-1w
Tax allowances 452w

Merchant Shipping Act 1988
Debates etc.
European Court of Justice (13:03:89) 55, 56-8
Questions
6-7, 122w

Merchant Shipping (Loading & Stability Assessment of Ro/Ro Passenger Ships) (Non-United Kingdom Ships) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(15:03:89) 413, (23:03:89) 1243

Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage) Order 1988
Questions
593w

Merchant Shipping (Weighing of Goods Vehicles & other Cargo) (Application to Non-UK Ships) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(15:03:89) 413, (23:03:89) 1243

Merchant ships
Certification 121-2w
Shipping registration 122w

Mersey Regional Health Authority
Hospital waiting lists 766w
Hospitals 766w

Merseyside
Cancer 236w
Nuclear submarines 125w

Meteorology
Research 369-70w, 648w

Methane
Air pollution 319w
Arkwright colliery (13:03:89) 42-5

Metropolitan Police
7w, 364w
Advertising 6w
Criminal statistics 812w
Manpower 805-6w
Public relations 5w
Resignations 152w
Statistics 6-7w

Mexborough
783-4w

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Questions
Boating, Accidents 212w
Boats, Swimming 241w
EC internal trade 907
Roads, Wales 713-4
Sewage, Wales 1081
Vacancies, Wales 720
Wales Tourist Board 437-8w

Michael, Mr Alun
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Money res (20:03:89) 854-6
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 935-8
Questions
Barlow Clowes, Compensation 260-1w
Common agricultural policy 348w
Medical treatments, Preventive medicine 566w
Minimum wage, Wales 177-8w
Railway travel, Urban areas 4-5
Water supply industry, Privatisation 238w

Michie, Mr Bill
Questions
Employment training, Inner city areas 256w
West Kent Water Company, Water charges 1084-5

Michie, Mrs Ray
Questions
Agriculture, Scotland 313w
Crown Estate Commissioners, Fish farming 383-4w

Michie, Mrs Ray—continued
Fish farming, Pollution control 142w
Hazardous Waste Inspectorate, Scotland 653w
Hazardous wastes, Scotland 653w
Personal income, Community charge 175-6w
Pesticides, Fish farming 142w
Questionnaires, Crime 140-1w
ReChem International, Waste disposal 652-3w
Survey techniques, Telephones 150-2w
Tipping of waste, Convictions 444w
Tipping of waste, Hazardous Waste Inspectorate 652w
Tipping of waste, Scotland 654-5w
Transport of hazardous materials, Developing countries 653-4w
VAT zero rated goods, Charities 63w
Veterinary medicine, Fish 145w
Veterinary medicine, Prescriptions 145w
Waste disposal, Crime 653w
Waste disposal, Disclosure of information 653w
Waste disposal, Fines 652w
Waste disposal, Scotland 652w

Microelectronics industry
Research finance 105w

Microlight aircraft
Legislation 707w

Mid Glamorgan
Hospitals 439w

Middle East
Defence Export Services Organisation 757w
Tornado aircraft 757w

Middlesbrough Borough Council
Rent arrears 642w

Middleton, Michael
Security vetting 694w

Midland Bank
366w

Midland main railway line
Railway electrification 3

Midwives
Pay 326w
Students 325w

Milford bypass
Noise control 373w

Military aircraft
Aircraft noise 617-8w
Airmisses 616w
Birds 754w
Otterburn 618w
RAF Alconbury 758w
RAF Spadeadam 618w

Military Lands Act 1892
Questions
Bye laws 758-9w

Military police
Accountants 477w
Criminal investigation 477w
Low flying 243-4w

Military vehicles
Greater London 756w
Motor vehicle registration 759w
RAF Greenham Common 759w
Tractors 619w

Milk
Bovine somatotropin 515
Goats 469-70w
Labelling 515
Production levies 725w
Production quotas 527

Milk Marketing Board
349w, 515, 725w

Miller, Sir Hal
Questions
Civil service agencies 461w
Vacant land 634-5w

Mills, Mr Iain
Questions
Taxis, Police powers 707w

Minerals
Cheese 347w
Departmental publications 648-9w
Quarrying 648-9w

Mines
Costs 762w

Minimum wage
177-9w, 181w, 183-4w, 275-6
Company investigations 801w
Derbyshire 255w
East Anglia 183-4w
East Midlands 178-80w, 182-3w, 280
Fines 181-3w
Greater London 178-80w
Manpower 278
North West region 178-85w
Northern region 177-85w, 202-3w
Prosecutions 184-5w, 275, 801w
Scotland 177-9w, 182-4w
South East region 178-9w, 181w, 183-4w
Wages Inspectorate 177w, 179-80w, 281-2
Wales 177-9w, 182-5w
West Midlands 177-8w, 181-5w, 275
Yorkshire & Humberside 178w, 180w, 182-4w

Minister for the Civil Service
Civil servants' political activities 227w
Management consultants 47-8w
Privatisation 47w

Ministerial policy advisers
419w
Civil servants' political activities 419-20w
Costs 419w
Employment 418-9w
Expenditure 246w

Ministerial powers
6

Ministerial responsibility
Dept of Energy 256w

Ministerial statements
Explosions (23:03:89) 1266-74
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1089-100
Income support (16:03:89) 546-54
Skills Training Agency (13:03:89) 23-33
Speaker's rulings & statements (13:03:89) 31, 32, (15:03:89) 35, (16:03:89) 550, (21:03:89) 924, 926, (23:03:89) 1315
Terrorism (21:03:89) 918-27

Ministers' domestic visits
371w
Abortion 560w

Ministers of religion
Easter 15

Ministry of Agriculture
Advertising 80-1w
Advisory bodies 86w
European Communities 250w
Management consultants 81-2w
Privatisation 81w
Public relations 81-2w
Statistics 81w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
see Ministry of Agriculture

Ministry of Defence
276-7w, 381w
Advertising 52w
Computer privacy 244-5w
Consumer organisations 244w
European Communities 246w
Management consultants 52w
Privatisation 53w
Public relations 54w
Security 760w
Security guards 760w
Select Committees 51w
Statistics 53w
Water pollution 51-2w

Ministry of Defence police
Manpower 760-1w
Pay 761w
Training 761w

Mink
Transmissible encephalopathies 468w

Misuse of Drugs Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (17:03:89) 702

Mitchell, Mr Andrew
Questions
Business sponsorship incentive scheme 463w
Council house sales, Right to buy 633w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Questions
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 246w
Barristers, Criminal proceedings 692w
Consumer organisations, Dept of Education & Science 289w
Consumer organisations, Dept of Energy 18w
Consumer organisations, Dept of Health 65w
Consumer organisations, Dept of the Environment 778w
Consumer organisations, Dept of Transport 113-4w
Consumer organisations, Ministry of Defence 244w
Consumer organisations, Northern Ireland Office 139w
Consumer protection 265-6w
Crown Prosecution Service, Manpower 692w
Fishing catches 345w
Legal profession, Treasury 275w
Low incomes, Families 783-4w
Minimum wage, East Midlands 178-9w
Select Committees, Dept of Transport 113w
Select Committees, Ministry of Defence 51w
Select Committees, Northern Ireland Office 299w
Select Committees, Treasury 146w

MMC
see Monopolies & Mergers Commission

MMR vaccines
Take-up 67-8w

Moate, Mr Roger
Questions
Dock labour scheme 277
Set-aside schemes 348w

Mobility allowance
Social security benefits uprating 174w

MOD
see Ministry of Defence

Modernisation
Nuclear weapons 477-8w, 509w

"Modernising NATO's Nuclear Weapons"
620w

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1093
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Homicide (21:03:89) 920
Questions
Terrorism 906-7

Monopolies & Mergers Commission
271-4w, (22:03:89) 1104-212
Advertising controls 281-4w
Brewing industry 494-5w
Welsh Water Authority 700-1w

Monro, Sir Hector
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 953-4
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 914

Monro, Sir Hector—continued
Forestry, Caithness 550-1w
Forestry, Scotland 660w
Legal profession, Scotland 37w
Roads, Scotland 551-2w
Student grants, Scotland 550w

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Questions
Business statements 536

Moonie, Dr Lewis
Questions
Industrial investment 261-2w
NHS, Performance indicators 900

Moore, Rt Hon John, Secretary of State for Social Security
Debates etc.
Income support, Ministerial statements (16:03:89) 546-54
Questions
Family credit, Take-up 393-4w
Management consultants, Dept of Social Security 31w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri
Debates etc.
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1055
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 969
Questions
Civil service agencies 728
Industrial training, Wales 714-5
Milk, Labelling 515

Morley, Mr Elliot
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 984, 1004-7, 1028-30, (22:03:89) 1154, 1160, 1165-8, 1210
Questions
Agricultural & Food Research Council 344w
Community charge 626w
Forestry, Caithness 38-9w

Morocco
Low flying 617w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc.
Air accidents, Manchester Airport (16:03:89) 629-32
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 914-5
Business statements 536
Drinking & driving, Greater Manchester 599w
Handicap benefits 675-6w
Handicapped, Access to buildings 30w
Minimum wage, North West region 183-4w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Questions
Crown Prosecution Service, "Work & Organisation of the Legal Profession Consultation Paper" 692-3w
Hospitals, Port Talbot 137w

Morris, Mr Michael
Questions
Drug industry, Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 331w
Drug industry, Price increases 331w
Drugs, Expenditure 331-3w
Drugs, Per capita costs 332-3w
Drugs, Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 332w
Family doctors, Contracts of employment 487-9w
Family doctors, Finance 768w
Family doctors, Information 767-8w
Family doctors, Pay 153-4w, 768w
Family practitioner services, Government assistance 154w
Law enforcement, Local government expenditure 805w
Prescriptions, Budgeting 902

Morrison, Sir Charles

Morrison, Sir Charles*—*continued
Debates etc.
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 669-72
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1206
Questions
Set-aside schemes, Government assistance 429w
Vacant land 634w

Morrison, Rt Hon Peter, Minister of State for Energy
Questions
Gas supply industry 127w
Gas tariffs, Industry 127w
Gas tariffs, Price controls 127w
Lead free petrol, Oil companies 18w
Office of Gas Supply, Civil servants' secondment 763w
Offshore drilling, Offshore safety 677w
Offshore structures 559w
Offshore structures, Medicine 559w
Petrol, Oil companies 126w
Pipelines, Offshore safety 677-8w
Piper Alpha platform, Gas pipelines 678w

Mortgage defaulters
Northern Ireland Housing Executive 733w
Repossession orders 776-7w

Mortgage relief
British residents abroad 455-7w

Moss, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1269
Questions
Radio frequencies, Cellular phones 262w
Training & enterprise councils 282

Motor vehicle registration
Computers 217w
Military vehicles 759w

Motor vehicle testing
DROPS 382w

Motor vehicles
Computer privacy 595w
Fraud 288w

Motoring
205w

Motorway service areas
375w

Motorways
Business travel 110-1w
Police 411-2w
Road accidents 595w
Road safety 6
Road works 5-6

Mowlam, Ms Marjorie
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 607-10
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 340w
Minimum wage 177-8w
Social Fund, Northern Ireland 737-40w

Moynihan, Mr Colin, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sport)
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Money res (20:03:89) 856-8
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1111-2, 1116-9, 1199-200, 1202
Questions
Anglian Water Authority, Water pollution 423-4w, 508-9w
Beaches, Water pollution 639w
Football, Identity cards 637-8w
Football national membership scheme 425w
Inland waterways, Water pollution 641w
North West Water Authority, Sewage 424w
River pollution 638w
River pollution, Prosecutions 427-8w
Sea pollution, EC law 89w, 424w
Sea pollution, North West region 422w

Moynihan, Mr Colin*—*continued
Sea pollution, Pollution monitoring 783w
Sewage, Sea pollution 644w
Sewage, Water pollution 242w
Sewers, Don Valley 772w
Sports Council 636w
Sports sponsorship, Tobacco industry 238w
Thames Water Authority, Land ownership & tenure 372w
Thames Water Authority, Water pollution 647-8w
Water authorities, Pay 424w
Water pollution, Aluminium 214w
Water pollution, EC law 775w
Water pollution, Lead 775w
Water pollution, Nottingham 507w
Water pollution, Pollution control 645w
Water pollution, Sewage 427w
Water storage, Yorkshire Water Authority 422-3w
Water supply, Asbestos 372w
Water supply, Fluoridation 773-4w
Water supply, Nitrates 241-2w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 424-5w, 639w
Yorkshire Water Authority, Water charges 774w

Mozambique
Peace negotiations 528-9

MRC
see Medical Research Council

Mudd, Mr David
Questions
Angola, Peace negotiations 24-5w

Mullin, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 981, 989, 1001, 1008-10, (22:03:89) 1113-5, 1131
Questions
Arms exports, Export credit guarantees 711w
Civil servants, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 25w
Industrial investment, Manufacturing industries 282w
Military vehicles, Greater London 756w
Minimum wage, Northern region 182-3w
Northern Regional Health Authority 574w
Police right of search, Weapons 12w
Sunderland Health Authority, Performance related pay 336w
Water charges, Price increases 645w

Murphy, Mr Paul
Questions
A465, Road works 714
Housing for Wales 721-2

Museum of Mankind
Art exhibitions 378w

Museums & galleries
463w
Burnley 228w
Clwyd 727
Industries 228w

Music
Travelling expenses 519w

MV Perintis
705-6w

NAHA
see National Association of Health Authorities

Namibia
Overseas aid 702w
Peace keeping operations 625w
South West Africa People's Organisation 624-5w

NAO
see National Audit Office

Narcotics
Scotland 315w

National Alliance of Women's Organisations

National Alliance of Women's Organisations*—*continued
Government grants to voluntary organisations 149w

National Association of Health Authorities
NHS finance 903-4

National Association of Port Employers
193w

National Audit Office
16-7
Public bodies 17

National Blood Transfusion Service
Management 73-4w

National Coal Board
see British Coal Corporation

National Consumer Council
349w

National Deaf Blind & Rubella Association
see SENSE

National debt
146-8w, 249-50w, 455-6w, 702w

National Dock Labour Board
194w, 281
Manpower 203w
Ports 276

National Engineering Laboratory
Civil service manpower 496w
Management 603-4w

National Farmers' Union
340w, 350w

National Film & Television School
271w

National finance
see Treasury

National Girobank
Privatisation 407

National Heritage Memorial Fund
368-9w

National income
North West region 430-1w

National insurance benefits
786-7w

National insurance fund
Treasury supplement 544-5w

National Loans Fund
Exchange equalisation account 702w

National parks
Environment protection 507w

National Pet Week
506w

National Rivers Authority
(20:03:89) 851-8, (21:03:89) 931-1037, (22:03:89) 1104-212
Flood control 242w
Loans 242w

National Rivers Authority Advisory Committee for Wales
(21:03:89) 931-1037

National security
Surveillance 514w

National stud
291w

National Union of Public Employees
689-90w

NATO
380w, 477-8w, 509w, 618w
Computer privacy 52w
Nuclear weapons 620w

NATO countries
245w

Natural Environment Research Council
608w
Research facilities 604-6w

Nature Conservancy Council
207-8w, 341-2w

Nature conservation
629w
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds 518

Nature reserves
207-8w

NCB
see British Coal Corporation

NCC
see National Consumer Council

NCC
see Nature Conservancy Council

Neale, Mr Gerrard
Questions
Lowermoor water treatment works, Pollution monitoring 88w
Lowermoor water treatment works, Water pollution 88w, 208-9w

Near market research
514-7w
Agricultural research 84-5w

***Needham, Mr Richard**, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Attendance allowance, Terminal care 730w
Comber bypass, Road construction 731w
Diets, Social security benefits 730w
Family credit, Northern Ireland 731w
Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Mortgage defaulters 733w
Public sector housing sales, Northern Ireland 736-8w
Rates & rating, Northern Ireland district councils 732-4w
Social Fund, Northern Ireland 733-40w
Urban development grants, Northern Ireland 731w

Neighbourhood councils
1080
Local authority powers 1079
Tower Hamlets 1079-80

Neighbourhood energy action scheme
803w

NEL
see National Engineering Laboratory

Nellist, Mr Dave
Debates etc.
Community charge (13:03:89) 72-3
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1100
Questions
Agricultural research 340w
Community charge 627w
Minimum wage, West Midlands 181w
Voluntary unemployment, Social security benefits disqualification 558w
Youth training scheme, Training Standards Advisory Service 557w

Nelson, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 29-30

NERC
see Natural Environment Research Council

Netherlands
Bovine somatotropin 472-3w
Fishing vessels 471-2w

Netherlands Antilles
Double taxation 301w

***Neubert, Mr Michael**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces*
Debates etc.
36 Engineers' Regiment, Army bases (13:03:89) 227-31

***Neubert, Mr Michael**—continued*
Questions
Air force, Community charge 759w
Air force bases, C130 aircraft 758w
Armed forces, Peace movement 759w
Armed forces deployment, Lindholme 618w
Armed forces deployment, Members' visits abroad 620w
Armed forces discharges, Medical treatments 275w
Armed forces pay, Equal pay 245w
Army, Armed forces recruitment 276w
Courts martial, Air force bases 275-6w
Exercise Red Lanyard, Low flying 476w
Hang gliding, Airmisses 616w
Harrier aircraft, Airmisses 616-7w
Helicopters, 6 Brigade 619w
Helicopters, Armed forces training 244w
HMS Cambridge, Fences 324w
Low flying, Air accidents 242-3w
Low flying, Armed forces training 242-3w
Low flying, Belgium 755w
Low flying, Child health 617w
Low flying, Complaints 243w
Low flying, East Lothian 476w
Low flying, F111 aircraft 244w
Low flying, Inquiries 243w
Low flying, Military police 243-4w
Low flying, Morocco 617w
Low flying, Noise control 243w
Low flying, Nuclear power stations 276w
Low flying, RAF Finningley 756w
Low flying, Scotland 755w
Low flying, West Germany 755-6w
Military aircraft, Aircraft noise 617-8w
Military aircraft, Airmisses 616w
Military aircraft, Birds 754w
Military aircraft, Otterburn 618w
Military aircraft, RAF Alconbury 758w
Military Lands Act 1892, Bye laws 758-9w
Military police, Accountants 477w
Military police, Criminal investigation 477w
Military vehicles, Greater London 756w
Military vehicles, Motor vehicle registration 759w
Ministry of Defence, Security 760w
Nuclear weapons, NATO 620w
Radio engineering, Glengarry forest 378-9w, 761w
RAF Greenham Common, Armed forces deployment 757-8w
RAF Sculthorpe, Air traffic 759w
Skyguard radar, Roxburgh & Berwickshire 755w
Statistics, Ministry of Defence 53w
Territorial Army, Armed forces strength 618-9w
Tornado aircraft, Air accidents 244w
Water pollution, Ministry of Defence 51-2w

New businesses
147w, 202w
Norfolk 99w
Suffolk 99w

New Forest
Blood sports 515w, 550w

New towns development corporations
321w
Enterprise allowance scheme 552-3w
Public sector housing sales 666w
Scotland 552-3w, 666w

Newbattle Abbey College
Educational finance (13:03:89) 61-4

Newchurch Hospital
Hospital closures 769w

Newham
Housing problems (23:03:89) 1307-15

Newport
Unemployment 719-20

Newspaper press
Civil proceedings 691w
London docklands 316-7w

***Newspaper press**—continued*
Police 8w

***Newton, Rt Hon Tony**, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster & Minister of Trade & Industry*
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 557-66
Questions
Balance of trade, OECD countries 267w
Balance of trade, Oil industry 401-2
Balance of trade, Standardisation 262w
Balance of trade, UK trade with EC 259w
Barlow Clowes, Compensation 260-1w
British Shipbuilders, External financing limits 365-6w
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation 284-5w
EC Industry Council 270w
Enterprise initiative 394
Export promotion 404
Exports 399-400
Exports, Balance of payments 400-1
Exports, Interest rates 400
Exports, Iron & steel industry 400
Financial institutions, Stocks & shares 406
GATT 258w
Inner cities initiative 258w, 262-3w
Invisible exports 406-7
Magistrates 14
Magistrates, Recruitment 14
Management consultants, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 101w
Manufacturing industries, Industrial investment 402
National Engineering Laboratory, Management 603-4w
National Girobank, Privatisation 407
Offshore Supplies Office, Oil industry 402
Plessey, Takeovers 405-6
Regional development grants, Foreign investment in UK 269w
Shipbuilding, Plymouth 284w

Next Steps initiative
48w, 461w

NFU
see National Farmers' Union

NHS
333w
Building repairs 742w
Contracts for services 565-6w
Expenditure 77w
Hearing aids 70w
Hertfordshire West 566w
Hospitals 514w
Land values 570-1w
Performance indicators 900
Scotland 742w
Statistics 75-6w

NHS & private practice
Greater London 564w
Laboratories 893

NHS charges
Administrative delays 78w

NHS finance
530, 569w, 903
Bradford Health Authority 901
Capital investment 571w
National Association of Health Authorities 903-4
NHS internal market 334w
Nottingham Health Authority 903
Private health services 492w
Resource management initiative 337w
Scottish health boards 749-50w
Supra-regional services 69-70w
Voluntary organisations 492w
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 900-1

NHS hospital trusts
334w, 336-7w, 571-2w, 669w, 769w
Salop 892
"Working for Patients White Paper" 562w

NHS internal market
NHS finance 334w

NHS Policy Board
Professional qualifications 336w

NHS Review
153-4w, 333w, 487-9w, 562w, 564w, 893-6, 904-5
Clwyd 690w, 699w
Clwyd Health Authority 689-90w
Family doctors 699-700w
Hospital waiting lists 567w
Wales 699w
"Working for Patients White Paper" 699w

NI Office
see Northern Ireland Office

***Nicholls, Mr Patrick**, Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Questions
British Drug House, Health & Safety Executive 556-7w
British Drug House, Industrial health & safety 556-7w
Child workers, Prosecutions 199w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Employment opportunities 414w
Closed shop 201w
Dock labour scheme 193-4w, 252w, 276-7, 281
Dock labour scheme, Age 193w
Dock labour scheme, Average earnings 194w
Dock labour scheme, Dock workers 795w
Dock labour scheme, Employment opportunities 194w
Dock labour scheme, Fisheries 194w
Dock labour scheme, Free movement of labour 193w
Dock labour scheme, Industrial disputes 194w
Dock labour scheme, Manpower 193-4w, 795-7w
Dock labour scheme, River Thames 194w
Dock labour scheme, Teesside 193w
Employment, Elderly 198w
Employment, Trades Union Congress 198-9w
Employment training, Dumfries & Galloway 252w
Employment training, Expenditure 556w
Employment training, Graduates 310w
Employment training, Housing insulation 203w
Employment training, Inner city areas 256w
Employment training, Take-up 186w, 415w
Employment training, Training allowances 556w
Employment training, Travelling expenses 256w
Factory Inspectorate, Manpower 416w, 803-4w
Farms, Pesticides 797w
Health & Safety Executive, Pesticides 797w
Homeworking, Day care of children 253w
Housing insulation 803w
Industrial health & safety, Transmissible encephalopathies 557w
Industrial safety, Sikhs 802w
London docklands, Employment schemes 225-6w
Lost working days, Drug abuse 195-6w
Lost working days, Industrial disputes 198w
Low pay 278
Minimum wage 177-9w, 181w, 183-4w
Minimum wage, Company investigations 801w
Minimum wage, Derbyshire 255w
Minimum wage, East Anglia 183-4w
Minimum wage, East Midlands 178-80w, 182-3w
Minimum wage, Fines 181-3w
Minimum wage, Greater London 178-80w
Minimum wage, Manpower 278
Minimum wage, North West region 178-85w
Minimum wage, Northern region 177-85w, 202-3w

***Nicholls, Mr Patrick**—continued*
Minimum wage, Prosecutions 184-5w, 801w
Minimum wage, Scotland 177-9w, 182-4w
Minimum wage, South East region 178-9w, 181w, 183-4w
Minimum wage, Wages Inspectorate 179-80w
Minimum wage, Wales 177-9w, 182-5w
Minimum wage, West Midlands 177-8w, 181-5w
Minimum wage, Yorkshire & Humberside 178w, 180w, 182-4w
National Dock Labour Board 194w, 281
National Dock Labour Board, Manpower 203w
National Dock Labour Board, Ports 276
Older workers, Employment discrimination 252w
Passive smoking, Health & Safety Executive 367-8w
Skill shortages, South East region 251-2w
Trade union officials, Facilities agreements 416w
Wages councils 309-10w
Wages councils, Employment 197w

Nicholson, Mr David
Questions
Bus services, Complaints 591w
Cellular phones, Road safety 705w
Driving, Eyesight 205-6w
Drugs, Counterfeit manufacturing 575-6w
Drugs, Greece 666w
Drugs, Imports 575w
Enterprise initiative 394
Gun sports, Land use 506w
Liscombe experimental husbandry farm 514-5w
Low flying, Nuclear power stations 276w
Milk, Production quotas 527
Motoring 205w
Ozone layer, International conferences 638-9w
Public houses, Tenancy agreements 87w
Transport of hazardous materials, Road accidents 591w
Unemployment 186w
United Nations, Children's rights 448w
Untreated milk, Labelling 520

Nicholson, Miss Emma
Debates etc.
Hearing aids (23:03:89) 1299-303
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 1024-5, (22:03:89) 1130, 1142, 1152, 1164-5
Questions
Computer privacy, Air traffic control 204-5w
Computer privacy, Customs & Excise 60w
Computer privacy, Defence 245w
Computer privacy, Dept of Health 66-7w
Computer privacy, Dept of Social Security 27w
Computer privacy, Dept of Transport 217w
Computer privacy, Disclosure of information 130w
Computer privacy, Driver & Vehicle Licensing Centre 114w
Computer privacy, Drugs 154w
Computer privacy, Family doctors 154w
Computer privacy, Home Office 2w, 231w
Computer privacy, Hospital waiting lists 66w
Computer privacy, Immigration & Nationality Division 231w
Computer privacy, Inland Revenue 60-1w
Computer privacy, Ministry of Defence 244-5w
Computer privacy, Police national computer 231w
Computer privacy, Railway transport 288w
Copyright Designs & Patents Act 1988, EC action 260w
Motor vehicle registration, Computers 217w
Toxoplasmosis 576w
Toxoplasmosis, Health education 576w
Toxoplasmosis, Screening 576w
Toxoplasmosis, Vaccination 577w

Night flying
Heathrow Airport 906

NII
see Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

NIREX
see Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive

Nitrates
507w
Water pollution 615w
Water supply 241-2w

Nitrogen oxides
Air pollution 319w, 321w

No-fault compensation
Medical profession 670-1w

Noise control
Low flying 243w
Milford bypass 373w

Non-contributory benefits
Job release scheme 803w

Non-domestic rates
Small businesses 644w

Norfolk
Employment 190w
New businesses 99w
Structure plans 633w

Norris, Mr Steve
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) (Grants-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 870, 871, 872-7, 880

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
see NATO

North East region
282w, 432-8w
Economic situation 282-3
Fisheries 343-4w

North East Thames Regional Health Authority
AIDS 154w

North Wales
Firearms certificates 539-40w
Police 690w, 808-9w
Prosthetics 40-1w

North West Arts
462w

North West region
Aerospace industry 271w
Arts 462w
Average earnings 415w, 677w
Channel tunnel 2-3, 106-8w
Dept of Social Security local offices 29-30w
Economic situation 273-4
Employment 273
Foreign companies in UK 602w
Foreign investment in UK 602w
House renovation grants 777-8w
Manufacturing industries 403, 430w
Minimum wage 178-85w
National income 430-1w
Police 599-600w
Prisons 809w
Pupil-teacher ratios 681w
Railway network 105w
School leaving 681w
Sea pollution 422w
Secure accommodation 237w
Standard of living 417w
Training 794w
Unemployment 188w, 192w
Water pollution 214w
Youth unemployment 795-6w

North West Water Authority
Sewage 424w, 1081-2

North Western Regional Health Authority
Capital investment 77w
Hospital waiting lists 766w

North Western Regional Health Authority—continued
Hospitals 766w

North Yorkshire
Road traffic 205w
Tree planting 608-10w

Northern Arts
461-2w

Northern Ballet Theatre
463w

Northern Ireland
Agricultural products 621-2w
Attendance allowance 730w
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme 732w
Broadleaved woodlands 731-2w
Cellular phones 228w
Diets 730w
EC grants & loans 732w
Eggs 522-3
Electoral register 12w
Employment discrimination 284
Family credit 731w
Graduates 528-9w
Handicapped 420-1w
Higher education admission 529w
Homicide 10-1w
Marginal land 11w
Mature students 527-8w
Police right of search 12w, 299w
Public expenditure 421w
Public Record Office 139w
Public sector housing sales 736-8w
Rates & rating 733-4w
Social Fund 733-40w
Student grants 529w
Student loans 421w, 527w
Students 421w
Teachers 520-8w
Teachers' pensions 731w
Terrorism (14:03:89) 357-9
Tobacco 139w
Tree felling 732w
Urban development grants 731w
Veterinary medicine 11-2w
Voluntary schools 519-20w

Northern Ireland district councils
Rates & rating 732-4w

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
736-8w
Mortgage defaulters 733w

Northern Ireland Office
Consumer organisations 139w
Information technology 137-8w
Privatisation 299w
Select Committees 299w

Northern region
Arts 461-2w
Employment 269-70
Minimum wage 177-85w, 202-3w
Social Fund 785-6w
Social security reform 27w

Northern Regional Health Authority
574w

Northumberland
EC grants & loans 263w
Tourism (15:03:89) 505-14

Norwich
Community charge 627w

Norwich Health Authority
Hospital waiting lists 566-7w

Norwich Union Life Insurance Society
667w

Notifiable diseases
Scrapie 342w

Nottingham
Arts sponsorship 227w
Budget 585w
Community charge 319w

Nottingham—continued
Defective housing 209w
Domestic rates 319w
Magistrates 172w
Remand in custody 360w
Water pollution 507w

Nottingham City Council
209w

Nottingham Health Authority
NHS finance 903

Nuclear accidents
Agriculture 474w
Gravelines 368w

"Nuclear Accidents & the Farmer"
474w

Nuclear disarmament
Arms control negotiations 513w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 381w
Treaties 381-2w

Nuclear free zones
Submarines 125w

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Air pollution 209w
Contracts 754w
Nuclear weapons 754w
Sellafield 709w

Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive
507-8w

Nuclear Installations Act 1965
Questions
762w

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
257w, 763w

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
Israel 143-4w
Nuclear disarmament 381w
West Germany 417w

Nuclear power
Emergency planning 763w

Nuclear power stations
British Nuclear Fuels 559w
Electricity generation 763-4w
Low flying 276w

Nuclear reactors
Atomic Energy Research Establishment 558-9w
Radioactive wastes 762w

Nuclear safeguards
EURATOM 126-7w
Sellafield 680w
Transport of radioactive materials 679w

Nuclear safety
Bradwell power station 257w
Nuclear submarines 479w
Transport of radioactive materials 592w

Nuclear submarines
Canada 689w
Ionizing radiation 478-80w
Liverpool 125w
Medical records 480w
Merseyside 125w
Nuclear safety 479w
Ports 125w, 479w
Radiation hazards 478-81w
Radioactive waste disposal 479w

Nuclear weapons
Modernisation 477-8w, 509w
NATO 620w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 754w

Nuclear weapons tests
477w

NUPE
see National Union of Public Employees

Nursery schools
Capital investment 683w
School population 686-7w

Nurses
Community charge 626w
Manpower 569w
Pay 565w
Rates & rating 428-9w
Scotland 444w
Wales 437w

Nurses' training
Family practitioner services 579w

Nursing homes
Property transfer 78w

Nutrition
Eggs 522

Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1108-9

OAL
see Office of Arts & Libraries

Objects in lieu of tax
Art works 701w

O'Brien, Mr William
Debates etc.
Council tenants, Social unrest (13:03:89) 148-51, 156
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1047
Questions
Minimum wage, Yorkshire & Humberside 180w
Ministerial policy advisers 419w
Ministerial policy advisers, Civil servants' political activities 419-20w
Ministerial policy advisers, Costs 419w
Ministerial policy advisers, Employment 418-9w
Neighbourhood councils 1080
Wakefield Health Authority, Hospital waiting lists 908

Occupational pensions
London Residuary Body 649w

Occupational therapists
Manpower 388w
Trent Regional Health Authority 388w

Occupied territories
24w

Oceanographic vessels
British Antarctic Survey 608w

OECD countries
Balance of trade 267w
Manufacturing industries 267w, 410
Research finance 266w
Self-employed 187w

Offenders
Remand in custody 297-8w

Office of Arts & Libraries
Advertising 48w
Management consultants 228w
Privatisation 50w
Public relations 48-9w
Statistics 49-50w

Office of Fair Trading
271w, 288w, 430w

Office of Gas Supply
Civil servants' secondment 763w

Office of Population Censuses & Surveys
420-1w
Advertising 71w
Public relations 71w, 73w
Statistics 74w

Office of Telecommunications
430w, 712-3w

Office of the Minister for the Civil Service
see Minister for the Civil Service

Offices
Church Commissioners 15
Director General of Water Services 781-2w

Official cars
Bordes, Pamella 509w

Official engagements
126w, 277-8w, 286, 514w
Brunton 125w

Official secrets
Advisory bodies 86w
Environmental health 160-2w, 770w

Official visits
Brazil 215-6w

Offshore drilling
Offshore safety 677w

Offshore safety
412-3w
Offshore drilling 677w
Pipelines 677-8w
Takapu 532w

Offshore structures
559w
Medicine 559w

Offshore Supplies Office
Oil industry 402

Offshore supply vessels
Continental shelf 532-8w

OFGAS
see Office of Gas Supply

OFT
see Office of Fair Trading

OFTEL
see Office of Telecommunications

Oil companies
Lead free petrol 18w
Petrol 126w

Oil exports
Balance of trade 99w

Oil industry
Balance of trade 401-2
Offshore Supplies Office 402

Oil pollution
Antarctic 144w

Oils & fats
Tropical products 351-2w

Old people's homes
160w
Whitby 157w

Older workers
Employment discrimination 252w

Olsen, Fred
(22:03:89) 1089-100

Oman
Armed forces deployment 476w

OMCS
see Minister for the Civil Service

"One of Us"
126w

One parent families
Council house waiting lists 320w
Sentencing 449-50w
Social security recipients 787-8w

O'Neill, Mr Martin
Questions
Defence research establishments, Audit 760w

Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1203-5, 1209, 1212
Questions
Magpies 646-7w

OPCS
see Office of Population Censuses & Surveys

Open College
Educational finance 311w

Opera
Festivals & special occasions 723-4

Operating costs
Crime prevention 812w
Scottish Assembly 741w

Operating department assistants
Manpower 577w
Pay 390w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Debates etc.
Local government pensions, Derbyshire County Council (17:03:89) 704-8
Questions
Association of County Councils 643w
Educational finance 685w
Educational finance, Capital investment 167-70w
Educational finance, Derbyshire County Council 685w
Educational finance, Government grants to local authorities 170w
Educational finance, Local government expenditure 166-8w
Enterprise initiative 258w
Prison discipline 234w
School leaving, General Certificate of Secondary Education 688-9w
School leaving certificates, GCE A level 170-2w
School leaving certificates, General Certificate of Secondary Education 172w
Sewage, Water charges 1082
Unemployment, East Midlands 189w
Water supply industry, Derbyshire 95w

Optical charges
Eye tests 162w

Oral questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (21:03:89) 915

Orders & regulations
Community charge 90w, 627w
Speaker's rulings & statements (21:03:89) 1058-9

Otterburn
Military aircraft 618w

Out-patients
London Ambulance Service 159w

Outer London boroughs
Urban planning 637w

Outgoers' scheme
527

Overseas aid
518-9w, (17:03:89) 637-701
Comic Relief 701w
Ethiopia 302w
Kampuchea 626w
Namibia 702w
South Africa 311-2w
Tanzania 517-8w

Overseas development
see Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Overseas investment
260w, 285

Overseas students
Veterinary medicine 13w

Overseas trade
431-2w
Tanzania 493-4w

Overseas workers
Veterinary services 86-7w

Overtime
HM Coastguard 403w

Owen, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989 (14:03:89) 322-6
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 432

Owen, Rt Hon David—continued
Questions
Benzodiazepines, Drug abuse 338w, 581w
Benzodiazepines, Drug industry 390-1w
Benzodiazepines, Prescriptions 338w, 391w
Tourism, Scotland 552w

Oxford
Public order offences 818w
Water pollution 642w

Ozone layer
Air pollution control 317-8w
International conferences 44w, 426w, 638-9w
Treaties 92-3w

P & O
108w

Page, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 579-81
Questions
NHS finance 569w

Paice, Mr James
Debates etc.
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 28
Questions
Children in care 485w
Council of Ministers 726-7w
Dock labour scheme, Free movement of labour 193w
Industrial training boards, Expenditure 368w
Industrial training boards, Training & enterprise councils 368w
Low pay 278
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Nature conservation 518
Secure units, Children in care 484-6w
Secure units, Government grants to local authorities 485-6w

Pakistan
Entry clearances 26w
Immigration applications 8-9w

Palace of Westminster
458w

Palestine Liberation Organisation
24w
Bomb victims 143w

Parachuting
Safety measures 286w

Paramedical staff
Wales 697-8w

Parental contributions
Student grants 219w

Parish councils
Local government staff 371w

Parking
Pedestrian areas 594w

Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil, Secretary of State for Energy
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Energy 21w
Coal mining, Redundancy 126w
Coal mining, Redundancy pay 126w
Consumer organisations, Dept of Energy 18w
Dept of Energy, Ministerial responsibility 256w
European Communities, Dept of Energy 257w
Management consultants, Dept of Energy 20w
Offshore safety 412-3w
Privatisation, Dept of Energy 19-20w
Public relations, Dept of Energy 20w
Public service messages, Dept of Energy 256-7w
Statistics, Dept of Energy 19w

Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil—continued
Water pollution, Dept of Energy 20w, 678w

Parliamentary constituencies
Electorate 414w, 668w

Parliamentary security
House of Commons passes 693-4w

Parole
Scotland 750-1w

Parole System Scotland Review
750-1w

Parrots
518

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway transport 106w
Minimum wage, Wages Inspectorate 177w

Part-time education
Queen's University Belfast 741w
Tuition fees 220w

Part-time employment
Teachers 225w
Teachers' pensions 224-5w
Unemployment benefits 55w

Passive smoking
Health & Safety Executive 367-8w

Passport Office
Computer privacy 231w

Patchett, Mr Terry
Questions
Council housing, Property transfer 634w
Health service staff, Temporary staff 583-4w
Housing insulation, Government grants 318w

Patients
Dialysis machines 313-4w, 441w
Wales 441w
"Working for Patients White Paper" 384w, 563w

Patnick, Mr Irvine
Questions
Business statements 541
Council housing, Property transfer 649-50w
Drinking & driving, Greater Manchester 364-5w
Economic situation, North East region 282-3
Preventive medicine 567w
Public sector housing, Property transfer 634w
Self-employed, OECD countries 187w
Sheffield Development Corporation, Corporate plans 639-40w

Patten, Mr Chris, Minister of State for Overseas Development
Debates etc.
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 644-54, 660, 662, 686, 697-9
Questions
Brazil, Foreign loans 625-6w
Desert Locust Control Organisation in Eastern Africa, UK contributions 382-3w
Ethiopia, Meningitis 302w
Japan, Rain forests 303w
Kampuchea, Overseas aid 626w
Namibia, Overseas aid 702w
Overseas aid 518-9w
Overseas aid, Comic Relief 701w
Tanzania, Overseas aid 517-8w

Patten, Mr John, Minister of State at the Home Office
Debates etc.
Electronic surveillance (13:03:89) 186
Justices' clerks, Career structure (23:03:89) 1319-22
Religious sects (13:03:89) 191-6
Questions
Alternatives to prison 296-7w

Patten, Mr John—continued
Bail hostels 296w, 361w
Bail information schemes 296w
Computer privacy, Disclosure of information 130w
Courts, Administrative delays 360w
Crime, Dorset 231w
Crime, Survey techniques 1-2w
Crime prevention 812w
Crime prevention, Lighting 411w
Crime prevention, Operating costs 812w
Crimes of violence, Knowsley 813w
Criminal injuries compensation, Cruelty to children 809-10w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 3-4w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Administrative delays 2w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Appeals 3-5w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Domestic violence 2-4w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Expenditure 3-4w
Domestic violence, Police records 817-8w
Drinking & driving, Greater Manchester 599w
Drunkenness, Arrests 597w
Extradition, Legislation 540w
Horse racing, Finance 818w
Horse racing, Prize money 818w
Horses, Privatisation 291w
Justices' clerks, Pay 1w
Justices' clerks, Resignations 149w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Remand in custody 362w
Metropolitan Police, Criminal statistics 812w
National Alliance of Women's Organisations, Government grants to voluntary organisations 149w
Police, Sex discrimination 294w
"Punishment Custody & the Community" 364w
Rape, Marriage 230w
Remand in custody, Administrative delays 297w
Remand in custody, Offenders 297-8w
Safer cities scheme 812w
"Satanic Verses", Islam 363w
Security industry 597w
Survey techniques, Telephones 150-2w
United Kingdom Warning & Monitoring Organisation, Emergency planning 599w

Pawsey, Mr James
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 879
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1160, 1181
Questions
English education, Curriculum 359-60w
Flecknoe 277w
M1, Road traffic 707w
Official engagements, Brunton 125w
Telecommunications technology 258w
Unemployment 186w
Wolston 513w

Pay
280
Agricultural workers 519
District health authorities 337w
Family doctors 153-4w, 765w, 768w
Graduates 528w
Health service staff 387w
Income tax assessment 63-4w
Justices clerks 1w
Midwives 326w
Ministry of Defence police 761w
Nurses 565w
Operating department assistants 390w
Self-governing hospitals 337w, 899
Teachers 407w, 682w
University teachers 165w, 682-3w
Water authorities 424w

Pay incentives
Civil service 729-30
Teachers 223-4w

Pay settlements
Health service ancillary staff 582w
Self-governing hospitals 571w
University teachers 164-5w

"Peace & Security"
44-5w, 381w

Peace keeping operations
Namibia 625w
United Nations (23:03:89) 1330-8

Peace movement
Armed forces 759w

Peace negotiations
Angola 24-5w
Israel 623w
Mozambique 528-9

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Questions
Dock labour scheme, Employment opportunities 194w

Pedestrian areas
Parking 594w

Pendry, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 586-8
Questions
Football, Arrests 809w
Football, Identity cards 637w
Football, Travel restrictions 813w
Minimum wage, North West region 181w

Pensioners
Disposable income 791w
Greater London 395w
Health insurance 587-8w
Personal income 172w

Pensions
Canada 393w

Per capita costs
Challenger tanks 616w
District health authorities 671-4w
Drugs 332-3w, 766w
Educational finance 222w
EH 101 helicopters 616w
Prescriptions 157w, 334-6w, 489-90w
Roads 7-8
Sea King helicopters 616w
Surgery 482-3w
Training 794w

Performance indicators
NHS 900

Performance related pay
729-30
Sunderland Health Authority 336w

Performing arts
Training 464w

Perivale Skillcentre
309w

Personal equity plans
588w

Personal income
392-3w, 791w
Community charge 175-6w
Family doctors 568w
Pensioners 172w

Personal records
Community charges register 370w, 375-6w

Personal tax allowances
Married men 585w

Personation
(21:03:89) 931-1037

Pest control
Locusts 382-3w

Pesticide residues
Cereals 717-8w

Pesticides
Civil service manpower 724w
Farms 797w
Fish farming 142w
Health & Safety Executive 797w
Safety 724w
Scotland 142w, 445w, 656w
Strychnine 44w
Water pollution 445w
Wild animals 656w, 723w

Peterborough
Explosions (23:03:89) 1266-74

Petitions
Universities 33-4w

Peto Institute
396w

Petrol
Oil companies 126w

Pets
598w

Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme
331-2w, 565w
Drug industry 331w
Drugs 332w

Pharmacists
Family doctors 765w

Philippines
Marcos, Ferdinand 624w

Phosphates
Detergents 319w

Photo identity passes
458w

Physical education
Self defence 681w

Pickles, James
285

Pield Heath Nurseries Uxbridge
Planning appeals 631w

Pigs
Animal feed 85w

Pike, Mr Peter L
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 450-5, 503
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1049-50, 1057, 1059
Water Bill, Money res (20:03:89) 857
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 975-7, 992, 1001, (22:03:89) 1109, 1116, 1170-1
Questions
Ambulance services, Regional health authorities 155-6w
Animal feed 348w
Cambridge University, Veterinary medicine 12w
Dance 228w
Historic buildings, Ancient monuments 368-9w
House of Commons papers, Dept of Social Security 26-7w
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 403
Minimum wage, North West region 178w
Museums & galleries, Burnley 228w
Museums & galleries, Industries 228w
North West Water Authority, Sewage 1081-2
Official engagements 277-8w, 514w
Prescription charges 157w
Rate increases 631w
Veterinary medicine, Overseas students 13w
Veterinary services, Graduates 392w

Pipelines
Asbestos 372w
Offshore safety 677-8w
Waveney District Council 92w

Piper Alpha Inquiry
Safety measures 277w

Piper Alpha platform
277w, 677-8w
Gas pipelines 678w

Planning appeals
635-6w
Churston Golf Club 507w
Costs 320w, 1080
Pield Heath Nurseries Uxbridge 631w
Planning permission 1080

Planning authorities
Administrative delays 1085
Housing 92w
Housing construction 1080-2
Manpower 1085-6

Planning inquiries
Lurcher's Gully 377-8w
Warrington & Runcorn Development Corporation 643w

Planning permission
1086
Archaeological sites 642-3w
Coal fired power stations 21w
Farm diversification scheme 519-20
HMS Cambridge 322w, 324w
Leeds Development Corporation 93-4w
Local plans 643-4w
Planning appeals 1080
Urban areas 1086

Playgrounds
Safety standards (15:03:89) 414-6

Plessey
Public petitions (23:03:89) 1244
Takeovers 405-6

PLO
see Palestine Liberation Organisation

Plutonium
Exports 127w, 762w
Transport of radioactive materials 143w, 391w, 596-7w, 709w

Plymouth
Shipbuilding 284w

Pneumoconiosis etc (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations 1989
Debates etc.
(16:03:89) 628

Points of order
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:03:89) 532, (20:03:89) 870, 880

Poisoning
Birds 778w
Domestic animals 44w
Wild animals 694w, 778w

Police
Armed forces discharges 363w
Essex 804-5w
Gibraltar 364w
Leicestershire 2w, 292-3w
London Underground 110w
Manpower 5-7w, 361-2w, 599-600w
Motorways 411-2w
Newspaper press 8w
North Wales 690w, 808-9w
North West region 599-600w
Rugby 231-2w
Sex discrimination 232w, 294w
Somerset 598w
Wales 808w

Police civilians
805-6w

Police custody
Suicide 814w

Police discipline
Cheshire 294-5w
Greater Manchester 294-5w

Police firearms
Baton rounds 137w
Training 598w

Police national computer
Computer privacy 231w

Police powers
Taxis 707w

Police records
Computer privacy 293w
Domestic violence 817-8w

Police right of search
Northern Ireland 12w, 299w
Weapons 12w

Police training
Domestic violence 818w
Mentally disturbed offenders 409-10w

Police vehicles
Road accidents 811w

Policewomen
817w

Political activities
Local government staff 638w

Political prisoners
Iran (13:03:89) 70-2

Political refugees
Tamils 233-4w

Pollution control
637w
Environmental policy 645-6w
Fish farming 142w
River Rother (13:03:89) 51-4
Sea pollution 288-9w
Water pollution 283, 645w

Pollution Inspectorate
see HM Inspectorate of Pollution

Pollution monitoring
Air pollution control 776w
Lowermoor water treatment works 88w
River pollution 427w
Sea pollution 783w

Population
668w

Port Talbot
Hospitals 137w

Porter, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1151
Questions
Petitions, Universities 33-4w

Porter, Mr David
Debates etc.
Education (13:03:89) 64-6
Questions
Drama education, Curriculum 15w
Fishing vessels, Belgium 471w
Fishing vessels, Netherlands 471-2w
Health education, Curriculum 15w
New businesses, Suffolk 99w
Pipelines, Waveney District Council 92w
Planning authorities, Housing 92w
School Examinations & Assessment Council, Public appointments 16w
VAT registration, Suffolk 147w
Youth unemployment 186w

Portillo, Mr Michael, Minister for Public Transport
Debates etc.
British Railways Bill 1988/89, 2R (14:03:89) 364
Transport safety (13:03:89) 135-9
Questions
Automatic ticketing systems, Computer privacy 373w
Automatic ticketing systems, Repairs & maintenance 373w
Boating, Accidents 212w
Boats, Swimming 241w
British merchant fleet, Shipping registration 115w

Portillo, Mr Michael*—*continued
British Rail, Capital investment 110w, 705w
British Rail, Government assistance 374w
British Rail, Privatisation 110w
British Rail, Transport police 590w
Bus services, Complaints 591w
Bus services, Greater London 286w
Bus services, Privatisation 109w
Buses, City of Westminster 400w
Central London Rail Study 112w
Channel tunnel, Economic regions 107w
Channel tunnel, Electric cables 206w
Channel tunnel, France 108w
Channel tunnel, Freight transport 3-4, 401w
Channel tunnel, King's Cross 4
Channel tunnel, Liverpool 107w
Channel tunnel, North West region 2-3, 106-7w
Channel tunnel, Railway freight transport 3-4
Channel tunnel, Railway network 106-8w, 373-4w
Channel tunnel, Railway transport 106w, 108w
Channel tunnel, Yorkshire & Humberside 704-5w
Computer privacy, Railway transport 288w
Construction materials, Criminal investigation 399w
Ferries, Shipping safety 122-4w
HM Coastguard, Aberdeen 120w
HM Coastguard, Civil service manpower 285w
HM Coastguard, Computer terminals 285-6w
HM Coastguard, Equipment 401-2w
HM Coastguard, Overtime 403w
HM Coastguard, Ramsey 121w
HM Coastguard, Repairs & maintenance 206-7w
HM Coastguard, Swansea 120w
Inverness-Wick/Thurso railway, Bridges 120w, 708-9w
Lindane, English Channel 594w
London Underground, Automatic ticketing systems 111w
London Underground, Crime 113w
London Underground, Police 110w
London Underground, Rolling stock 372-3w
London Underground, Security 207w
Merchant ships, Certification 121-2w
Merchant ships, Shipping registration 122w
Offshore supply vessels, Continental shelf 532-8w
Ports, Dock labour scheme 204w
Railway accidents, Paligrove 591w
Railway electrification, Midland main railway line 3
Railway freight transport, Environment protection 218w
Railway Inspectorate 2, 530w
Railway Inspectorate, Railway safety 1-2
Railway network, North West region 105w
Railway safety 705w
Railway safety, Automatic train protection 119w
Railway safety, Railway signals 708w
Railway stations 111w
Railway track, Railway safety 287-8w
Railway travel 5
Railway travel, Urban areas 4-5
Railway workers, Working hours 529-30w
Ridley, Tony, Resignations 404w
Road haulage licences 532w
Sea pollution, Pollution control 288-9w
Sealink Harbours, Special constables 217-8w
Shipping, EC action 114-5w
Shipping, Fees & charges 287w
Shipping, Refuse 593w
Shipping accidents, Submarines 402w
Shipping safety, Fishing gear 206w
Shipping safety, Information 286w
Shipping safety, Manpower 287w
Takapu, Offshore safety 532w
Taxis 112w

Portillo, Mr Michael*—*continued
Taxis, Police powers 707w
Thamesline, Government grants 286w
Transport of hazardous materials, Sea transport 706w
Transport of hazardous materials, Shipping accidents 705-6w
Transport of radioactive materials, Sea transport 400w
Transport police, Recruitment 373w
Vale of Rheidol railway line, Privatisation 402w

Ports
Dock labour scheme 204w
National Dock Labour Board 276
Nuclear submarines 125w, 479w

Post Office
257w

Potatoes
Agricultural marketing 524-5
Agricultural subsidies 615w

Poultry
Compensation 522
EC action 515w
Manpower 515w
Salmonella 352w, 526, 613-4w

Poverty
Health 446w

Powell, Mr Ray
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 917
Minimum wage, East Midlands 182-3w

Powell, Mr William
Debates etc.
Corby (13:03:89) 45-8
Questions
Civil list 148w
Companies House Executive Agency 713-4w
Employment 188w
Hospital waiting lists 531-2
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 421w

Pregnant women
Income support 786w

Pre-school education
502w
Government grants to local authorities 358w
Local government expenditure 358-9w
Teacher training 683w

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc.
Air accidents, Lockerbie (20:03:89) 732
Air accidents, Standing Order No 20 applications (16:03:89) 555-6
HM Coastguard, Public petitions (23:03:89) 1244
Housing problems, Newham (23:03:89) 1314-5
Transport safety (13:03:89) 131-5, 137
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 418w
Air safety 9-10
Kent County Council 112w
Railway Inspectorate 2

Prescription charges
157w

Prescription drugs
Drug industry 581w

Prescriptions
905
Benzodiazepines 338w, 391w
Budgeting 902
Per capita costs 157w, 334-6w, 489-90w
Veterinary medicine 145w

Preservation orders
Tree conservation 526-7

Press advertising
Council housing 323w

Press freedom
Departmental correspondence 246w

Press releases
Public relations 71-2w

Prevention of Terrorism Acts
Questions
Arrests 363-4w

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989
Questions
538w

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Allocation of time motion* & Lords amendts* (14:03:89) 357-9
Royal assent (15:03:89) 416

Preventive medicine
567w
Medical treatments 566w

Price, Sir David
Questions
British merchant fleet, Shipping registration 115w
Cultural relations, European Communities 724
Ferries, Shipping safety 122-4w
Food hygiene, Agricultural research 342-4w
Merchant ships, Shipping registration 122w
Nurses' training, Family practitioner services 579w
Psychiatry, Elderly 567-8w
Psychiatry, Geriatric patients 158w
Retirement age 459w
River pollution, Hampshire 239w
Roads, Hampshire 114w
Sea pollution, Southampton Water 239w
Shipping, EC action 114-5w
Southern Arts Association, Arts grants 726

Price controls
Gas tariffs 127w

Price increases
Drug industry 331w
Water charges 213-4w, 240w, 643w, 645w

Price labelling
Codes of practice 431-2w

Price Waterhouse
627-8w

Prices
Drugs 540w

Pricing
British Telecom 430w

Prilutzkaya, Malka
USSR 510w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Questions
Balance of trade, UK trade with EC 259w
Bristol University, Bombings 363-4w

Primary education
Educational publications 685-6w
Government grants to local authorities 358w
Local government expenditure 683w
Pupil-teacher ratios 289w
Teacher training 683w

Primary health care
District health authorities 569w

Prime Minister
44w, 246w
Advertising 47w
Management consultants 48w
Public relations 46w
Statistics 45-6w

Prime Minister's Office
see Prime Minister

Prime Minister's questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (14:03:89) 285, (15:03:89) 412-3

Prison discipline
234w

Prison escapes
413w

Prison governors
538w

Prison population
Mentally disturbed offenders 408-9w

Prison riots
Mentally disturbed offenders 410w

Prison sentences
Domestic rates 646w
Prisoners 291-2w
Whatton Detention Centre 816w

Prison Service
Privatisation 538w

Prison staff
AIDS 295w
Armed forces discharges 363w
Private sector involvement in the remand system 297-8w

Prison visits
Samaritans 814w

Prisoners
AIDS 295-6w
Body belts 410-1w
Cameroon 144w
Families 365w
Members' correspondence 412w
Prison sentences 291-2w
Suicide 232w, 814w

Prisoners on remand
Mentally disturbed offenders 407w

Prisons
Catering 815w
Fires 806w
Food hygiene 806-7w
Food poisoning 807w
North West region 809w
Young offenders 669w

Private Bills
House of Commons procedure 19

Private detectives
597w

Private health services
Abortion 560w
Hearing aids 259w
NHS finance 492w

Private investment
Public expenditure 542w

Private Members' Bills
House of Commons procedure 18-9

Private Members' motions
Speaker's rulings & statements (17:03:89) 678

Private notice questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (15:03:89) 411, 412, 413, (21:03:89) 912, 913, 915, 916

Private patients' plan
452w

Private rented housing
781w
Housing benefits 176w

Private sector
Housing & elderly (13:03:89) 58-61
Laboratories 893
Land registration 1076
Medical education 605w
Remand in custody 297-8w
Residential care 670w

"Private Sector Involvement in the Remand System"

"Private Sector Involvement in the Remand System"—continued
Prison staff 297-8w

Privatisation
British Rail 110w
British Shipbuilders 284-5w
Bus services 109w
Dept of Education & Science 13w
Dept of Employment 58w
Dept of Energy 19-20w
Dept of Health 35w
Dept of Social Security 31w
Dept of the Environment 91w
Dept of Trade & Industry 102w
Dept of Transport 118w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 23w
Horses 291w
Lord Chancellor 40w
Minister for the Civil Service 47w
Ministry of Agriculture 81w
Ministry of Defence 53w
National Girobank 407
Northern Ireland Office 299w
Office of Arts & Libraries 50w
Prison Service 538w
Scottish Office 36w
Treasury 62w
Vale of Rheidol railway line 402w
Water authorities (20:03:89) 851-8, (21:03:89) 931-1037
Water supply industry 238w, 240-1w, 424-5w, 528-9, 639w, 1072-3, 1084-5
Welsh Office 42w

Privy Council Office
Advertising 34w
Management consultants 34w
Public relations 34-5w
Statistics 34w

Prize money
Horse racing 818w

PRO
see Public Record Office

Procedure Select Committee
House of Commons debates 18

Production levies
Cheese 725w
Milk 725w

Production quotas
Milk 527

Productivity
Coal mining 763w
Manufacturing industries 263w, 403

Professional organisations
Advertising controls 281-4w

Professional qualifications
NHS Policy Board 336w

Profit sharing
276-7

"Promoting Better Health White Paper"
563w

Property development
Architectural conservation 325w
County Hall 782w
Stockport 1074

Property Services Agency
Contracts for services 778w
Energy conservation 240w

Property transfer
Council house rents 323w
Council housing 634w, 649-50w
General Practice Finance Corporation 667w
Local government property 372w
Nursing homes 78w
Public sector housing 634w
Redbridge 372w
Residential care 570w
Tenants' choice 779w

Prosecutions
Cellular phones 601-2w
Child workers 199w
Minimum wage 184-5w, 275, 801w
River pollution 427-8w

Prosthetics
581w
North Wales 40-1w
Wales 41w

Provisional IRA
see IRA

PSA
see Property Services Agency

PSV operators licences
532w

Psychiatry
Elderly 567-8w
Geriatric patients 158w
Mentally disturbed offenders 409w

Public access
(22:03:89) 1104-212

Public Accounts Commission
16-7

Public appointments
Advisory Board for the Research Councils 290-1w
Boards of trustees 51w
Boundary Commission for Scotland 749w
Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food 770w
Committee on the Review of Medicines 68w
Family practitioner committees 769-70w
London Regional Transport 594-5w
Magistrates 451w
Medicines Control Agency 328w
Registered Homes tribunals 492w
School Examinations & Assessment Council 16w
Self-governing hospitals 334w
Transportation Unit 121w

Public bodies
Land acquisition 239-40w
National Audit Office 17

Public companies
Company registration 432w

Public expenditure
Northern Ireland 421w
Private investment 542w
Scotland 585w

Public footpaths
625w

"Public Health in England"
561w

Public Health Laboratory Service
78-9w

Public houses
Tenancy agreements 87w

Public inquiries
Hinkley Point C 777w

Public order offences
Oxford 818w
St Neots 818w

Public petitions
Cruelty to children (16:03:89) 628
HM Coastguard (15:03:89) 504, (23:03:89) 1244
Plessey (23:03:89) 1244
Ripon & District Hospital (20:03:89) 884

Public Record Office
Fees & charges 139w
Northern Ireland 139w

Public relations
Armed forces 54w
Cabinet Office 46w

***Public relations**—continued*
Central Office of Information 62w
Civil service manpower 5w, 14w, 20w, 23w, 30-2w, 36w, 39w, 46w, 48-9w, 57w, 62w, 71-2w, 81w, 89-90w, 100w, 115-6w, 137-8w, 247-8w
Dept of Education & Science 14-5w
Dept of Employment 57-8w
Dept of Energy 20w
Dept of Health 72-3w
Dept of Social Security 30-2w
Dept of the Environment 89-90w
Dept of Trade & Industry 100w, 103w
Dept of Transport 115-6w
Expenditure 34w, 36w, 39w, 42w, 46-7w, 58w, 62w, 72-3w, 82w, 89-90w, 103w, 116w, 300w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 23-4w
Health Education Authority 71-2w
Home Office 5w
Lord Chancellor 39w
Metropolitan Police 5w
Ministry of Agriculture 81-2w
Ministry of Defence 54w
Office of Arts & Libraries 48-9w
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 71w, 73w
Press releases 71-2w
Prime Minister 46w
Privy Council Office 34-5w
Scottish Office 36w
10 Downing Street 47w
Training Agency 57-8w
Treasury 247-8w, 300w
Welsh Office 42w, 137-8w

Public sector assets
Hospitals 141w

Public sector debt
702w

Public sector housing
Property transfer 634w
Rent arrears 908

Public sector housing sales
New towns development corporations 666w
Northern Ireland 736-8w

Public service messages
Dept of Education & Science 356w
Dept of Employment 253w
Dept of Energy 256-7w
Dept of Health 385w
Dept of Social Security 306w
Dept of the Environment 370w

Public service pensions
586w

Publicity
Council house sales 37w
Dept of the Environment 633w
Lead free petrol 87w
"Working for Patients White Paper" 570w

Publishing
AIDS (Control) Act 1987 569w

Punishment
River pollution 631w
Water pollution 632w

"Punishment Custody & the Community"
364w

Pupil-teacher ratios
North West region 681w
Primary education 289w

Pupils
Transient people 501w

Puppet Centre Battersea
463w

Puppets
463w

Quarrying
Minerals 648-9w

Queen's University Belfast
Part-time education 741w

Questionnaires
Crime 140-1w
Scottish Office 140-1w

Quin, Ms Joyce
Questions
Hearing aids, Sales methods 394
Intervention stocks 610-2w
Minimum wage, Northern region 181-3w
Price labelling, Codes of practice 431-2w

Racial harassment
Research 321w

Radar
Air safety 287w

Radiation
210-1w
Health hazards 229w

Radiation hazards
Nuclear submarines 478-81w

Radio broadcasting licences
Greater London 129w

Radio engineering
Glengarry forest 378-9w, 761w
Rediffusion Radio Systems 379w
Submarines 379-81w

Radio frequencies
Cellular phones 262w

Radio waves
Health hazards 378w

Radioactive waste disposal
507-8w
Barton-le-Clay 505w
Electricity tariffs 762w
Nuclear submarines 479w
USSR 128w

Radioactive wastes
Amersham International 777w
Barton-le-Clay 777w
Nuclear reactors 762w

Radioactivity
Capper pass 94w, 211w
Cumbria 720w
Livestock 719w
Sheep 475w, 719-20w

Radon gas
777w

RAF Alconbury
Military aircraft 758w

RAF Finningley
Low flying 756w

RAF Greenham Common
Armed forces deployment 757-8w
Military vehicles 759w

RAF Sculthorpe
Air traffic 759w

RAF Spadeadam
Military aircraft 618w

Raffan, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 938-9
Questions
Deeside waterfront scheme 722
Unemployment, Delyn enterprise zone 720
Vacant land, Government departments 635w

Railway accidents
Ambulance services 667-8w
Bellgrove 591w
Hospitals 158w
Transport of radioactive materials 592-3w

Railway electrification
Midland main railway line 3

Railway freight transport
Channel tunnel 3-4
Environment protection 218w

Railway Inspectorate
2, 287-8w, 530w
Railway safety 1-2

Railway network
Channel tunnel 2-3, 106-8w, 373-4w
North West region 105w

Railway safety
705w
Automatic train protection 119w
Railway Inspectorate 1-2
Railway signals 708w
Railway track 287-8w

Railway signals
705w
Railway safety 708w

Railway stations
111w

Railway track
Railway safety 287-8w

Railway transport
(14:03:89) 360-74
Channel tunnel 106w, 108w
Computer privacy 288w
Greater London 12
Rapid transit systems 109w

Railway travel
5
Commuters 597w
Urban areas 4-5

Railway workers
Working hours 529-30w

Rain forests
Brazil 143w, 513w
Climate 369-70w, 648w
Consolidated Fund debates (13:03:89) 157-74
Exhibitions 378w
Forest protection 286-8
Japan 303w

Ramblers' Association
(14:03:89) 360-74

Ramsey
HM Coastguard 121w

Rape
Marriage 230w

Rapid transit systems
Railway transport 109w

Rate increases
631w, 636w
Derbyshire 642w
Rates & rating 1086-7

Rate support grants
Basildon District Council 640w

Rates & rating
Calderdale 1087
City of Westminster 1087
Cleveland 1088
Ealing 1086-7
Greater London 428-9w
Northern Ireland 733-4w
Northern Ireland district councils 732-4w
Nurses 428-9w
Rate increases 1086-7
Wandsworth 1087

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Questions
Employment opportunities 275
Lost working days, Drug abuse 195-6w
Namibia, Overseas aid 702w
Planning appeals, Planning permission 1080
South Africa, Apartheid 284
Water supply industry, France 1073

RB211 engines
270w

Recess motions
Easter (13:03:89) 37-77
Speaker's rulings & statements (13:03:89) 37

ReChem International
Waste disposal 652-3w

Recruitment
Justices' clerks (23:03:89) 1316-22
Magistrates 14
Teachers 682w
Transport police 373w

Redbridge
Local government expenditure 372w
Property transfer 372w

Redbridge London Borough Council Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (16:03:89) 515, (22:03:89) 1071

Rediffusion Radio Systems
Radio engineering 379w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Lindholme 618w
Army bases, Security industry 621w
British Rail, Capital investment 705w
Channel tunnel, Yorkshire & Humberside 704-5w
Coal mining, Equipment 391w
EC Industry Council 270w
Electoral register, Doncaster 430w
European Court of Human Rights 622-3w
Exercise Red Lanyard, Low flying 476w
Family income supplements, Doncaster 783w
Forestry, Yorkshire & Humberside 714-8w
Hospital waiting lists, Trent Regional Health Authority 153w
Housing benefits, Rent allowances 544w
Israel, Peace negotiations 623w
Low flying, RAF Finningley 756w
Minimum wage, Prosecutions 801w
Minimum wage, Yorkshire & Humberside 178w
Ministers' domestic visits 371w
One parent families, Social security recipients 787-8w
Parish councils, Local government staff 371w
Pesticide residues, Cereals 717-8w
Police, Armed forces discharges 363w
Police right of search, Northern Ireland 299w
Press freedom, Departmental correspondence 246w
Prison Service, Privatisation 538w
Road construction, Competition 589-90w
School closures, Yorkshire & Humberside 357-8w
Sewers, Don Valley 772w
Sex education, Sexual intercourse 497w
Slaughterhouses, Yorkshire & Humberside 718-9w
Supplementary benefits, Doncaster 784w
Teachers, South Yorkshire 356w
Television, Children 411w
Terrorism, Broadcasting controls 538w
Transport of radioactive materials, Doncaster 706w
Tree planting, North Yorkshire 608-10w
Trent Regional Health Authority, Water pollution 765-7w
Veterinary services, Yorkshire & Humberside 465w
Water pollution, EC law 775w
Water pollution, Lead 775w
Water pollution, Lead pollution 660-1w
Water storage, Yorkshire Water Authority 422-3w
Yorkshire Water Authority, Water charges 774w

Redundancy
Coal mining 126w, 270-1
Textile industry 273, 399
Tin 723
Wales 720-1, 723

Redundancy pay
Coal mining 126w
Local government staff (16:03:89) 628

Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) (Amendment) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(16:03:89) 628

Redundant Churches Fund
368-9w

Redundant mineworkers' payments scheme
126w, 270

Redwood, Mr John
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989 (14:03:89) 335-8
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 812
Questions
EC Agriculture Commissioner 344w
Invisible trade balance, UK contributions to EC budget 586w

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Debates etc.
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Homicide (21:03:89) 923
Questions
Business statements 537
Manufacturing industries, Balance of trade 395-6

Refrigeration
Air pollution control 636-7w
Chlorofluorocarbons 317w, 426w, 1088

Refuse
Shipping 593w

Regional aid
267-8w
Expenditure 441-2w
Scotland 711-2w
Wales 711-2w

Regional development grants
Expenditure 432-4w, 441w
Foreign investment in UK 269w
Scotland 446w, 651-2w
Wales 441-2w

Regional enterprise grants
Expenditure 433-6w, 442-3w
Innovation 442w
Scotland 315-6w, 555-6w, 665w
Wales 442-3w

Regional health authorities
Ambulance services 155-6w
Finance 69w
Secure psychiatric units 328w, 575w
Self-governing hospitals 564-5w

Regional secure units
328w, 408w, 575w
Finance 482w

Regional selective assistance
266w, 711-2w
Expenditure 433-4w, 436w, 441-2w
Scotland 447w, 547w, 651w
Wales 441-2w

Registered homes tribunals
Public appointments 492w

Reid, Dr John
Questions
Minimum wage, Wages Inspectorate 179-80w

Religion
City technology colleges 405-6w

Religious sects
Consolidated Fund debates (13:03:89) 188-96

Relocation of employees
House purchase 300w
London docklands 316-7w

Remand in custody
Administrative delays 297w
Ethnic groups 813w
Mentally disturbed offenders 362w

Remand in custody—continued
Nottingham 360w
Offenders 297-8w
Private sector 297-8w
Scotland 443w

RENAVAL
284w

Renfrew West & Inverclyde
Electorate 549w

Renshaw, Michelle
Custodial treatment 412w

Rent allowances
Housing benefits 544w

Rent arrears
Langbaurgh District Council 642w
Middlesbrough Borough Council 642w
Public sector housing 908

Rent officers
544w, (21:03:89) 1038-63

Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(21:03:89) 1038-63

Rent Officers (Additional Functions) (Scotland) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(21:03:89) 1038-63

Rented housing
642w
Homelessness 1074-5
London boroughs 647w

***Renton, Mr Tim**, Minister of State at the Home Office*
Debates etc.
Electronic surveillance (13:03:89) 183-7
Questions
British citizenship, Administrative delays 413w
British nationality, Administrative delays 413w
Broadcasting, Community relations 294w
Broadcasting, Deaf 292w
Broadcasting, Handicapped 292w
"Broadcasting in the 90s White Paper" 539w, 598w, 810-1w
Broadcasting Standards Council, Codes of practice 10w
Computer privacy, Immigration & Nationality Division 231w
Concessionary television licences 293w
Concessionary television licences, Sheltered housing 293w
Deportation, Tamils 234w
Drug abuse, Advertising controls 296w
Entry clearances, Administrative delays 807-8w
Entry clearances, Genetics 815w
Entry clearances, Immigrants' dependants 150w
Immigration appeals, Members 233w, 811w
Immigration applications, Administrative delays 412-3w, 539-40w, 809w
Immigration applications, Pakistan 8-9w
Immigration rules 811w
Police records, Computer privacy 293w
Political refugees, Tamils 233-4w
Television, Children 411w
Television advertising, Advertising controls 810w
Television advertising, Commercial television 297-8w
Terrorism, Broadcasting controls 538w
Work permits, Immigrants' dependants 149w

Rents
VAT 774w

Repairs & maintenance
Automatic ticketing systems 373w
Blackwall tunnel 119w
HM Coastguard 206-7w

Repossession orders
Building societies 743w
Council house sales 38w
Mortgage defaulters 776-7w
Scotland 743w

Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(15:03:89) 504

Republic of Ireland
Agricultural products 621-2w
Teachers 404w

Resale of Tickets Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (17:03:89) 702

Research
Carbon dioxide 212w
Chlorofluorocarbons 317w
Cruelty to children 384w
Dept of Trade & Industry 129w
Mentally disturbed offenders 407-8w
Meteorology 369-70w, 648w
Racial harassment 321w
Salmonella 523
Transport 121w
Water pollution 238w

Research assistants
House of Commons passes 457w

Research facilities
Natural Environment Research Council 604-6w

Research finance
Agricultural & Food Research Council 289w
Agricultural research 516-7w
AIDS 569-70w
Climate 499w
Flood control 85-6w
Horticulture 345w
Industrial research 264w
Microelectronics industry 105w
OECD countries 266w
Science & technology research 710-2w

Residential care
Costs 77-8w
Electronic surveillance 584w
Income support 30w, 787w
Private sector 670w
Property transfer 570w
Retirement pensions 307w

Resignations
Family doctors 578w
Inland Revenue 64-5w
Justices' clerks 149w
Metropolitan Police 152w
Ridley, Tony 404w

Resource management initiative
Inverclyde Royal Hospital 554w
NHS finance 337w

Restart programme
126w, 202w, 270-1

Restaurants
59w

Retail price index
EC countries 55w
Interest charges 55w
Social security benefits 790w

Retail trade
Butane gas 268w, 360-1w
Cook-chill catering 251w
Greenbelt 211-2w

Retirement
Teachers 225w

Retirement age
459w
Costs 308w

Retirement pensions
173w, 303w
Residential care 307w

RF-4C aircraft
758w

Rhodes James, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 664-5
Questions
Jobclubs 201w

Richardson, Ms Jo
Questions
Crime, Survey techniques 1-2w
Domestic violence, Police records 817-8w
Domestic violence, Police training 818w
Further education, Day care of children 416-7w
Homeworking, Day care of children 253w
National Alliance of Women's Organisations, Government grants to voluntary organisations 149w
Policewomen 817w
Rape, Marriage 230w
Self defence, Physical education 681w
Sex education 605-6w
Training, Women 55w
Youth training scheme, Child care 55w

Richmond Committee
see Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food

Riddick, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989 (14:03:89) 328
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 29
Questions
Business statements 543
National Dock Labour Board 194w
Textile industry, Education & industry 396-7
Untreated milk 345w
Water pollution, Punishment 632w
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority, NHS finance 900-1

Riders of Equine Animals (Wearing of Protective Headgear) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (17:03:89) 702

***Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas**, Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 968, 973, 978, 981, 1010-7
Questions
Advertising, Dept of the Environment 89-90w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 630w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Refrigeration 1088
Community charge 626w
Community charge, Departmental publications 628w
Community charge, Nurses 626w
Consumer organisations, Dept of the Environment 778w
Dept of the Environment, Departmental publications 94w
Dept of the Environment, Publicity 633w
EC Environment Council 318w
Environment protection 89w
European Communities, Dept of the Environment 242w
Hazardous wastes, International conferences 651w
Homelessness, Bed & breakfast accommodation 1075-6
Homelessness, Rented housing 1074-5
Homelessness, Young people 1074-5
Housing action trusts, Council housing 323-4w
Housing associations, Housing finance 1077-8
Housing stock 1076
Management consultants, Dept of the Environment 91-2w
Ministers' domestic visits 371w
National Rivers Authority, Flood control 242w

***Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas**—continued*
North West Water Authority, Sewage 1081-2
Privatisation, Dept of the Environment 91w
Property Services Agency, Contracts for services 778w
Public relations, Dept of the Environment 89-90w
Public service messages, Dept of the Environment 370w
Radioactive waste disposal 507-8w
Sewage, Sea pollution 422w, 648w, 1081-2
Sewage, Wales 1081
Sewage, Water charges 1082
Statistics, Dept of the Environment 91w
Water charges, Price increases 240w
Water supply industry, France 1073
Water supply industry, Privatisation 1072-3

Ridley, Tony
Resignations 404w

***Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm**, Secretary of State for Scotland*
Questions
Advertising, Scottish Office 35w
Beaches, Sea pollution 741w
EC internal trade, Civil service manpower 315w
EC internal trade, Translation services 546w
Electricity area boards, Scotland 749w
Forestry, Caithness 550-1w
Forestry, Scotland 660w
Government information services, Scottish Office 229w
Legal profession, Scotland 37w
Management consultants, Scottish Office 36w
Parole, Scotland 750-1w
Public relations, Scottish Office 36w
Regional development grants, Scotland 651w
Regional selective assistance, Scotland 651w
Roads, Scotland 551-2w
Schools, Assisted places scheme 554w
Scottish Assembly, Operating costs 741w
Statistics, Scottish Office 35w

Right to buy
Council house sales 633w

Ripon & District Hospital
Public petitions (20:03:89) 884

Risley Remand Centre
Suicide 814-5w

River Don
River pollution (13:03:89) 51-4

River pollution
638w
Hampshire 239w
Pollution monitoring 427w
Prosecutions 427-8w
Punishment 631w
River Don (13:03:89) 51-4
Scotland 447w

River Rother
Pollution control (13:03:89) 51-4

River Severn
Industrial development 719
Toll bridges 719

River Thames
286w
Dock labour scheme 194w

Rivers
Flood control 85-6w

Rivers advisory committees
(21:03:89) 931-1037

RNID
see Royal National Institute for the Deaf

Road accidents
Death 592w
Motorways 595w

***Road accidents**—continued*
Police vehicles 811w
Severn bridge 537w
Transport of hazardous materials 589w, 591w

Road construction
Arundel bypass 707w
Comber bypass 731w
Competition 589-90w
Engineers 707-8w
Local authorities 589-90w
M11 206w
M40 13, 706w
Scotland 660w
VAT 596w, 695w
Wales 695w

Road haulage licences
532w

Road safety
Cellular phones 705w
Driving 13-4
Greater London 11
Motorways 6
Transport of hazardous materials 399-400w

Road tax
Sub post offices 402w

Road traffic
Blackwall tunnel 117-9w
City of Westminster 401w
Hampshire 207w
Heathrow Airport 216-7w
M1 707w
North Yorkshire 205w

Road traffic control
Blackwall tunnel 7w
Britannia bridge 399w
Severn bridge 595w

Road works
109w
A465 714
A850 314w
Elveden 207w, 704w
Government grants 709-10w
M4 216-7w
Motorways 5-6

Roads
8
Consolidated Fund debates (13:03:89) 197-209
East Midlands 8
Expenditure 7-8, 366-7w, 376-7w
Greater London 10-2
Hampshire 114w, (13:03:89) 197-209
Per capita costs 7-8
Scotland 376-7w, 551-2w
South East region 8
Wales 366-7w, 713-4

"Roads in Wales"
713

Roberts, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 983, 993, 1011-2, 1013, (22:03:89) 1148, 1155, 1165, 1177, 1181-3
Questions
Chlorofluorocarbons, Aerosols 426w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Exports 426w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Refrigeration 426w
EC internal trade, Economic regions 260w
Minimum wage 177-8w
Ozone layer, International conferences 426w
Sea pollution, Lindane 1084

***Roberts, Mr Wyn**, Minister of State for Wales*
Debates etc.
Hospital closures, Gwynedd Health Authority (23:03:89) 1277, 1278-81
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 931-5, 942
Questions
A465, Road works 714

***Roberts, Mr Wyn**—continued*
Educational finance, Wales 718-9
Hospitals, Mid Glamorgan 439w
Immunopathology, Hospital consultants 718
Industrial training, Wales 714-5
Lluesty Hospital, Bus services 699w
Local education authority training grant scheme, Wales 714-5
Nurses, Wales 437w
River Severn, Toll bridges 719
Road construction, VAT 695w
Roads, Expenditure 366-7w
Roads, Wales 713-4
Secondary education, Cost per pupil 718
Severn bridge, Fees & charges 719
Wales Tourist Board 437-8w

Robertson, Mr George
Questions
Scottish Development Agency 652w

Robinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1092
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Homicide (21:03:89) 920-1

Roe, Mrs Marion
Debates etc.
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 551
Questions
Railway travel, Commuters 597w
Youth training scheme 200w

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 874
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Members' visits abroad 620w
Armed forces deployment, Western Europe 620w
Artillery, Testing 620w
Bovine somatotropin, Veterinary Products Committee 339w
Export credit, Tornado aircraft 713w
Helicopters, 6 Brigade 619w
Medical education 606w
Medical education, Cost per student 606w
Medical education, Private sector 605w
Medical students, Student numbers 578w, 606w
Tornado aircraft, Jordan 691w
Tornado aircraft, Middle East 757w
Tornado aircraft, Saudi Arabia 757w
Tractors, BAOR 619w
Tractors, Military vehicles 619w

Rolling stock
London Underground 372-3w

Roll-on roll-off ships
(23:03:89) 1243
Shipping safety 122-4w

Rolls-Royce Aeroengines
Government assistance to industry 270w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Debates etc.
Legal Aid & Legal Advice & Assistance Regulations 1989 (22:03:89) 1224-5
Roads (13:03:89) 208-9
Special education, Educational health services (13:03:89) 210-5
Questions
Bees 339w
Concessionary television licences, Sheltered housing 293w
Dog registration scheme 638w
Minimum wage, West Midlands 185w
Radio broadcasting licences, Greater London 129w

Ross, Mr Ernie
Debates etc.
Community care, Dundee (23:03:89) 1247-50
Questions
Dock labour scheme 276, 281

***Ross, Mr Ernie**—continued*
Research finance, Agricultural & Food Research Council 289w

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 466-70, 500
Private notice questions (15:03:89) 413
Questions
Ammunition, Forensic science 598w
Detergents, Phosphates 319w
Firearms, Compensation 817w
Firearms certificates, North Wales 539-40w
Firearms certificates, Thames Valley police 292w
Music, Travelling expenses 519w
Part-time education, Queen's University Belfast 741w
Police firearms, Training 598w

Rossi, Sir Hugh
Questions
Community charge, Nurses 626w

Rost, Mr Peter
Questions
Wave power, Government grants 761-2w

Rover Group
(23:03:89) 1323-9

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
36 Engineers' Regiment, Army bases (13:03:89) 225-7
British Railways Bill 1988/89, 2R (14:03:89) 367-70
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 26
Special education, Educational health services (13:03:89) 219
Questions
EC Finance Council 247w
Homelessness, Young people 306-7w
Pupils, Transient people 501w
Residential care, Retirement pensions 307w
"Wages Councils 1988 Consultation Document" 557-8w
Women's employment 192w

Rowland, Tiny
(23:03:89) 1323-9

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 940-1, 946, 980, 985-8, 1013
Questions
Coal mining, Wales 438w
Minimum wage, Wales 178-9w
Redundancy, Wales 720-1

Roxburgh & Berwickshire
Skyguard radar 755w

Royal College of Midwives
326w

Royal Commission on Ancient & Historical Monuments & Constructions
see Ancient & Historical Monuments & Constructions of England Royal Commission

Royal Engineers
(13:03:89) 222-31

Royal National Institute for the Deaf
326w
Hearing aids 326w

Royal Naval College
Transport of radioactive materials 593w

Royal Ordnance
(23:03:89) 1323-9

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Nature conservation 518

Royal Ulster Constabulary
12w, 299w
Homicide (21:03:89) 918-27

Royal Ulster Constabulary—*continued*
Inquiries 530-1

RSPB
see Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

RUC
see Royal Ulster Constabulary

Ruddock, Mrs Joan
Debates etc.
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1266-7
Roads (13:03:89) 206, 207, 208
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 108w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Production 630w
City technology colleges, Voluntary schools 290w
Libyan Arab Republic, Chemical weapons 624w
Minimum wage, South East region 181w
Nuclear safeguards, Sellafield 680w
Roads, Greater London 11-2
Science & technology research, Genetics 607w
Transport of radioactive materials, Air freight transport 596w
Transport of radioactive materials, International Atomic Energy Agency 592w
Transport of radioactive materials, Nuclear safeguards 679w
Transport of radioactive materials, Nuclear safety 592w
Transport of radioactive materials, Plutonium 596-7w, 709w
Transport of radioactive materials, Railway accidents 592-3w
Transport of radioactive materials, Royal Naval College 593w
United Kingdom Warning & Monitoring Organisation, Emergency planning 599w

Rugby
Police 231-2w

Rumbold, Mrs Angela, *Minister of State for Education and Science*
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 881
Questions
Advertising, Dept of Education & Science 13w
Consumer organisations, Dept of Education & Science 289w
Curriculum, Departmental publications 606-7w, 684-5w
Drama education, Curriculum 15w
Education, Inner London boroughs 497w
Educational finance 685w
Educational finance, Derbyshire County Council 685w
Educational publications, Cost per pupil 685-6w
Grant maintained schools, School governors 684w
Languages education, India 681-2w
Management consultants, Dept of Education & Science 13-4w
Nursery schools, Capital investment 683w
Nursery schools, School population 686-7w
Pre-school education, Government grants to local authorities 358w
Pre-school education, Local government expenditure 358-9w
Privatisation, Dept of Education & Science 13w
Public relations, Dept of Education & Science 14-5w
Public service messages, Dept of Education & Science 356w
School closures, Yorkshire & Humberside 357-8w
School Examinations & Assessment Council, Public appointments 16w
School governors, Departmental publications 406-7w
Schools, Educational finance 607w

Rumbold, Mrs Angela—*continued*
Self defence, Physical education 681w
Statistics, Dept of Education & Science 14-5w
Teacher training, Pre-school education 683w
Teachers, Pay 407w, 682w
Teachers, Pay-incentives 223-4w
Teachers, Recruitment 682w
Teachers, Republic of Ireland 404w
Teachers, South Yorkshire 356w
Teachers, Women's employment 359w
Under-fives Education Inquiry 502w

Rumbold Committee
see Under-fives Education Inquiry

Rural areas
Community councils 321w
Family doctors 568w, 896-7
Housing 92w, 209w, 518-9, 640w, 642w
Maternity services 572w
Water supply 697w

Rural conversion grants
Small businesses 695w

Rushdie, Salman
25-6w, 363w

Ryan, Michael
292w

Ryder, Mr Richard, *Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1210-2
Questions
Agricultural & Food Research Council 344w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Civil service manpower 721-2w
Agricultural land, Extensification schemes 516w
Agricultural land, Housing construction 350w
Agricultural products, Festivals & special occasions 82w
Agricultural products, Labelling 392w
Agricultural research, Government laboratories 722w
Agricultural research, Near market research 84-5w
Agricultural workers, Pay 519
Animal feed, Composition labelling 614w
Animal feed, Salmonella 719w
Birds, Imports 518
Birds, Poisoning 778w
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme 723w
Cereals, Intervention stocks 527
Cheese, Minerals 347w
Council for the Protection of Rural England 518-9
Countryside Commission 345w
Dioxins, Food packaging 249w
EC free food scheme, Charities 723w
Eggs, Food labelling 520
Environmentally sensitive areas, Landlord & tenant 474w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Water authorities 519
Experimental farms, Animal husbandry 722w
Experimental farms, Horticulture 722w
Farm & conservation grants scheme 339-40w
Farm diversification scheme, Planning permission 519-20
Farm woodland scheme 526-7
Farm woodland scheme, Administrative delays 467w
Fishing catches 345w
Food contamination, Food standards 526
Food hygiene, Agricultural research 342-4w
Food hygiene, Food industry 80w
Food industry, Tropical products 85w
Food microbiology, Food inspection 82w
Food standards, Airlines 520
Forestry, Yorkshire & Humberside 714-8w
Fruit, Cyanide 470w

Ryder, Mr Richard—*continued*
Fruit, Food imports 470w
Hedges & ditches 347-8w, 521-2
Hedges & ditches, East Anglia 521
Hedges & ditches, Environment protection 520-1
Horticulture, Research finance 345w
Housing, Rural areas 519
Infant foods, Beef 346w
Internal drainage boards 250-1w
Irradiated food 249w
Lindane 725w
Liscombe experimental husbandry farm 514-5w
Livestock, Radioactivity 719w
"Mammal & Bird Pests 1985" 249w
Meat products, Food composition 341-2w
Nature Conservancy Council 341-2w
New Forest, Blood sports 515w
"Nuclear Accidents & the Farmer" 474w
Oils & fats, Tropical products 351-2w
Pesticide residues, Cereals 717-8w
Pesticides, Civil service manpower 724w
Pesticides, Safety 724w
Pesticides, Wild animals 723w
Potatoes, Agricultural marketing 524-5
Poultry, Salmonella 526
Public houses, Tenancy agreements 87w
Radioactivity, Cumbria 720w
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Nature conservation 518
Sheep, Radioactivity 475w, 719-20w
Sheep dipping, Water pollution 721w
Thames flood barrier 349w
Tree planting, North Yorkshire 608-10w
Untreated milk, Labelling 520

Safer cities scheme
812w

Safety
Medical equipment 387-9w
Pesticides 724w
Transport (13:03:89) 119-39

Safety in Children's Playgrounds Bill, 1988/89
Debates etc.
(15:03:89) 414-6

Safety measures
Parachuting 286w
Piper Alpha Inquiry 277w
Swimming 241w

Safety standards
Playgrounds (15:03:89) 414-6
Shipping safety (23:03:89) 1243

Sainsbury, Mr Tim, *Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement*
Debates etc.
British Aerospace (23:03:89) 1326-9
Trident (13:03:89) 256-60
Questions
Artillery, Testing 620w
AWE Aldermaston, Television programmes 753w
British Nuclear Fuels, Defence contracts 382w
Challenger tanks, Per capita costs 616w
Chemical weapons, Disclosure of information 754w
Consumer organisations, Ministry of Defence 244w
Defence research establishments, Audit 760w
Defence research establishments, Civil service agencies 276-7w
DROPS, Motor vehicle testing 382w
European Communities, Ministry of Defence 246w
Firearms, Costs 760w
Management consultants, Ministry of Defence 52w
Mines, Costs 762w
Ministry of Defence, Security guards 760w
Ministry of Defence police, Manpower 760-1w
Ministry of Defence police, Pay 761w
Ministry of Defence police, Training 761w

***Sainsbury, Mr Tim**—continued*
Nuclear weapons, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 754w
Nuclear weapons tests 477w
Privatisation, Ministry of Defence 53w
Public relations, Ministry of Defence 54w
Radio engineering, Glengarry forest 379w
Radio engineering, Rediffusion Radio Systems 379w
Radio engineering, Submarines 379-80w
Radio waves, Health hazards 378w
Scientists against Nuclear Arms, Conferences
Sea King helicopters, Per capita costs 616w
Statistics, Armed forces 52-3w
Tornado aircraft, Middle East 757w
Tornado aircraft, Saudi Arabia 756-7w
Tractors, BAOR 619w
Tractors, Military vehicles 619w
Transport of radioactive materials, USA 754w
Trident submarines, Defence contracts 54w

St George's Hospital Tooting
158w

St John Ambulance Association & Brigade
667-8w

St Leonards Church Swithland
Church buildings 16

St Neots
Public order offences 818w

Sales methods
Hearing aids 393-4

Salisbury Plain
759w

Salmon
Drift nets 473w

Salmon Act 1986
Questions
473w

Salmond, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 783-5
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 346-8, 351, 354
HM Coastguard, Public petitions (15:03:89) 504
Private notice questions (15:03:89) 411-2
Water charges, Grampian (22:03:89) 1237
Questions
Business statements 542-3
HM Coastguard 7
HM Coastguard, Aberdeen 120w
HM Coastguard, Swansea 120w
House of Commons standing orders 457w
Piper Alpha Inquiry, Safety measures 277w

Salmonella
Animal feed 83w, 719w
Eggs 349w, 474w, 516w, 517, 520
Environmental health 153w
Poultry 352w, 526, 613-4w
Research 523

Salop
Hospital beds 892
Hospital closures 893
NHS hospital trusts 892

Samaritans
Prison visits 814w

SANE
579w

"Satanic Verses"
Islam 363w

Satellite broadcasting
Television reception 129w

Saudi Arabia
Tornado aircraft 756-7w

Sayeed, Mr Jonathan

***Sayeed, Mr Jonathan**—continued*
Questions
Tourism, Bristol 279

School boards
663-5w

School closures
Yorkshire & Humberside 357-8w

School Discipline Inquiry
16-8w

School Examinations & Assessment Council
Public appointments 16w

"School Governors"
406-7w
Departmental publications 406-7w
Grant maintained schools 684w

School leaving
Further education 681w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 688-9w
North West region 681w
Scotland 745w

School leaving certificates
GCE A level 170-2w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 172w

School population
City technology colleges 355w
Durham Education Authority 355w
Nursery schools 686-7w

School transport
Handicapped 165-6w

School violence
16-8w

Schools
Assisted places scheme 554w
Educational finance 607w

Science & technology
Japan 104-5w

Science & technology research
Genetics 607w
Research finance 710-2w

Scientists
Health service staff 573w

Scientists against Nuclear Arms
Conferences 381w

Scope of debate
Speaker's rulings & statements (13:03:89) 208, (14:03:89) 343, 345, 347, 353, 354, 369, (20:03:89) 864, 868, 869, 871, 872, 875, (21:03:89) 1016

Scotland
Agriculture 313w
Alcoholic drinks 545w
Armed forces deployment 759w
Assisted places scheme 554w
Beaches 741w
Capital investment 744-5w
Channel tunnel 167w
Children 745w, 785w
Community charge 175-6w
Community charges register 314w, 375-6w
Community health services 750w
Community service orders 554w
Computer privacy 376w
Council house sales 37-8w
Council housing 548w
Crimes of violence 743w
Criminal statistics 743w
Cruelty to children 748-9w
Detection rates 743w
Dialysis machines 313-4w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986 661-2w
Divorce law (16:03:89) 628
Drug crimes 546w
Drug seizures 546w
Education 663-5w, 742w

***Scotland**—continued*
Educational publications 745-7w
Electricity area boards 749w
Employment 655-6w
Employment training 545w
Environmentally sensitive areas 663w
Exports 553-4w
Family credit 544w
Family income supplements 544w
Fish farming 142w, 444-5w
Forestry 660w
Handicapped workers 741w
Hazardous Waste Inspectorate 652-3w
Hazardous wastes 653w
Health 446w
Hospital finance 750w
Hospitals 141w
Housing 548w
Housing amenities 742w
Housing associations 229w
Housing occupancy 744w
Housing standards 742w, 744w
Housing starts 745w
Housing subsidies (21:03:89) 1038-63
Income tax 455-7w
Industrial investment 549w
Junior hospital doctors 547-8w
Legal advice & assistance 662w
Legal aid 662-3w
Legal profession 37w
Low flying 755w
Manufacturing industries 744w
Matrimonial property 142w
Mental welfare officers 547w
Mentally disturbed offenders 376w
Minimum wage 177-9w, 182-4w
Narcotics 315w
New towns development corporations 552-3w, 666w
NHS 742w
Nurses 444w
Parole 750-1w
Pesticides 142w, 445w, 656w
Public expenditure 585w
Regional aid 711-2w
Regional development grants 446w, 651-2w
Regional enterprise grants 315-6w, 555-6w, 665w
Regional selective assistance 447w, 547w, 651w
Remand in custody 443w
Repossession orders 743w
River pollution 447w
Road construction 660w
Roads 376-7w, 551-2w
School leaving 745w
Self-governing schools 446w, 751-2w
Sentencing 741-2w
Severe disablement allowance 784-5w
Shipbuilding 548-9w
Skiing 230w
Social Fund 395-6w
Social workers' training 547w
Sports competitors 663w
Student grants 550w
Tax yields 585w
Teachers 443w
Tipping of waste 444w, 654-5w
Tourism 552w
Translation services 546w
Transport of hazardous materials 653-4w
Tree planting 659-60w, 748w
Unemployment 229-30w
Vocational guidance 555w
Waste disposal 444w, 652-3w
Water pollution 660-1w
Woodland grant scheme 657-8w

***Scott, Mr Nicholas**, Minister of State, Dept of Social Security*
Questions
Attendance allowance, Administrative delays 786w
Attendance allowance, Social security claims 306-8w
Conductive education, Government assistance 396w
Handicap benefits 675-6w
Handicapped, Access to buildings 30w

Scott, Mr Nicholas—continued
Invalid care allowances, Social security benefits rules 173-4w
Invalid care allowances, Take-up 784-5w
Mobility allowance, Social security benefits uprating 174w
National insurance benefits 786-7w
Pensioners, Disposable income 791w
Social security appeals 175w
Social security benefits, Expenditure 174-5w
Social security benefits rules, Young people 27-8w

Scottish Arts Council
Government grants 701w

Scottish Assembly
Operating costs 741w

Scottish Development Agency
652w

Scottish health boards
NHS finance 749-50w

Scottish Office
Advertising 35w
Chlorofluorocarbons 139w
EC internal trade 315w
Government information services 229w
Management consultants 36w
Privatisation 36w
Public relations 36w
Questionnaires 140-1w
Statistics 35w

Scottish Tourist Board
552w

Scrapie
466w
Goats 79w
Notifiable diseases 342w
Sheep 469w

Screening
Breast cancer 447w
Cervical cancer 567w
Heart diseases 338w
Toxoplasmosis 576w

SDA
see Scottish Development Agency

Sea fishing
Lug worms 351w

Sea King helicopters
Per capita costs 616w

Sea pollution
Beaches 741w, 1082-4
EC law 89w, 424w, 1082-3
Lindane 1084
North West region 422w
Pollution control 288-9w
Pollution monitoring 783w
Sewage 422w, 644w, 648w, 1081-2
Solent 239w
Southampton Water 239w
Welsh Water Authority 504-5w

Sea transport
Transport of hazardous materials 706w
Transport of radioactive materials 400w

SEAC
see School Examinations & Assessment Council

Seaham Harbour
Educational health services 66w

Seal products
Imports 776w

Sealink Harbours
Special constables 217-8w

Seas & oceans
Climate 212-3w

Second homes
Arson 716-7

Secondary education
Cost per pupil 718
Teachers 520-8w

Secondary Examinations Council
16w

Secure accommodation
North West region 237w

Secure psychiatric units
Mentally disturbed offenders 408w
Regional health authorities 328w, 575w

Secure units
Children in care 484-6w
Government grants to local authorities 485-6w
Young offenders 669w

Security
Army bases 760w
London Underground 207w
Ministry of Defence 760w

Security guards
Ministry of Defence 760w

Security industry
597w
Army bases 621w

Security vetting
Middleton, Michael 694w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
British Aerospace (23:03:89) 1327
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 752, 771-5
Housing problems, Newham (23:03:89) 1315
Questions
Arts, Greater London 362-3w
Marcos, Ferdinand, Philippines 624w

Select Committees
Abortion 560w
Dept of Transport 113w
Ministry of Defence 51w
Northern Ireland Office 299w
Treasury 146w

Self defence
Physical education 681w

Self-employed
188w
Employment level 416w
OECD countries 187w

Self-governing hospitals
336-7w, 899, 901-2
Calderdale Health Authority 571w
Clergy 669w
Greater London 899-900
Hospitals 314w
Medical audit 571-2w
Medical education 769w
Pay 337w, 899
Pay settlements 571w
Public appointments 334w
Regional health authorities 564-5w

Self-governing schools
Scotland 446w, 751-2w

Self-Governing Schools etc (Scotland) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
(14:03:89) 339-57

Sellafield
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 709w
Nuclear safeguards 680w

Senile dementia
582w

SENSE
219w

Sentencing
One parent families 449-50w
Scotland 741-2w

Sentencing—continued
Sexual offences 741-2w

Set-aside schemes
348w
Government assistance 429w

Severe disablement allowance
Scotland 784-5w

Severe weather payments
Capital rules 789w

Severn bridge
Fees & charges 595w, 719
Road accidents 537w
Road traffic control 595w

Severn-Trent Water Authority
241-2w, 775w
Sites of special scientific interest 94w

Sewage
AIDS 95w
Highland Regional Council 1081
North West Water Authority 424w, 1081-2
Sea pollution 422w, 644w, 648w, 1081-2
South West Water Authority 644w
Wales 44w, 1081
Water charges 1082
Water pollution 211w, 242w, 427w, 640w
Welsh Water Authority 504-5w

Sewers
Don valley 772w

Sex change operations
District health authorities 767w

Sex discrimination
Police 232w, 294w

Sex Discrimination Act 1975
Questions
294w

Sex education
605-6w
Sexual intercourse 497w

Sexual intercourse
Sex education 497w

Sexual offences
Crime victims 817w
Cruelty to children 574-5w
Sentencing 741-2w

Share option scheme
277

Shareholders
247w
Anglo Dutch Limited 104w
Water supply industry 240-1w

Shares
Water supply industry 424-5w

Shaw, David
House of Commons passes 313w

Shaw, Mr David
Questions
Anglo Dutch Limited, Company investigations 104w
Anglo Dutch Limited, Licensing 104w
Anglo Dutch Limited, Shareholders 104w
Care Homes, Company liquidations 103-4w
Care Homes, Directors 104w
Company investigations 105w
Hard core unemployed 189w
Sea pollution, Beaches 1083

Shaw, Sir Giles
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1096
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 982-5, (22:03:89) 1176

Shaw, Sir Michael
Questions
Farm diversification scheme, Planning permission 519-20

Sheep
Radioactivity 475w, 719-20w
Scrapie 469w

Sheep dipping
Chemicals 466-7w, 721w
Health hazards 721w
Water pollution 721w

Sheep diseases
Disease control 340w

Sheep meat
350w
Animal feed 86w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Electronic surveillance (13:03:89) 180-2
Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Bill, Lords amendts (14:03:89) 359
Religious sects (13:03:89) 192
Questions
Complaints against police 813-4w
London Underground, Security 207w
Police custody, Suicide 814w
Police vehicles, Road accidents 811w
Prisoners, Suicide 814w
Prisons, Catering 815w
Remand in custody, Ethnic groups 813w
Risley Remand Centre, Suicide 814-5w

Sheffield
Unemployment 191w

Sheffield Development Corporation
Corporate plans 639-40w

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 764-8, 770

Sheltered housing
Codes of practice (13:03:89) 58-61
Concessionary television licences 293w
Housing & elderly (23:03:89) 1291-8

Shephard, Mrs Gillian
Questions
Dock labour scheme, Age 193w
Secure psychiatric units, Regional health authorities 575w
Tenants' choice 240w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Debates etc.
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 32
Questions
Gun sports, Land use 211w
Hospitals, Construction 236w
Mappa mundi, Hereford Cathedral 464w
Microlight aircraft, Legislation 707w
Potatoes, Agricultural marketing 525
Road works 109w
Sheep meat 350w
Training & enterprise councils 204w
USSR 513w

Shepherd, Mr Richard
Questions
Guillotine 312-3w

Shersby, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Justices' clerks, Career structure (23:03:89) 1316-8, 1320
Transport safety (13:03:89) 119
Questions
Consumer credit, Credit licensing 271w
Dock labour scheme, Teesside 193w
Food hygiene, Air transport 163w
Health hazards, Transport of hazardous materials 490w
M4, Road works 216-7w
Metropolitan Police, Resignations 152w
Pield Heath Nurseries Uxbridge, Planning appeals 631w
Sealink Harbours, Special constables 217-8w

Shersby, Mr Michael—continued
Special constables, Codes of practice 448-9w

Shetland
Arctic terns 752-3w
Birds 753w

Shipbuilding
279
EC grants & loans 284w
Plymouth 284w
Scotland 548-9w

Shipping
EC action 6, 114-5w
Fees & charges 287w
Refuse 593w
Taxation 59-60w, 453-4w

Shipping accidents
Submarines 402w
Transport of hazardous materials 705-6w

Shipping registration
British merchant fleet 115w
Merchant ships 122w

Shipping safety
Ferries 122-4w
Fishing gear 206w
Information 286w
Manpower 287w
Roll-on roll-off ships 122-4w
Safety standards (23:03:89) 1243

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc.
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 27
Questions
Employment opportunities 271-2
Minimum wage, West Midlands 181w

Shotgun certificates
539-40w, 817w

Shotton
699w

Shropshire County Council
341-2w

Sick pay
789-90w

Siemens
405, (23:03:89) 1244

Sikhs
Industrial safety 802w

Sillars, Jim
Members' suspension (14:03:89) 289-90, 292

Sillars, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989 (14:03:89) 289
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 949, 954-6, 962
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 915-6
Social security appeals, Administrative delays 458w

Sims, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace) Bill 1988/89, 2R (14:03:89) 378
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 552
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 106w
Hearing Aid Council, Codes of practice 262w
Private Members' Bills, House of Commons procedure 18

Single people
Council house waiting lists 320w

Sites of special scientific interest
Severn-Trent Water Authority 94w
Tree planting 505-6w

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Questions
Minerals, Quarrying 648-9w

Skiing
Scotland 230w

Skill shortages
South East region 251-2w, 271, 274-5

Skills Training Agency
Ministerial statements (13:03:89) 23-33

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Arkwright colliery, Methane (13:03:89) 42-5
British Aerospace (23:03:89) 1327
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 435-6
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1272, 1273
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 347
Local government pensions, Derbyshire County Council (17:03:89) 709
Private notice questions (15:03:89) 412
Water Bill, Money res (20:03:89) 852
Questions
Business statements 543
Civil service agencies 728
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 523-4
Health service staff, Pay 387w
House of Commons broadcasting, Administrative delays 20-2
Magistrates 14
P & O 108w
Personal tax allowances, Married men 585w
Student loans 605w
Vacant land, Litter 1076-7
Wages councils, Employment 197w

Skyguard radar
Roxburgh & Berwickshire 755w

Slaughterhouses
83w
Animal diseases 466w
Animal welfare 717w
Export licensing 718-9w
Food hygiene 466w
Food inspection 83w
Licensing 83w
Veterinary services 473w
Yorkshire & Humberside 718-9w

Small businesses
Corporation tax 60w
Non-domestic rates 644w
Rural conversion grants 695w
Wales 695w

Smith, Mr Andrew
Questions
Community charge, Students 370-1w
Educational finance, Higher education 220-3w
Educational finance, Per capita costs 222w
Educational Maintenance allowance 220w
Higher education, University Grants Committee 221w
M40 110w
Minimum wage, South East region 183-4w
Skill shortages, South East region 251-2w
Southern Arts Association, Arts grants 726
Student grants 219-20w
Student grants, Parental contributions 219w
Student grants, Travelling expenses 220w
Student loans 499-501w
Tuition fees, Part-time education 220w
University teachers, Pay 682-3w
Water pollution, Oxford 642w

Smith, Mr Chris
Questions
AIDS, North East Thames Regional Health Authority 154w
Arts, Greater London 362-3w
British Rail 109w

Smith, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 417-25, 427, 428, 429, 430, 433, 502

Smith, Rt Hon John*—*continued
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 821, 822

Smith, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 420
Questions
Charities 301-2w
Exchange equalisation account, National Loans Fund 702w
Government securities 703w
Loan guarantee scheme 280
Local enterprise agencies 201w
National debt 249-50w, 455-6w
Plessey, Takeovers 406
Prescriptions, Per capita costs 334-6w

Smoking
65-6w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1095
Questions
Attendance allowance, Terminal care 730w
Diets, Social security benefits 730w
Family credit, Northern Ireland 731w
Handicapped, Survey techniques 420-1w
NHS Review 894
Social Fund, Northern Ireland 733-6w

Snape, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
British Railways Bill 1988/89, 2R (14:03:89) 361-2, 365-7, 369
Private notice question intervention (21:03:89) 916
Questions
Airport security 112w
Minimum wage, West Midlands 182-3w
Railway travel 5

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1110, 1157, 1210
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 915
Civil service, Pay incentives 729-30
Libraries 462w
Transport supplementary grants, West Sussex County Council 112w

Social Fund
308-9w
Administrative delays 785-6w
Chatham 676w
Expenditure 676w
Funerals 789w
Inverness 394w
Lockerbie 394w
Northern Ireland 733-40w
Northern region 785-6w
Scotland 395-6w

Social security
Merchant seamen 460-1w

Social security abuse
Unemployment benefits 199w

Social security appeals
175w
Administrative delays 458w
Halifax 33w
Training 33w
Unemployment benefits 458-9w

Social security benefits
Carers 173-4w
Community charge 675w
Diets 730w
Expenditure 174-5w
Retail price index 790w

Social security benefits disqualification
Voluntary unemployment 558w
Young people 59w

Social security benefits rates
Housing benefits 396w

Social security benefits rules
Invalid care allowances 173-4w
Young people 27-8w

Social security benefits uprating
Mobility allowance 174w

Social security claims
Attendance allowance 306-8w
Family credit 459w
Income support 33w

Social security recipients
Hostels 393w
Housing benefits 785w
One parent families 787-8w
Supplementary benefits 174w
War pensions 173w

Social security reform
396-8w, 790w
Housing benefits 306w, 395w, 789w
Income support 395w
Northern region 27w
Unemployment benefits 801-2w

Social Services Inspectorate
490-1w

Social Services Select Committee
407w, (20:03:89) 884

Social unrest
Council tenants (13:03:89) 140-56

Social workers
County councils in Wales 696-7w
Handicapped 696-7w

Social workers' training
Mental health 327-8w, 387w, 547w, 667w, 764-5w

Soleut
Sea pollution 239w

Soley, Mr Clive
Debates etc.
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1038, 1040-5, 1050
Questions
House renovation grants, Earnings rules 425-6w
Housing action trusts, Consultants 779w
Housing construction, London boroughs 647w
Housing stock 1076
Rented housing, London boroughs 647w
Tenants' choice, Property transfer 779w

Solicitors
Legal advice & assistance 449w

Solitary confinement
Bettaney, Michael 411w

Somerset
Police 598w

Sound insulation
Traffic noise 402-3w

South Africa
Apartheid 284
Chile 448w
Overseas aid 311-2w
UK companies abroad 602w

South Cumbria Health Authority
Finance 667w
Health service staff 386w
Hospital patients 386-7w

South East region
Minimum wage 178-9w, 181w, 183-4w
Roads 8
Skill shortages 251-2w, 271, 274-5
Unemployment 271

South Hams
Water pollution 644w

South Hams District Council
322w, 324w

South Korea
Armed forces deployment 476w

South Wales
Housing construction 367w
Unemployment 504w

South West Africa People's Organisation
Namibia 624-5w

South West region
Employment 193w
Water supply (13:03:89) 66-9

South West Thames Regional Health Authority
158-9w

South West Water Authority
88w, 208-9w
Sewage 644w

South Yorkshire
Teachers 356w

Southampton Water
Sea pollution 239w

Southern Africa
528-9

Southern Arts Association
Arts grants 726

Southwark
Child safety 490-1w
City technology colleges 607-8w
Globe Theatre 421w

Southwood Committee
see Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy Working Party

Spastics Society
439-40w

***Speaker and his deputies**, For rulings & statements see separate heading*
Speaker's rulings & statements
Debates etc.
Amendments & new clauses (14:03:89) 359, (21:03:89) 931, 946, 964-5, (22:03:89) 1104, 1127-9, 1203
Disallowed questions (16:03:89) 529
Members' deaths, McTaggart, Bob (23:03:89) 1265
Members' suspension, Sillars, Jim (14:03:89) 289-90, 292
Orders & regulations motions (15:03:89) 413, 504, (22:03:89) 1213
Private Members' Bills, 2R order read (17:03:89) 702, 703
Procedure (14:03:89) 281, 283, (16:03:89) 545, (20:03:89) 827, 854, 869, (23:03:89) 1274, 1288
Royal assent notified (15:03:89) 416
Standing Order No 20 applications, Air accidents (16:03:89) 555, 556
Standing Order No 20 applications, Bird's Eye (13:03:89) 34
Standing Order No 20 applications, Lockerbie (20:03:89) 731-2
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 915
Labour Party 529
Pickles, James 285

Speaker's rulings & statements
Business questions (16:03:89) 535
Calling of Members (14:03:89) 344
House of Commons division of time (21:03:89) 946
House of Commons passes (13:03:89) 36
House of Commons procedure (20:03:89) 732-4, 735, (21:03:89) 946, 1039, 1059, 1060
House of Commons staff (23:03:89) 1338
Members (23:03:89) 1338
Members' conduct (15:03:89) 436, (20:03:89) 717, 851, 874, (21:03:89) 913, 1010, 1038
Members' interventions (15:03:89) 426, (16:03:89) 529, 530, (20:03:89) 874, (22:03:89) 1083
Members' speeches (13:03:89) 101, 125, 145, (15:03:89) 430, (16:03:89) 557, 577, (20:03:89) 749, 781, 783, 760, 805, 877, (21:03:89) 1002, (22:03:89) 1092, 1098, 1145, (23:03:89) 1269

Speaker's rulings & statements—continued
Members' staff (15:03:89) 411
Ministerial statements (13:03:89) 31, 32, (15:03:89) 35, (16:03:89) 550, (21:03:89) 924, 926, (23:03:89) 1315
Oral questions (21:03:89) 915
Orders & regulations (21:03:89) 1058-9
Points of order (16:03:89) 532, (20:03:89) 870, 880
Prime Minister's questions (14:03:89) 285, (15:03:89) 412-3
Private Members' motions (17:03:89) 678
Private notice questions (15:03:89) 411, 412, 413, (21:03:89) 912, 913, 915, 916
Recess motions (13:03:89) 37
Scope of debate (13:03:89) 208, (14:03:89) 343, 345, 347, 353, 354, 369, (20:03:89) 864, 868, 869, 871, 872, 875, (21:03:89) 1016
Sub judice (13:03:89) 6, (16:03:89) 540
Supplementary questions (14:03:89) 271, 274
Ten minutes rule (16:03:89) 557, 577, (20:03:89) 749, 781, 783, 805
Unparliamentary expressions (16:03:89) 535, (20:03:89) 863, (21:03:89) 916

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1042, 1048, 1059
Transport safety (13:03:89) 127-9
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 986, (22:03:89) 1149
Questions
Agricultural products, EC external trade 351w
Blackwall tunnel, Road traffic 117-9w
Blackwall tunnel, Road traffic control 7w
Brundtland Report 210w
Central London Rail Study 12
Curriculum, Departmental publications 606-7w
East London river crossing 706-7w
Hospitals, Railway accidents 158w
London Ambulance Service, Emergency calls 159w
London Ambulance Service, Finance 158-9w
London Ambulance Service, Out-patients 159w
Railway track, Railway safety 287-8w
Thamesline, Government grants 286w
Veterinary medicine, Medical students 145w

Special constables
Codes of practice 448-9w
Sealink Harbours 217-8w

Special education
Blind 219w
Consolidated Fund debates (13:03:89) 210-21
Deaf 219w

Special schools
Educational health services (13:03:89) 210-21

Speed, Mr Keith
Questions
Unemployment, South East region 271

Speller, Mr Tony
Questions
Air force, Community charge 759w
Livestock, Dog licences 351-2w
Tourism, Government grants 197w

Spicer, Mr Michael, Under-Secretary of State for Energy
Questions
Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Nuclear reactors 558-9w
Bradwell power station, Nuclear safety 257w
British Coal Corporation 763w
British Nuclear Fuels, Nuclear power stations 559w
Central Electricity Generating Board, Capital investment 391w

Spicer, Mr Michael—continued
Coal fired power stations, Air pollution control 21-2w, 391-2w
Coal fired power stations, West Burton 21w
Coal mining, Equipment 391w
Coal mining, Government assistance 764w
Coal mining, Productivity 763w
Dungeness B Power Station, Construction costs 257w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power stations 763-4w
Electricity supply industry, Capital investment 559w
Electricity tariffs, Energy costs 678w
Fiddler's Ferry power station, Air pollution control 22w
Nuclear power, Emergency planning 763w
Nuclear reactors, Radioactive wastes 762w
Nuclear safeguards, EURATOM 126-7w
Nuclear safeguards, Sellafield 680w
Plutonium, Exports 127w, 762w
Plutonium, Transport of radioactive materials 391w
Transport of radioactive materials, Export licensing 762w
Transport of radioactive materials, Exports 762-3w
Transport of radioactive materials, Nuclear safeguards 679w
Wave power, Government grants 761-2w

Sports
Injuries 663w, 668w

Sports competitors
Scotland 663w

Sports Council
636w

Sports sponsorship
Tobacco industry 238w

Squire, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 553
Questions
Air transport, EC action 9
Dock labour scheme 252w
Lead free petrol 632w
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 263w

Stanbrook, Mr Ivor
Debates etc.
Bromley London Borough Council (Crystal Palace) Bill 1988/89, 2R (14:03:89) 381, 382-3

Standard of living
North West region 417w

Standardisation
Balance of trade 262w

"Standards in Education, 1987/88"
219w, 501-2w

Standing Medical Advisory Committee
338w

Standing Order No 20 applications
Air accidents (16:03:89) 555-6, (20:03:89) 731-4
Bird's Eye (13:03:89) 34

Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Debates etc.
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 653, 658-61
Questions
British Rail, Government assistance 374w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 373-4w
Debts, Developing countries 542w
Overseas aid 518-9w

Statute law
Capital allowances 145w
Capital gains tax 145w

Statutory maternity pay
790-2w

Steel, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 446
Questions

Steel, Rt Hon David—continued
South Africa, Chile 448w
Tibet, China 621-2w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 652, 671, 678-80
Vacant land, Land use (13:03:89) 49-51
Questions
Agricultural products, Festivals & special occasions 82w
Air routes, Licensing 401w
Air routes, Malta 401w
Air travel, Civil servants' visits abroad 595-6w
Armed forces, Air transport 509w
British Food & Farming Year 1989, Festivals & special occasions 93w
Churston Golf Club, Planning appeals 507w
Greenbelt, Retail trade 211-2w
HMS Cambridge, Fences 322w, 324w
South West Water Authority, Sewage 644w
Vacant land, Housing construction 1074
Vacant land, Land acquisition 629w
Wines, Licensing 7-8w

Steinberg, Mr Gerry
Debates etc.
Safety in Children's Playgrounds Bill, 1R (15:03:89) 415
Questions
Minimum wage, Northern region 183-4w
Rate increases 636w

Stern, Mr Michael
Questions
Family doctors, Budgeting 387w
Jobclubs, Bristol 252-3w
Lead free petrol 216w
National Alliance of Women's Organisations, Government grants to voluntary organisations 149w
Official engagements 126w, 277-8w, 514w
River Severn, Toll bridges 719
Rolls-Royce Aeroengines, Government assistance to industry 270w
Territorial Army, Armed forces strength 618-9w
Vacant land, Building land 1073-4

Stevens, Mr Lewis
Questions
Advertising controls, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 281-4w
Country Landowners' Association 345-6w
EC Agriculture Council 615-6w
Education & industry 407-8
Enterprise allowance scheme 201-2w
Hospital waiting lists 574w

Stewart, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 339
Questions
Boundary Commission for Scotland, Public appointments 749w
Burrell art gallery, Construction costs 665w
Companies, East Kilbride 553w
Education, Scotland 663-5w
New towns development corporations, Enterprise allowance scheme 552-3w
Unemployment 192w

Stewart, Mr Andy
Debates etc.
Central Electricity Generating Board, Coal (13:03:89) 41-2
Questions
Coal mining, Redundancy pay 126w
Driving instruction 531w
Driving instruction, Harmonisation of standards 531w
Driving tests, Drinking & driving 530w
Driving tests, Fees & charges 530w
Driving tests, Harmonisation of standards 530-1w
Employment, Elderly 198w
Family doctors, Contracts 565w

***Stewart, Rt Hon Ian**, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office*
Questions
Baton rounds, Police firearms 137w
Consumer organisations, Northern Ireland Office 139w
EC grants & loans, Northern Ireland 732w
Electoral register, Northern Ireland 12w
Graduates, Civil service manpower 529w
Handicapped, Survey techniques 420-1w
Homicide, Northern Ireland 10-1w
Information technology, Northern Ireland Office 137-8w
Kincora Children's Home, Compensation 300w
Police right of search, Northern Ireland 299w
Police right of search, Weapons 12w
Privatisation, Northern Ireland Office 299w
Public expenditure, Northern Ireland 421w
Rates & rating, Northern Ireland 733-4w
Select Committees, Northern Ireland Office 299w

Stockport
European Regional Development Fund 493w, 541w
Property development 1074

Stocks & shares
Financial institutions 406

Stockton on Tees
801-2w

Stokes, Sir John
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989 (14:03:89) 327-9
Questions
House of Commons debates 18
Unemployment benefits, Social security abuse 199w

Stomach
Cancer 236w

Stonehenge
632w

Stott, Mr Roger
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway transport 108w
National Girobank, Privatisation 407

Strang, Mr Gavin
Questions
AIDS (Control) Act 1987, Publishing 569w
British Drug House, Health & Safety Executive 556-7w
British Drug House, Industrial health & safety 556-7w
Factory Inspectorate, Manpower 416w, 803-4w
Low pay 278
Minimum wage, Scotland 182-3w

Strategic programme for innovation & technology transfer
270w

Strathclyde
Council house sales 37-8w
Young people 555w

Straw, Mr Jack
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 859-62, 863, 865, 866
Questions
Inquiries 18w
Road works, Government grants 709-10w
School violence 16-8w
"Standards in Education, 1987/88" 219w, 501-2w

Structure plans
Norfolk 633w
Surrey (13:03:89) 261-8

Strychnine
516w
Pesticides 44w

***Strychnine**—continued*
Wales 44w

Student grants
219-20w, 502w
Community charge 529w
Housing benefits 306w
Northern Ireland 529w
Parental contributions 219w
Scotland 550w
Travelling expenses 220w

Student loans
499-501w, 605w
Northern Ireland 421w, 527w

Student numbers
Medical students 578w, 606w

Students
Community charge 370-1w
Degrees 421w
Handicapped 421w
Midwives 325w
Northern Ireland 421w

Sub judice
Speaker's rulings & statements (13:03:89) 6, (16:03:89) 540

Sub post offices
Road tax 402w

Submarines
Nuclear free zones 125w
Radio engineering 379-81w
Shipping accidents 402w

Subsistence allowances
250w

Sudan
312w

Suffolk
New businesses 99w
VAT registration 147w

Suffolk County Council
207w

Suicide
Mentally disturbed offenders 376w
Police custody 814w
Prisoners 232w, 814w
Risley Remand Centre 814-5w

Sulphur dioxide
21-2w

Sumberg, Mr David
Questions
Economic situation, North West region 273-4
Manchester City Council 636w
Safer cities scheme 812w
Unemployment, North West region 192w

Summerson, Mr Hugo
Questions
Lead free petrol, Publicity 87w
Youth unemployment, Hard core unemployed 192w

Sunderland Health Authority
66w
Performance related pay 336w

Supermarkets
Equipment 506-7w

Supplementary benefits
Children 785w, 788w
Doncaster 784w
Social security recipients 174w
Women 308w

Supplementary questions
Speaker's rulings & statements (14:03:89) 271, 274

Supra-regional services
NHS finance 69-70w

Surgery
Per capita costs 482-3w

Surrey
Structure plans (13:03:89) 261-8

Surveillance
National security 514w

Survey techniques
Crime 1-2w
Handicapped 420-1w
Telephones 150-2w
Women 1-2w

Sutherland
Forestry 550-1w

Sutton
Council house sales 321-2w

Swan Hunter Shipbuilders
608w

Swansea
HM Coastguard 120w

SWAPO
see South West Africa People's Organisation

Swimming
Boats 241w
Safety measures 241w

Swithland Rectory
16

Takapu
Offshore safety 532w

Take-home pay
704w
Married men 585w

Takeovers
Plessey 405-6

Tamils
Deportation 234w
Political refugees 233-4w

Tanzania
EC external trade 493-4w
Overseas aid 517-8w
Overseas trade 493-4w

Tax allowances
Enterprise zones 643w
Health insurance 451-2w, 588w
Merchant seamen 452w

Tax evasion
Disclosure of information 61w

Tax incentives
Chlorofluorocarbons 65w

Tax rates & bands
Income tax 453-5w
Income tax assessment 588w
Tax yields 62w

Tax yields
Fringe benefits 63-4w
Independent Broadcasting Authority 152-3w
Scotland 585w
Tax rates & bands 62w

Taxation
(20:03:89) 850
Shipping 59-60w, 453-4w

Taxis
112w
Driving licences 293w
Police powers 707w

Taxpayers
Income tax assessment 63w

Taylor, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 1016-9, (22:03:89) 1104-8, 1208
Questions
Pre-school education, Government grants to local authorities 358w

***Taylor, Mrs Ann**—continued*
Pre-school education, Local government expenditure 358-9w
Teachers, Women's employment 359w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 1073

Taylor, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 424
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 810
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 603-7
Questions
Drugs, Imports 812w
Hospices, Government grants 572w
Industrial democracy 276-7
Industrial research, Research finance 264w
Invisible exports 406-7

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Questions
Comber bypass, Road construction 731w
Electoral register, Northern Ireland 12w
Urban development grants, Northern Ireland 731w

Taylor, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Air accidents, Lockerbie (20:03:89) 733
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1269
Water supply, South West region (13:03:89) 66-9
Questions
District health authorities, Local authorities 574w
Industrial investment 261w
Neighbourhood councils, Local authority powers 1079
Railway Inspectorate, Railway safety 1-2

Taylor, Mr Teddy
Questions
Balance of trade, UK trade with EC 259w
British nationality, Administrative delays 413w
Extradition, Legislation 540w
Food imitations, Consumer protection 481w
Food imitations, EC action 281w
NHS Review 564w
Self-governing hospitals, Medical audit 571-2w
Self-governing hospitals, Pay settlements 571w
VAT, Bus services 589w

Tayside Regional Council
(23:03:89) 1245-54

Teacher training
Curriculum 163w, 165w
Pre-school education 683w
Primary education 683w

Teachers
Curriculum 163-4w
Educational qualifications 497w
Loughborough School London 499w
Manpower 404-5w, 497-8w
Northern Ireland 520-8w
Part-time employment 225w
Pay 407w, 682w
Pay incentives 223-4w
Recruitment 682w
Republic of Ireland 404w
Retirement 225w
Scotland 443w
Secondary education 520-8w
South Yorkshire 356w
Vacancies 356w, 443w
Women's employment 359w
Working hours 55w

Teachers' pensions
Northern Ireland 731w
Part-time employment 224-5w
Widowers' benefits 499w

Technical & vocational education initiative
663-5w

Teesside
Dock labour scheme 193w
Employment opportunities 272-3

Telecommunications technology
258w

Telephones
Survey techniques 150-2w

Television
Children 411w

Television advertising
Advertising controls 810w
Commercial television 297-8w

Television programmes
AWE Aldermaston 753w

Television reception
Satellite broadcasting 129w

Telford Hospital
892

Temporary staff
Health service staff 583-4w

10 Downing Street
Public relations 47w

Ten minutes rule
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:03:89) 557, 577, (20:03:89) 749, 781, 783, 805

Tenancy agreements
Public houses 87w

Tenants' charter
Council housing 320w

Tenants' choice
240w
Property transfer 779w

Tenants' incentive scheme
641w

Terminal care
Attendance allowance 730w

Tern Hill barracks
760w

Territorial Army
Armed forces strength 618-9w

Terrorism
906-7
Broadcasting controls 538w
Ministerial statements (21:03:89) 918-27
Northern Ireland (14:03:89) 357-9

Testing
Artillery 620w
Cosmetics (23:03:89) 1255-61

Textile industry
398-9
Balance of trade 271w
Education & industry 396-7
Imports 396-9
Redundancy 273, 399

Thames flood barrier
349w

Thames Valley police
Firearms certificates 292w

Thames Water Authority
Land ownership & tenure 372w
Water pollution 647-8w

Thameslink
Government grants 286w

Thatcher, Margaret
Books 126w

***Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret**, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service*
Questions
Advertising, Cabinet Office 47w

***Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret**—continued*
Advertising, Prime Minister 47w
Air accidents, Lockerbie 418w, 906
"Ark Manifesto" 45w
Armed forces deployment, Cyprus 905-6
Bird's Eye, Factory closures 283, 286
Bordes, Pamella, Government information services 692w
Brazil, Rain forests 513w
Canada, Nuclear submarines 689w
Cereals, Intervention stocks 532
Civil proceedings, Newspaper press 691w
Community charge 907
Community charge, Alzheimer's disease 282
Debts, Developing countries 277w
EC internal trade 907
Economic situation 284
Economic situation, North East region 282-3
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 284
European Free Trade Association 908
Family doctors 283
Flecknoe 277w
Forestry, Land use 417w
Hazardous materials, Departmental responsibilities 690-1w
Heart of Midlothian Football Club 285
Hospital waiting lists 531-2
Hospitals, NHS 514w
Immigration applications, Administrative delays 420w
"Interception of Communications Commissioner Annual Report 1988" 514w
Legal profession 285-6
Legal profession, Bar Council 907-8
Management consultants, Minister for the Civil Service 47-8w
Management consultants, Prime Minister 48w
Mandela, Nelson 528
Manufacturing industries, Equipment 906
Ministerial policy advisers 419w
Ministerial policy advisers, Civil servants' political activities 419-20w
Ministerial policy advisers, Costs 419w
Ministerial policy advisers, Employment 418-9w
Ministerial policy advisers, Expenditure 246w
Mozambique, Peace negotiations 528-9
NHS finance 530
NHS Review 904-5
NHS Review, Clwyd 690w
NHS Review, Clwyd Health Authority 689-90w
Night flying, Heathrow Airport 906
Nuclear disarmament, Arms control negotiations 513w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, West Germany 417w
Official engagements 126w, 277-8w, 286, 514w
Official engagements, Brunton 125w
Overseas investment 285
Ozone layer, International conferences 44w
"Peace & Security" 44-5w
Piper Alpha Inquiry, Safety measures 277w
Police, North Wales 690w
Prescriptions 905
Press freedom, Departmental correspondence 246w
Privatisation, Minister for the Civil Service 47w
Public relations, Cabinet Office 46w
Public relations, Prime Minister 46w
Public relations, 10 Downing Street 47w
Public sector housing, Rent arrears 908
Rain forests, Forest protection 286-8
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Inquiries 530-1
South Africa, Apartheid 284
Statistics, Prime Minister 45-6w
Terrorism 906-7
Thatcher, Margaret, Books 126w
"The Time the Place" 45w
Tornado aircraft, Jordan 691w
Transport of hazardous materials, International conferences 690w

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret—*continued*
Turkey, Human rights 285
UN environment programme, Finance 45w
Untreated milk 531
USA 513w
USSR 513w
USSR, Agricultural policy 530
Wakefield Health Authority, Hospital waiting lists 908
Water charges, Bournemouth 904-5
Water pollution, Pollution control 283
Water supply industry, Privatisation 526-9
Wolston 513w

Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Questions
Air pollution, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 209w
Argentina, Guided weapons 142-3w
"Ark Manifesto" 45w
Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Nuclear reactors 558-9w
Brazil, Rain forests 143w
Canada, Nuclear submarines 689w
Carbon dioxide, Research 212w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 128w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Employment opportunities 414w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Refrigeration 317w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Research 317w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Waste disposal 317w
Coal mining, Government assistance 764w
Condor 2 missiles, Argentina 381w
D notices, Defence Press & Broadcasting Committee 1w
Dept of Energy, Ministerial responsibility 256w
EC Environment Council 318w
Egypt, Chemical weapons 726w
Environment protection, International conferences 777w
Hazardous wastes, International conferences 209-10w
Helicopters, Armed forces training 244w
Hinkley Point C, Public inquiries 777w
Israel, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 143-4w
Low flying, Air accidents 242-3w
Low flying, Armed forces training 242-3w
Low flying, Complaints 243w
Low flying, F111 aircraft 244w
Low flying, Inquiries 243w
Low flying, Military police 243-4w
Low flying, Noise control 243w
Nuclear accidents, Gravelines 368w
Nuclear disarmament, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 381w
Nuclear disarmament, Treaties 381-2w
Nuclear safeguards, EURATOM 126-7w
Nuclear weapons, NATO 620w
Ozone layer, Air pollution control 317-8w
Ozone layer, International conferences 44w
"Peace & Security" 44-5w, 381w
Plutonium, Exports 127w
Plutonium, Transport of radioactive materials 143w, 391w
Radioactive waste disposal, Barton-le-Clay 505w
Radioactive waste disposal, USSR 128w
Radioactive wastes, Amersham International 777w
Radioactive wastes, Barton-le-Clay 777w
Scientists against Nuclear Arms, Conferences 381w
Seas & oceans, Climate 212-3w
"The Time the Place" 45w
Tornado aircraft, Air accidents 244w
UN environment programme, Finance 45w
Waste disposal, Benin 505w
Water supply, Rural areas 697w

***Thompson, Mr Donald**, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture*
Questions
Advertising, Ministry of Agriculture 80-1w
Advisory bodies, Official secrets 86w
Agricultural products, Import duties 353w
Agricultural research, Government laboratories 352w

Thompson, Mr Donald—*continued*
Animal diseases, Agricultural research 467w
Animal feed 348w
Animal feed, Cattle 614w
Animal feed, Pigs 85w
Animal feed, Salmonella 83w
Animal feed, Sheep meat 86w
Animal products, Imports 614w
Bees 339w
Bovine somatotropin, Agricultural research 472w
Bovine somatotropin, Licensing 472w, 725-6w
Bovine somatotropin, Netherlands 472-3w
Bovine somatotropin, Veterinary Products Committee 339w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 80w, 347w, 467-71w, 516w, 712-3w, 720w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Agricultural research 80w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Cattle 525-6
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Compensation 347w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Health hazards 515w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy working party 80w
British Veterinary Association 347w
Central Veterinary Laboratory, Civil service manpower 722w
Cheese, Production levies 725w
Dairy farming 340w
Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations 1986 251w
Deer farming, Tuberculosis 250w
Departmental publications, Vote Office 465w
Eggs, Imports 249w
Eggs, Salmonella 474w
European Communities, Ministry of Agriculture 250w
Fisheries, Marine animals 468w
Fisheries, North East region 343-4w
Fishing catches 345w
Fishing vessels, Belgium 471w
Fishing vessels, Netherlands 471-2w
Food surpluses 353-4w
Intervention Board 346w
Intervention stocks 610-2w
Livestock, Dog licences 351-2w
Lug worms, Sea fishing 351w
Management consultants, Ministry of Agriculture 81-2w
Meat, Production 468w
Milk, Goats 469-70w
Milk, Production levies 725w
Milk, Production quotas 527
Poultry, EC action 515w
Poultry, Manpower 515w
Poultry, Salmonella 352w, 613-4w
Privatisation, Ministry of Agriculture 81w
Public relations, Ministry of Agriculture 81-2w
Rivers, Flood control 85-6w
Salmon, Drift nets 473w
Scrapie, Goats 79w
Scrapie, Notifiable diseases 342w
Scrapie, Sheep 469w
Sheep, Radioactivity 720w
Sheep dipping, Chemicals 466-7w, 721w
Sheep dipping, Health hazards 721w
Sheep dipping, Water pollution 721w
Sheep diseases, Disease control 340w
Sheep meat 350w
Slaughterhouses 83w
Slaughterhouses, Animal diseases 466w
Slaughterhouses, Animal welfare 717w
Slaughterhouses, Food hygiene 466w
Slaughterhouses, Food inspection 83w
Slaughterhouses, Licensing 83w
Slaughterhouses, Veterinary services 473w
Slaughterhouses, Yorkshire & Humberside 718-9w
Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture 81w
Strychnine 516w
Transmissible encephalopathies, Mink 468w

Thompson, Mr Donald—*continued*
Untreated milk 345w
Veterinary medicine, Fish 145w
Veterinary medicine, Licensing 473w
Veterinary medicine, Medical students 145w
Veterinary medicine, Prescriptions 145w
Veterinary Products Committee, Civil servants 723w
Veterinary Products Committee, Disclosure of information 722-3w
Veterinary Products Committee, Licensing 467w
Veterinary services 346w
Veterinary services, Civil service manpower 346w
Veterinary services, College closures 526
Veterinary services, Graduates 392w
Veterinary services, Licensing 468w
Veterinary services, Overseas workers 86-7w
Veterinary services, Yorkshire & Humberside 465w

Thompson, Mr Jack
Questions
Manufacturing industries, Balance of trade 265w
Minimum wage 183-4w

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Amusement Machines (Protection of Children) Bill, 1R (15:03:89) 413
Questions
Defence research establishments, Civil service agencies 276-7w
Hospital waiting lists, Norwich Health Authority 566-7w
Motor vehicles, Fraud 288w
Open College, Educational finance 311w
Structure plans, Norfolk 633w
Training & enterprise councils 203-4w

Thorne, Mr Neil
Debates etc.
Piessey, Public petitions (23:03:89) 1244

Thornton, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Teachers, Educational qualifications 497w
Teachers, Manpower 497-8w
Unemployment, Liverpool 187w
Urban development corporations 506w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Education (Grants) (Grant-Maintained Schools Limited) Regulations 1989 (20:03:89) 880
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1099
Income support, Hostels (16:03:89) 554
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1132, 1146, 1147-50
Questions
Business statements 540
Church Commissioners, Offices 15
Civil service agencies 728
Cook-chill catering, Retail trade 251w
EC internal trade 259-60w
Family credit, Take-up 393-4w
North Western Regional Health Authority, Capital investment 77w
Unitary development plans 1072

Tibet
China 366w, 621-2w
Human rights 726w

Timber Trade Federation
496w

"The Time the Place"
45w

Tin
Redundancy 723

Tipping of waste
Convictions 444w
Hazardous Waste Inspectorate 652w
Scotland 444w, 654-5w

Tobacco
Average earnings 61-2w
Government grants 139w
Northern Ireland 139w

Tobacco advertising
Duty free shops 70w

Tobacco dock
316w

Tobacco industry
235w
Sports sponsorship 238w

Toll bridges
River Severn 7f9

Tornado aircraft
Air accidents 244w
Export credit 713w
Jordan 691w, 756-7w
Middle East 757w
Saudi Arabia 756-7w
West Germany 691w

Tourism
197w
Bristol 279
Canary Wharf 650w
Capital investment 197w
Consultants 253w
Departmental publications 309w
Government grants 197w
London docklands 650w
Northumberland (15:03:89) 505-14
Scotland 552w

Tourism Review Committee
309w

Tower Hamlets
Neighbourhood councils 1079-80

Town & Country Planning Act 1971
Questions
508w

Town & Country Planning General Development Order 1988
Questions
211w, 506w

Town Police Clauses Act 1847
Questions
707w

Townend, Mr John
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 742, 757, 790-2
Questions
Dock labour scheme 277
Eggs, Agricultural production 522

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Debates etc.
United Nations, Peace keeping operations (23:03:89) 1330-3
Questions
Hong Kong, Annual reports 26w

Toxoplasmosis
576w
Health education 576w
Screening 576w
Vaccination 577w

Tractors
BAOR 619w
Military vehicles 619w

Trade & Industry Select Committee
Information technology 97w

Trade barriers
Turkey 105w

Trade competitiveness
268w

Trade union officials
Facilities agreements 416w
Leave 202w

Trades Union Congress
Employment 198-9w
Vocational education 198w

Traffic lights
Eye disorders 218w
M1 218w

Traffic noise
Sound insulation 402-3w

Trailers
111w

Training
Ministry of Defence police 761w
North West region 794w
Per capita costs 794w
Performing arts 464w
Police firearms 598w
Social security appeals 33w
Women 55w

Training Agency
Advertising 57w
Public relations 57-8w
Statistics 255-6w

Training allowances
Employment training 556w

Training & enterprise councils
54-5w, 203-4w, 274, 282
Greater London 309-11w
Industrial training boards 368w

Training Standards Advisory Service
Youth training scheme 557w

Transient people
Pupils 501w

Translation services
EC internal trade 546w
Scotland 546w

Transmissible encephalopathies
Industrial health & safety 557w
Mink 468w

Transplant surgery
489w
Death 385-6w
Hospital waiting lists 386w

Transport
Consolidated Fund debates (13:03:89) 119-39
Research 121w
Safety (13:03:89) 119-39

Transport & Road Research Laboratory
USA 375w

Transport of hazardous materials
Developing countries 653-4w
Hazardous wastes 690w
Health hazards 490w
International conferences 690w
Road accidents 589w, 591w
Road safety 399-400w
Scotland 653-4w
Sea transport 706w
Shipping accidents 705-6w
Weather 531-2w

Transport of radioactive materials
Advisory Committee on Safe Transport of Radioactive Material 596-7w
Air freight transport 596w
Airports 596w
Doncaster 706w
EC action 593w
Export licensing 762w
Exports 762-3w
International Atomic Energy Agency 592w
Licensing 591w
Nuclear safeguards 679w
Nuclear safety 592w
Plutonium 143w, 391w, 596-7w, 709w
Railway accidents 592-3w
Royal Naval College 593w
Sea transport 400w
USA 754w

Transport police
British Rail 590w
Recruitment 373w

Transport supplementary grants
West Sussex County Council 112w

Transportation Unit
Public appointments 121w

Travel restrictions
Football 813w

Travelling expenses
Employment training 256w
Music 519w
Student grants 220w

Treasury
20-2
Advertising 249w
Legal profession 275w
Management consultants 383w
Privatisation 62w
Public relations 247-8w, 300w
Select Committees 146w
Statistics 249w

Treasury & Civil Service Select Committee
(20:03:89) 884

Treasury supplement
National insurance fund 544-5w

Treaties
Double taxation 301w
Nuclear disarmament 381-2w
Ozone layer 92-3w

Tredinnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Skills Training Agency, Privatisation (13:03:89) 31, 33
Questions
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 630w
Council housing, Leicester 1079
Official engagements 514w
Pay 280
Potatoes, Agricultural marketing 524-5
Railway electrification, Midland main railway line 3
Regional development grants, Foreign investment in UK 269w
Textile industry, Imports 396-8
Tourism, Capital investment 197w
Trailers 111w

Tree conservation
Preservation orders 526-7

Tree felling
Northern Ireland 732w

Tree planting
Environmental impact assessment 657w, 747w
Government assistance 88w
North Yorkshire 608-10w
Scotland 659-60w, 748w
Sites of special scientific interest 505-6w

Trent Regional Health Authority
Aids for handicapped 388w
Hospital waiting lists 153w, 326w
Occupational therapists 388w
Water pollution 765-7w

Tribunals
Marginal land 11w

Trident
Consolidated Fund debates (13:03:89) 248-60

Trident submarines
Defence contracts 54w

***Trippier, Mr David**, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment*
Debates etc.
Council tenants, Social unrest (13:03:89) 151-6
Housing problems, Newham (23:03:89) 1311-4

Trippier, Mr David—*continued*
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1038-40, 1041, 1043-4, 1048, 1054, 1058
Questions
Assured tenancies 95w
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Local government expenditure 545w
Black Country Development Corporation 638w
Canary Wharf, Tourism 650w
Council house sales 633-4w
Council house sales, Right to buy 633w
Council house sales, Sutton 321-2w
Council house waiting lists 320w
Council house waiting lists, One parent families 320w
Council housing, Leicester 1079
Council housing, Press advertising 323w
Council housing, Property transfer 634w, 649-50w
Council housing, Tenants' charter 320w
Defective housing, Leicester 1078
Defective housing, Nottingham 209w
Enterprise zones, Tax allowances 643w
Homelessness 641w
Homelessness, Greater London 641w
Homelessness, Housing finance 641w
House prices 95w
House renovation grants, Earnings rules 425-6w
House renovation grants, North West region 777-8w
Housing, Young people 629w
Housing action trusts, Consultants 779w
Housing construction, Hampshire 210w
Housing construction, London boroughs 647w
Housing cooperatives 774w
Housing insulation, Government grants 318w
Housing investment programmes, Brent 645w
Housing investment programmes, Leicester 1078
Leeds Development Corporation, Planning permission 93-4w
Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 427w
Local government expenditure, Redbridge 372w
London Docklands, Employment 316w
London Docklands, Employment opportunities 316w
London Docklands, Employment schemes 316w
London Docklands, Relocation of employees 316-7w
London Docklands, Tourism 650w
Manchester City Council 636w
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 776-7w
New towns development corporations 321w
Planning inquiries, Warrington & Runcorn Development Corporation 643w
Private rented housing 781w
Public sector housing, Property transfer 634w
Racial harassment, Research 321w
Rent arrears, Langbaurgh District Council 642w
Rented housing 642w
Rented housing, London boroughs 647w
Sheffield Development Corporation, Corporate plans 639-40w
Tenants' choice 240w
Tenants' choice, Property transfer 779w
Tenants' incentive scheme 641w
UK 2000 208w
Urban development corporations 506w
Urban development corporations, Land acquisition 636w
Urban programme 645w
Urban programme, Bradford 428w
Vacant land 634-5w
Vacant land, Government departments 635w
Vacant land, Land acquisition 629w
Vacant land, Land registration 1076

Trippier, Mr David—*continued*
Vacant land, Litter 1076-7
Voluntary organisations, Bradford 428w

Tritium
754w

Tropical products
Food industry 85w
Oils & fats 351-2w

Trotter, Mr Neville
Questions
Capital gains tax, Statute law 145w
Income tax assessment, Pay 63-4w
Inland Revenue, Resignations 64-5w

TRRL
see Transport & Road Research Laboratory

TSAS
see Training Standards Advisory Service

TTF
see Timber Trade Federation

Tuberculosis
Deer farming 250w

TUC
see Trades Union Congress

Tudorbury Securities
406

Tuition fees
Part-time education 220w

Turkey
Human rights 215w, 285
Trade barriers 105w

Turner, Mr Dennis
Questions
EC internal trade, Balance of trade 267w
Minimum wage, West Midlands 177w

Turtles
Import controls 322w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Central London Rail Study 112w

UGC
see University Grants Committee

UK 2000
208w

UKAEA
see United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

UKWMO
see United Kingdom Warning & Monitoring Organisation

UN
see United Nations

UN Commission on Human Rights
729-30w

UN Decade of Disabled Persons 1983-1992
215w, 386w

UN environment programme
651w
Finance 45w

UN High Commissioner for Refugees
624-5w

UN Transition Assistance Group
(23:03:89) 1330-8

Under-fives' Education Inquiry
502w

Unemployment
186w, 190w, 192w, 269-70, 272-4
Basildon 191w
Birmingham 189-90w
Bury 187w

Unemployment—*continued*
Delyn enterprise zone 720
Development areas 695-6w
East Midlands 189w
Greenock & Port Glasgow 229-30w
Handicapped workers 200-1w
Industrial relations 272
Jobclubs 368w
Liverpool 187w
London docklands 310w
Newport 719-20
North West region 188w, 192w
Scotland 229-30w
Sheffield 191w
South East region 271
South Wales 504w
Wales 272, 695-6w, 719-20
Welsh Development Agency 720
West Midlands 189w

Unemployment benefit offices
55w

Unemployment benefits
Computers in Government departments 56w
Part-time employment 55w
Social security abuse 199w
Social security appeals 458-9w
Social security reform 801-2w

UNITA
24-5w

Unitary development plans
1072

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
558-9w

United Kingdom Warning & Monitoring Organisation
Emergency planning 599w

United Nations
24-5w, 210w, 448w, 476w, 624-5w, (17:03:89) 637-701, 905-6
Children's rights 448w
Peace keeping operations (23:03:89) 1330-8

Universities
Petitions 33-4w

University finance
406w
Higher education administration 406w

University Grants Committee
222-3w
Higher education 221w

University teachers
Examinations 684w
Industrial disputes 684w
Pay 165w, 682-3w
Pay settlements 164-5w

Unpaid taxes
VAT 147w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speaker's rulings & statements (16:03:89) 535, (20:03:89) 863, (21:03:89) 916

UNTAG
see UN Transition Assistance Group

Untreated milk
345w, 516, 531
Labelling 520

Urban areas
Planning permission 1086
Railway travel 4-5

Urban development corporations
506w
Land acquisition 636w

Urban development grants
Northern Ireland 731w
Wales 136w

Urban planning
Outer London boroughs 637w

Urban programme
645w
Bradford 428w
Wales 132-6w

USA
513w
Employment schemes 201w
Foreign tourists 197-8w
Transport & Road Research Laboratory 375w
Transport of radioactive materials 754w

USSR
513w
Agricultural policy 530
Chemical weapons 245-6w
Coal (13:03:89) 41-2
Prilutzkaya, Malka 510w
Radioactive waste disposal 128w

Vacancies
200w
Kent 191w
Teachers 356w, 443w
Wales 720

Vacant land
634-5w
Building land 1073-4
Government departments 635w
Housing construction 1074
Land acquisition 629w
Land registration 1076
Land use (13:03:89) 49-51
Litter 1076-7

Vaccination
Babies 767w
Toxoplasmosis 577w

Vaccine damaged children
Compensation 770-2w
Whooping cough 770w

Vale of Glamorgan
By election writs (14:03:89) 269

Vale of Rheidol railway line
Privatisation 402w

Valleys initiative
504w

Value Added Tax (Education) Order 1989
Debates etc.
(22:03:89) 1234

VAT
Bus services 589w
Charities 65w
Community charge 586w
Construction 703-4w
Higher education (22:03:89) 1234
Leisure facilities 61w
Rents 774w
Road construction 596w, 695w
Unpaid taxes 147w

VAT registration
Companies 59w
Suffolk 147w

VAT zero rated goods
Charities 63w
Construction 61w
EC action 63w

Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Questions
Vacant land 634w

Vaz, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Legal Aid & Legal Advice & Assistance Regulations 1989 (22:03:89) 1226-7, 1232
Questions
"Broadcasting in the 90s White Paper" 810-1w
Community charge, Orders & regulations 627w
Hearing aids, Leicestershire Health Authority 670-1w

***Vaz, Mr Keith**—continued*
Immigration appeals, Members 811w
Immigration rules 811w
Police, Leicestershire 2w, 292-3w
Police, Newspaper press 8w
Textile industry 398-9

Veterinary medicine
166w, 341w
Cambridge University 12w
Fish 145w
Licensing 473w
Medical students 11-2w, 145w
Northern Ireland 11-2w
Overseas students 13w
Prescriptions 145w

Veterinary Products Committee
725-6w
Bovine somatotropin 339w
Civil servants 723w
Disclosure of information 722-3w
Licensing 467w

Veterinary services
346w
Animal welfare 341w
Cancer 16w
Civil service manpower 346w
College closures 526
Government grants 166w
Graduates 392w
Licensing 468w
Manpower 341w
Overseas workers 86-7w
Slaughterhouses 473w
Yorkshire & Humberside 465w

Victoria & Albert Museum
(13:03:89) 78-118, 512w
Manpower 302w

Vietnam
EC external relations 448w

***Viggers, Mr Peter**, Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Agricultural products, Republic of Ireland 621-2w
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme, Northern Ireland 732w
Broadleaved woodlands, Northern Ireland 731-2w
Graduates, Pay 528w
Marginal land, Northern Ireland 11w
Marginal land, Tribunals 11w
Tobacco, Government grants 139w
Tree felling, Northern Ireland 732w
Veterinary medicine, Medical students 11-2w

Vocational education
Trades Union Congress 198w

Vocational guidance
Scotland 555w

Voluntary organisations
Bradford 428w
Health services finance 491w
Local education authority training grant scheme 714
Manpower 200w
NHS finance 492w

Voluntary schools
407w
City technology colleges 290w
Educational finance 520w
Expenditure 519-20w
Northern Ireland 519-20w

Voluntary unemployment
Social security benefits disqualification 558w

Voluntary work
Bradford (14:03:89) 386-92

Vote Office
Departmental publications 465w

Wages councils
309-10w, 797-801w
Employment 197w

"Wages Councils 1988 Consultation Document"
557-8w, 797-801w

Wages Inspectorate
183-4w, 202-3w, 271, 275, 801w
Civil service manpower 280
Minimum wage 177w, 179-80w, 281-2

Wakefield Health Authority
Hospital waiting lists 908

***Wakeham, Rt Hon John**, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc.
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 339-40
Recess motions, Easter (13:03:89) 37-77
Questions
Advertising, Privy Council Office 34w
Business statements 533, 535-45
Guillotine 312-3w
House of Commons broadcasting, Administrative delays 20-2
House of Commons debates 18
House of Commons divisions, Bordes, Pamella 457w
House of Commons divisions, City of Westminster 694w
House of Commons passes, Bordes, Pamella 693-4w
House of Commons passes, Government departments 458w
House of Commons passes, Shaw, David 313w
House of Commons standing orders 457w
Management consultants, Privy Council Office 34w
Members' allowances, Clarke, Kenneth 621w
Middleton, Michael, Security vetting 694w
Petitions, Universities 33-4w
Private Bills, House of Commons procedure 19
Private Members' Bills, House of Commons procedure 18-9
Procedure Select Committee, House of Commons debates 18
Public relations, Privy Council Office 34-5w
Research assistants, House of Commons passes 457w
Statistics, Privy Council Office 34w
Westminster Hall 19-20

***Waldegrave, Mr William**, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office*
Questions
Argentina, Guided weapons 142-3w
China, Human rights 144w
Developing countries, Debts 510w
European Communities, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 215w
Iraq, Human rights 144w
Israel, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 143-4w
Israel, Peace negotiations 623w
Libyan Arab Republic, Chemical weapons 624w
Palestine Liberation Organisation 24w
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Bomb victims 143w
Plutonium, Transport of radioactive materials 143w
Rushdie, Salman 25-6w
South Africa, Overseas aid 311-2w
Sudan 312w
Turkey, Human rights 215w
USSR, Prilutzkaya, Malka 510w

Walden, Mr George
Questions
English Folk Dance & Song Society, Elections 541w

Wales
Agriculture 439w
AIDS 718
Alcoholism 696w

Wales*—*continued
Arson 716-8
Bed & breakfast accommodation 137w
Benzodiazepines 42-3w
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme 700w
Childbirth 43w
Coal mining 438w
Common sheep meat regime 437w
Community charge 439w
Council house sales 716
Council housing finance 278-82w
Crime prevention 698w
Dialysis machines 441w
Educational finance 718-9
Employment opportunities 721
Environmentally sensitive areas 135-6w
Experimental farms 438w
Family doctors 503-4w, 699-700w
Foreign investment in UK 438-9w
Handicapped 439-41w, 696w
Homelessness 722
House renovation grants 131-2w
Housing 715-6, 722
Housing capital allocations 278-82w
Industrial training 714-5
Local education authority training grant scheme 714-5
Medical students 606w
Medical treatments 41w
Mental health community care 696w
Minimum wage 177-9w, 182-5w
NHS Review 699w
Nurses 437w
Paramedical staff 697-8w
Patients 441w
Police 808w
Prosthetics 41w
Redundancy 720-1, 723
Regional aid 711-2w
Regional development grants 441-2w
Regional enterprise grants 442-3w
Regional selective assistance 441-2w
Road construction 695w
Roads 366-7w, 713-4
Sewage 44w, 1081
Small businesses 695w
Strychnine 44w
Unemployment 272, 695-6w, 719-20
Urban development grants 136w
Urban programme 132-6w
Vacancies 720
Water supply 697w
Wild animals 694w
Woodland grant scheme 503w

Wales Council for the Disabled
439-40w

Wales Tourist Board
437-8w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 350
Questions
Air accidents, Manchester Airport 122w
Business statements 542
Electricity area boards, Scotland 749w
Hospital finance, Scotland 750w
Matrimonial property, Scotland 142w
Poultry, Salmonella 526
Scottish health boards, NHS finance 749-50w

Walker, Rt Hon Peter*, *Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Advertising, Welsh Office 278w
Agriculture, Wales 439w
Alcoholism, Wales 696w
Arson, Wales 717-8
Broadleaved woodland grant scheme, Wales 700w
Clwyd Health Authority, Finance 699w
Coal mining, Wales 438w
Common sheep meat regime, Wales 437w
Community charge, Wales 439w
Council house sales, Wales 716
Council housing, Cardiff 716

Walker, Rt Hon Peter*—*continued
Crime prevention, Housing estates 698w
Deeside waterfront scheme 722-3
Development areas, Unemployment 695-6w
Dialysis machines, Patients 441w
Domestic animals, Poisoning 44w
Employment opportunities, Wales 721
Environmentally sensitive areas, Wales 135-6w
Experimental farms, Wales 438w
Family doctors, Wales 503-4w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 438-9w
Forestry, Glamorgan 504w
Gwynedd Health Authority 438w
Handicapped, Local government expenditure 440-1w
Handicapped, Wales 439-40w
Homelessness, Wales 722
Hospitals, Port Talbot 137w
Housing, Wales 715-6, 722
Housing capital allocations, Wales 278-82w
Housing construction, South Wales 367w
Housing for Wales 721-2
Lluesty Hospital 698w
Lluesty Hospital, Hospital closures 698w
Lug worms, Burry estuary 350-1w
Management consultants, Welsh Office 42w
Mental health community care, Local authorities 696w
Mental health community care, Local government services 696w
NHS Review, Clwyd 699w
NHS Review, Family doctors 699-700w
NHS Review, "Working for Patients White Paper" 699w
Paramedical staff, Wales 697-8w
Patients, Wales 441w
Pesticides, Strychnine 44w
Privatisation, Welsh Office 42w
Public relations, Welsh Office 42w, 137-8w
Redundancy, Wales 720-1
Regional aid, Expenditure 441-2w
Regional development grants, Expenditure 441w
Regional enterprise grants, Expenditure 442-3w
Regional enterprise grants, Innovation 442w
Regional selective assistance, Expenditure 441-2w
Second homes, Arson 716-7
Sewage, Welsh Water Authority 504-5w
Small businesses, Rural conversion grants 695w
Social workers, Handicapped 696-7w
Statistics, Welsh Office 41-2w
Tin, Redundancy 723
Unemployment, Delyn enterprise zone 720
Unemployment, Newport 719-20
Unemployment, South Wales 504w
Unemployment, Welsh Development Agency 720
Urban programme, Wales 132-6w
Vacancies, Wales 720
Water charges, Welsh Water Authority 504w
Water supply, Rural areas 697w
Welsh Office, Computers in Government departments 278w
Welsh Water Authority, Monopolies & Mergers Commission 700-1w
Wild animals, Poisoning 694w
Woodland grant scheme, Wales 503w
Ysbyty Madog, Hospital closures 503w

Wall, Mr Pat
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 797-9

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc.
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 342
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 949, 958-60, 964-5
Questions
Balance of trade, Manufactured goods 394-5
Business statements 535-6

Wallace, Mr James*—*continued
Chlorofluorocarbons, Refrigeration 1088
Low pay 278
"Working for Patients White Paper", Health service staff 562w

Wallenberg, Raoul
British citizenship (22:03:89) 1101-3

Waller, Mr Gary
Debates etc.
Explosions, Peterborough (23:03:89) 1272
Questions
Chlorofluorocarbons, Air pollution control 630-1w
Dock labour scheme, River Thames 194w
Roads 8
Textile industry, Imports 399
Untreated milk 531
Water pollution, Pollution control 283

Walley, Ms Joan
Debates etc.
Environment protection, Derbyshire (13:03:89) 238, 239, 246-7
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 1023-4, 1032, (22:03:89) 1120, 1198-9, 1200
Questions
Chlorofluorocarbons, Scottish Office 139w
Dioxins, Food packaging 249w
Seal products, Imports 776w
Tax incentives, Chlorofluorocarbons 65w
Water charges, Low incomes 1085
Water pollution, Manpower 87-8w
Weil's disease, Health education 575w

Walters, Sir Dennis
Questions
Railway freight transport, Environment protection 218w

Waltham Forest Health Authority
Genito-urinary medicine 237w

Wandsworth
Rates & rating 1087

War pensions
Housing benefits 303-6w
Social security recipients 173w

War widows' pensions
(13:03:89) 37-41, 530

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Questions
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, Compensation 347w
Drug abuse, Advertising controls 296w
Family doctors, Fees & charges 768w
Handicapped, Wales 439-40w
Lug worms, Burry estuary 350-1w
Lug worms, Sea fishing 351w
Minimum wage, Wales 178-9w
NHS Review, Family doctors 699-700w
Tin, Redundancy 723

Wardle, Mr Charles
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Economic situation (15:03:89) 447-50
Questions
Hospitals, NHS 514w

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Questions
Balance of trade, Electronic equipment 259w
Interest rates 704w
Minimum wage 178-9w

Warren, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc.
Harland & Wolff (22:03:89) 1094
Questions
Lead free petrol, Oil companies 18w

Warrington
809w

Warrington & Runcorn Development Corporation
Planning inquiries 643w

Waste disposal
Air pollution control 317w, 322-3w, 444w
Benin 505w
Capper pass 507w
Chlorofluorocarbons 317w
Crime 653w
Disclosure of information 653w
Fines 652w
Hazardous wastes (13:03:89) 70-2, 633w
ReChem International 652-3w
Scotland 444w, 652-3w

"Watchdog"
801w

Water authorities
Debts 94-5w, 238w
Environmentally sensitive areas 519
Pay 424w
Privatisation (20:03:89) 851-8, (21:03:89) 931-1037

Water Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Money res (20:03:89) 851-8
Allocation of time motion* (21:03:89) 930
Rep (21:03:89) 931-1037, (22:03:89) 1104-212
Questions
615w

Water charges
Bournemouth 904-5
Grampian (22:03:89) 1235-42
Income support 460w
Low incomes 1085
Price increases 213-4w, 240w, 643w, 645w
Sewage 1082
Welsh Water Authority 504w
West Kent Water Company 1084-5
Yorkshire Water Authority 774w

Water (Fluoridation) Act 1985
Questions
773-4w

Water pollution
Aluminium 214w
Anglian Water Authority 423-4w, 508-9w
Animal breeding 88w
Beaches 639w
Dept of Energy 20w, 678w
Dept of the Environment 89w
Diseases 79w
EC law 20w, 51-2w, 89w, 678w, 775w
Fish farming 444-5w
Inland waterways 641w
Lead 775w
Lead pollution 660-1w
Lowermoor water treatment works 88w, 208-9w
Manpower 87-8w
Ministry of Defence 51-2w
Nitrates 615w
North West region 214w
Nottingham 507w
Oxford 642w
Pesticides 445w
Pollution control 283, 645w
Punishment 632w
Research 238w
Scotland 660-1w
Sewage 211w, 242w, 427w, 640w
Sheep dipping 721w
South Hams 644w
Thames Water Authority 647-8w
Trent Regional Health Authority 765-7w

Water storage
Yorkshire Water Authority 422-3w

Water supply
Asbestos 372w
Fluoridation 773-4w
Nitrates 241-2w
Rural areas 697w
South West region (13:03:89) 66-9
Wales 697w

Water supply disconnections
(22:03:89) 1104-212

Water supply industry
Derbyshire 95w
France 1073

Water supply industry*—*continued
Privatisation 238w, 240-1w, 424-5w, 528-9, 639w, 1072-3, 1084-5
Shareholders 240-1w
Shares 424-5w

Watts, Mr John
Questions
NHS Review 895
Shareholders 247w

Wave power
Government grants 761-2w

Waveney District Council
Pipelines 92w

WCD
see Wales Council for the Disabled

WDA
see Welsh Development Agency

Weapons
Police right of search 12w

Weather
Transport of hazardous materials 531-2w

Weights & Measures (Amendment) Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
Order for consideration in Com read (17:03:89) 702

Weil's disease
Health education 575w

Wells, Mr Bowen
Debates etc.
Overseas aid (17:03:89) 649, 680-5
Questions
Homelessness, Young people 1075

Welsh, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
First Scottish Standing Committee, Members (14:03:89) 344-6, 352
Private notice questions (15:03:89) 413
Rent Officers (Additional Functions) Orders (21:03:89) 1045-6
Questions
Hearing aids, Private health services 259w
"Legal Profession in Scotland" 230w
Skiing, Scotland 230w

Welsh Affairs Select Committee
(20:03:89) 884

Welsh Arts Council
Arts grants 727

Welsh Development Agency
695w, 722
Unemployment 720

Welsh Office
Advertising 278w
Computers in Government departments 278w
Management consultants 42w
Privatisation 42w
Public relations 42w, 137-8w
Statistics 41-2w

Welsh Water Authority
697w
Monopolies & Mergers Commission 700-1w
Sea pollution 504-5w
Sewage 504-5w
Water charges 504w

Wentworth Estate Bill 1988/89
Debates etc.
2R order read (16:03:89) 515, (22:03:89) 1071

West Burton
Coal fired power stations 21w

West Germany
Interest rates 541-2w
Low flying 755-6w

West Germany*—*continued
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 417w
Tornado aircraft 691w

West Glamorgan Health Authority
137w

West Kent Water Company
Water charges 1084-5

West Midlands
Arts 463w
Minimum wage 177-8w, 181-5w, 275
Unemployment 189w

West Midlands Arts
463w

West Sussex County Council
Transport supplementary grants 112w

West Yorkshire
Woollen industry 254w

Western Europe
Armed forces deployment 620w

Western European Union
620w

Westminster City Council
400-1w

Westminster Hall
19-20

WEU
see Western European Union

Whatton Detention Centre
815w
Prison sentences 816w

Wheeler, Mr John
Questions
ACCEPT, Government grants to voluntary organisations 575w
"Interception of Communications Commissioner Annual Report 1988" 514w
Ridley, Tony, Resignations 404w
Tax yields, Scotland 585w

Whitby
Old people's homes 157w

Whitley Councils
577w

Whooping cough
Vaccine damaged children 770w

Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Debates etc.
36 Engineers' Regiment, Army bases (13:03:89) 222-5
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 803-5, 806
Questions
Abortion, Human organs 571w
British Rail, Capital investment 110w
Farm & conservation grants scheme 339-40w
Parachuting, Safety measures 286w
Road tax, Sub post offices 402w
Training & enterprise councils 204w

Widowers' benefits
731w
Teachers' pensions 499w

Widows' benefits
Expenditure 460w

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Industry (16:03:89) 562, 581-4
Hospital closures, Gwynedd Health Authority (23:03:89) 1276-8
Water Bill, House of Commons procedure (20:03:89) 735
Water Bill, Money res (20:03:89) 853-4
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 939-40, 978-82, 1012, 1025-6, (22:03:89) 1161-4, 1167, 1179

Wigley, Mr Dafydd—*continued*
Questions
Alcoholism, Wales 696w
Arson, Wales 717-8
Childbirth, Wales 43w
Development areas, Unemployment 695-6w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Community care 662w
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Act 1986, Scotland 661-2w
Family doctors, Manpower 578w
Family doctors, Wales 503-4w
Handicapped, Local government expenditure 440-1w
Handicapped, Wales 439-40w
Hearing aids, Sales methods 393
Mental health community care, Local authorities 696w
Mental health community care, Local government services 696w
Roads, Wales 713
Small businesses, Rural conversion grants 695w
Unemployment, Wales 272
Ysbyty Madog, Hospital closures 503w

Wild animals
Pesticides 656w, 723w
Poisoning 694w, 778w
Wales 694w

Wilding Committee
see Arts Support Review Group

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc.
Air accidents, Lockerbie (20:03:89) 732-3
Questions
Educational finance, Wales 718-9
Westminster Hall 20

Williams, Mr Alan W
Questions
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 633w
Minimum wage, Wales 177w
Second homes, Arson 716-7

Wilshire, Mr David
Debates etc.
Air accidents, Lockerbie (16:03:89) 556
Questions
Air accidents, Lockerbie 914
Business statements 538
Dock labour scheme 194w
Skill shortages, South East region 274
"Working for Patients White Paper", Budgeting 561w

Wilson, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (21:03:89) 948
Questions
Balance of trade 246-7w
British Veterinary Association 347w
Employment training, Dumfries & Galloway 252w

Wimbledon Football Club
Arrests 298w

Wines
Licensing 7-8w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal (13:03:89) 70-2
Questions
Entry clearances, Immigration appeals 693w, 728-9w
Interest rates, West Germany 541-2w
Water supply industry, Privatisation 1073

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1153-4, 1160
Questions
Medical ethics 574w
Namibia, Peace keeping operations 625w

Winterton, Mrs Ann—*continued*
Namibia, South West Africa People's Organisation 624-5w
Road accidents, Death 592w
Schools, Educational finance 607w
Teachers, Pay 407w
Unemployment, North West region 188w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Water Bill, Rep (22:03:89) 1137-45
Questions
Down's syndrome, Babies 573w
Down's syndrome, Medical research 15-6w
Down's syndrome, Medical treatments 573w
Employment, Buy British 270

Wireless Telegraphy (Cordless Telephone Apparatus) (Restriction) Order 1987
Questions
228w, 601-2w

Wise, Mrs Audrey
Debates etc.
Rain forests (13:03:89) 165-6, 171
Questions
Armed forces deployment, South Korea 476w
Bananas, Imports 269w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 306w
Housing benefits, Student grants 306w
Midwives, Students 325w
Pensioners, Personal income 172w
VAT, Charities 65w
Wood, Imports 268w

Wolston
513w

Women
Supplementary benefits 308w
Survey techniques 1-2w
Training 55w

Women's employment
58w, 192w
Teachers 359w

Women's National Commission
681w

Wood
Import duties 496w
Imports 268w

Wood, Mr Timothy
Questions
El Salvador, Elections 448w
Employment opportunities, Foreign investment in UK 264w
National Dock Labour Board 281
USA 513w

Woodcock, Dr Mike
Questions
Social security, Merchant seamen 460-1w
Tax allowances, Merchant seamen 452w
Taxation, Shipping 453-4w

Woodland grant scheme
747w
Crofting 748w
Scotland 657-8w
Wales 503w

Woollen industry
West Yorkshire 254w

"Work & Organisation of the Legal Profession Consultation Paper"
Crown Prosecution Service 692-3w

Work permits
Immigrants' dependants 149w

"Working for Patients White Paper"
562-4w, 690w, 893-4
British Medical Association 564w
Budgeting 561-3w
Community care 561w
Expenditure 390w

"Working for Patients White Paper"—*continued*
Family doctors 384w, 563w
Health service staff 362w, 562w
Hospital waiting lists 563w
NHS hospital trusts 562w
NHS Review 699w
Patients 384w, 563w
Publicity 570w

Working hours
Junior hospital doctors 333-4w, 547-8w
Railway workers 529-30w
Teachers 55w

"Working with Sexually Abused Children"
575w

World Bank
542w, 625-6w

"World in Action"
753w

Worthington, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 792-4
Questions
Veterinary services, Civil service manpower 346w

Wray, Mr Jimmy
Questions
Balance of trade, Oil industry 401-2
Channel tunnel, Railway transport 106w
Exports, Scotland 553-4w
Health, Disadvantaged 901
Health, Poverty 446w
Oil exports, Balance of trade 99w
Ozone layer, Treaties 92-3w
River pollution, Pollution monitoring 427w
University finance 406w
University finance, Higher education administration 406w
Water pollution, Research 238w
Women's employment 58w

The Wrekin
Community charge 627w

Wyre Forest
Companies 59w

Yeo, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Budget March 1989, Employment (20:03:89) 747-8
Oral question time point of order (16:03:89) 532
Questions
British Antarctic Survey, Oceanographic vessels 608w
Community charge, Crown lands & estates 587w
Finance Bill 1988/89 587w
Railway stations 111w
Unemployment 272
"Working for Patients White Paper" 563w

Yorkshire & Humberside
Arts 461w
Channel tunnel 704-5w
Employment 188w
Forestry 714-8w
Low flying 756w
Minimum wage 178w, 180w, 182-4w
School closures 357-8w
Slaughterhouses 718-9w
Veterinary services 465w

Yorkshire Arts Association
461w

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority
NHS finance 900-1

Yorkshire Water Authority
241-2w
Water charges 774w
Water storage 422-3w

"You & the Community Charge"
628w

Young, Mr David
Questions
Minimum wage 178w

Young, Sir George
Questions
Council house sales 633-4w

Young, Hugo
126w

Young offenders
Prisons 669w
Secure units 669w

Young people
Childbirth 768-9w
Departmental leaflets 786w
Homelessness 306-7w, 1074-5
Housing 548w, 629w
Income support 33w
Social security benefits disqualification 59w
Social security benefits rules 27-8w
Strathclyde 555w

Younger, Rt Hon George, *Secretary of State for Defence*
Questions
Select Committees, Ministry of Defence 51w

Youth employment
186-7w

Youth training scheme
199-200w
Child care 55w
Halifax 59w
Training Standards Advisory Service 557w

Youth unemployment
186w
Greenock & Port Glasgow 314w
Hard core unemployed 192w
North West region 795-6w

Ysbyty Madog
Hospital closures 503w